

Abu Hurayrah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

**1** Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan, out of faith and with dedication, shall have his past sins forgiven,

**2** and whoever spends the Night of Power in worship, out of faith and with dedication, shall have his past sins forgiven.<sup>(1)</sup>

Abu Hurayrah also narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

**3** Whoever attends to night worship during Ramadan, out of faith and with dedication, shall have his past sins forgiven.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1901; Muslim, 760.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 37; Muslim, 759.

### From the Qur'an

﴿Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may be God-fearing. (183) [Fast] on a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, shall fast instead the same number of days later on. Those who find fasting a strain too hard to bear may compensate for it by feeding a needy person. He who does good of his own account does himself good thereby. For to fast is to do good to yourselves, if you only knew it. (184) It was in the month of Ramadan that the Qur'an was revealed: a guidance for mankind and a self-evident proof of that guidance and a standard to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month shall fast throughout the month; but he who is ill or on a journey shall fast instead the same number of days later on. God desires that you have ease. He does not desire that you be afflicted with hardship. You are, however, required to complete the necessary number of days and to extol and glorify God for having guided you aright and to tender your thanks.﴾ (2: 183-185)

﴿*Hā. Mīm.* (1) By the Book that makes things clear! (2) We have bestowed it from on high on a blessed night; for, indeed, We have always sent warnings. (3) On that night every matter of wisdom is made clear.﴾ (44: 1-4)

﴿From on high have We bestowed it [the Qur'an] on the Night of Power. (1) Would that you knew what the Night of Power is! (2) The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. (3) On that night the angels and the Spirit by their Lord's leave descend with all His decrees. (4) That night is peace, till the break of dawn.﴾ (97: 1-5)

### The Narrator

'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Dawsī al-Azdī of Yemen was better known by his appellation, Abu Hurayrah. This is what is best known about his name and his father's name. He embraced Islam in the year in which the Battle of Khaybar took place, i.e. Year 7 of the Hijri calendar. He remained close to the Prophet, eager to learn, and he accompanied the Prophet wherever he went. He was one of the best memorizers of the Prophet's companions and the one who narrated the largest number of hadiths. Al-Bukhari mentioned that more than eight hundred companions of the Prophet or those who belonged to the *tābi'īn* generation narrated hadiths from him. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb appointed him as Governor of Bahrain. Later he returned to Madinah and devoted his time to narrating the Prophet's hadiths and educating people about their faith. He died in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

### Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) says that whoever fasts during the month of Ramadan believing that it is a duty incumbent on him, dedicating his worship to God, (limitless He is in His glory), shall have all his past sins forgiven. Likewise, the one who spends the Night of Power in worship, out of faith and in dedication, shall have his past sins forgiven. The same applies, even in a greater degree, to one who attends to night worship throughout the month of Ramadan. He is also forgiven all his past sins.



# Message and Meaning



The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions that a believer fasts the month of Ramadan believing that God, Mighty and Exalted, has made such fasting a duty binding on him, holding as true what God has promised those who fast for His sake, looking for his reward from God only, looking for reward from no-one else. He only seeks to please God, neither seeking reputation nor indulging in hypocrisy, and he starts the month with a delightful mood, using his time to draw closer to God. Such a person shall have the reward of having all his past sins erased and forgiven.

Fasting means abstention from eating, drinking and sex with the intention of fulfilling an act of worship. Such abstention lasts from the beginning of Fajr Prayer, or dawn, up to the time when the Maghrib Prayer falls due. This is in implementation of the Qur'anic statement: 'Eat and drink until you can see the white streak of dawn against the blackness of the night. Then resume the fast till nightfall'. (2: 187) In a *qudsī* hadith, God says of a fasting person: 'He abandons his desire and food for My sake'.<sup>(1)</sup>



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then states that whoever spends the Night of Power in worship, including prayer, supplication, glorification of God, reciting the Qur'an, etc. and doing all this out of faith and in dedication and devotion, shall have all his past sins erased. It is not a condition that a person spends the entire night in worship; a portion of it is sufficient, even though it may be a short portion. This is in line with the general meaning of *tahajjud*, i.e. night worship, or joining the imam leading a prayer of night worship.

The Night of Power is given this name because God has given it an exceptionally great status. It was on this night that the Qur'an was sent down to the House of Might in the nearest heaven, as God says: 'From on high We have bestowed it [the Qur'an] on the Night of Power'. (97: 1) On this night, the fortunes of people that will take place in the coming year are copied from the Imperishable Tablet, and assigned their timings. God has favoured His servants with a multiplication of their good deeds on that night. He says: 'The Night of Power is better than a thousand months'. (97: 3)

The Night of Power is kept uncertain, but it is during the last ten days of Ramadan. Whoever offers night worship on all the ten nights will definitely have done his worship on this night. The Mother of Believers, 'Ā'ishah, said: 'When the last ten nights of Ramadan started, the Prophet was more diligent and tightened his lower garment, spent its nights in worship and awakened his family'.<sup>(2)</sup> It is more probable that it occurs in the odd nights of the last ten of Ramadan, as the Prophet says: 'Seek it in the odd ones of the last ten nights of Ramadan'.<sup>(3)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1894; Muslim, 1151.

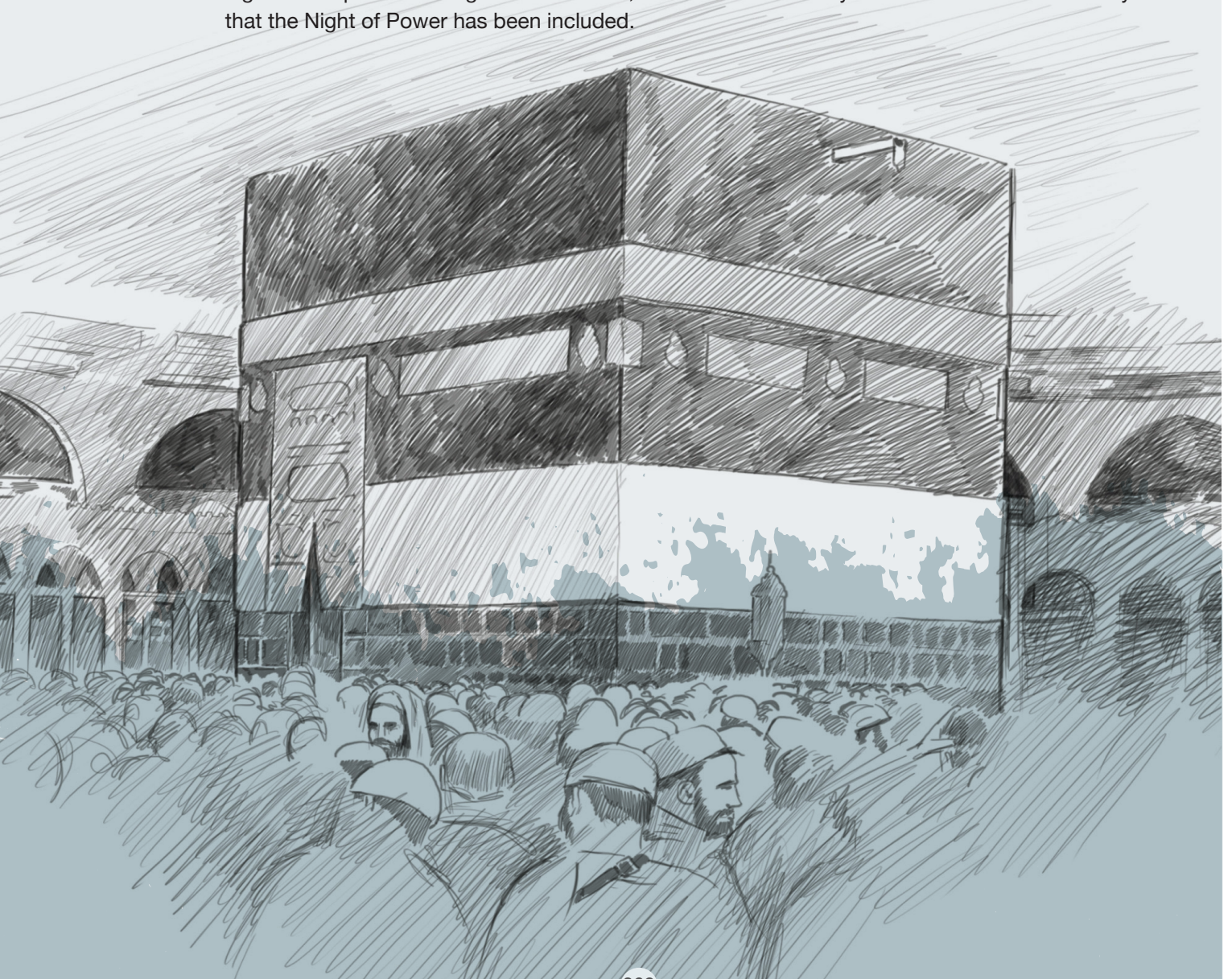
2 Related by al-Bukhari, 2024; Muslim, 1174.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 2017; Muslim, 1169.



3

In the second hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions that whoever offers night worship on all nights of Ramadan, out of faith and in dedication and devotion, shall have all his past sins forgiven. There is no contradiction between having one's sins forgiven for doing night worship throughout the month of Ramadan and their forgiveness for doing so on the Night of Power. Each of these two practices is good enough for the forgiveness of past sins, but each of them has something special which does not apply to the other. Offering night worship on every night of the month is certainly hard, but whoever does it shall inevitably have witnessed the Night of Power. He is forgiven his past sins for having done each one of the two. To offer worship on the Night of Power is not as hard as doing this throughout the month, but it requires looking hard for it, and one may ultimately witness it or miss it. Therefore, it is better to offer night worship on each night of the month, because it earns very rich reward as also certainty that the Night of Power has been included.



# Implementation

1

One aspect of the grace God bestows on us is that He gives certain times and places special and exclusive merits. Hence, the Day of Arafat is the best day of the year, and Friday is the best day of the week. The Ka'bah is the best place on earth, the month of Ramadan the best month in the year, and the Night of Power is the best of all nights. God has associated these times and places with a great prospect for splendid success, to motivate man to be diligent and keen to make the best use of these occasions.

2

Good deeds must be offered out of faith and in true dedication and devotion. Good deeds are unacceptable from an unbeliever. A person who does not do it as an act of dedication, or one who does it to earn some reputation or to give a false impression of himself will earn no reward for his good deed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Actions are but by intention'. Therefore, a Muslim should have clear intention in everything he does and dedicate all his deeds to seeking God's pleasure.

3

Faith and dedication must be the basis of every good action. Both are combined in the definition of God-fearing stated by Ṭalq ibn Ḥabīb: 'That you act in obedience of God, clear by God's light, seeking God's reward, and that you abandon disobedience of God, clear by God's light, fearing God's punishment'. Every action must have faith as its starting point and God's reward and pleasure as its ultimate objective.

4

God kept the Night of Power undefined so that His servants would increase their efforts in obeying Him at all times, rather than concentrating their efforts on one night only. Likewise, He kept the time of answering prayers on Fridays undefined so that His servants prayed to Him throughout the day.

5

Disobedience of God is one of the most important reasons that prevent a person from making use of the best times for worship. The Prophet came out of his home to tell people the time of the Night of Power, but he saw two men quarrelling in the mosque. This was the direct cause for his forgetting its exact time. Hence, a Muslim should steer away from all sin, so that God gives him light in his heart and enables him to make the best of good times and deeds.

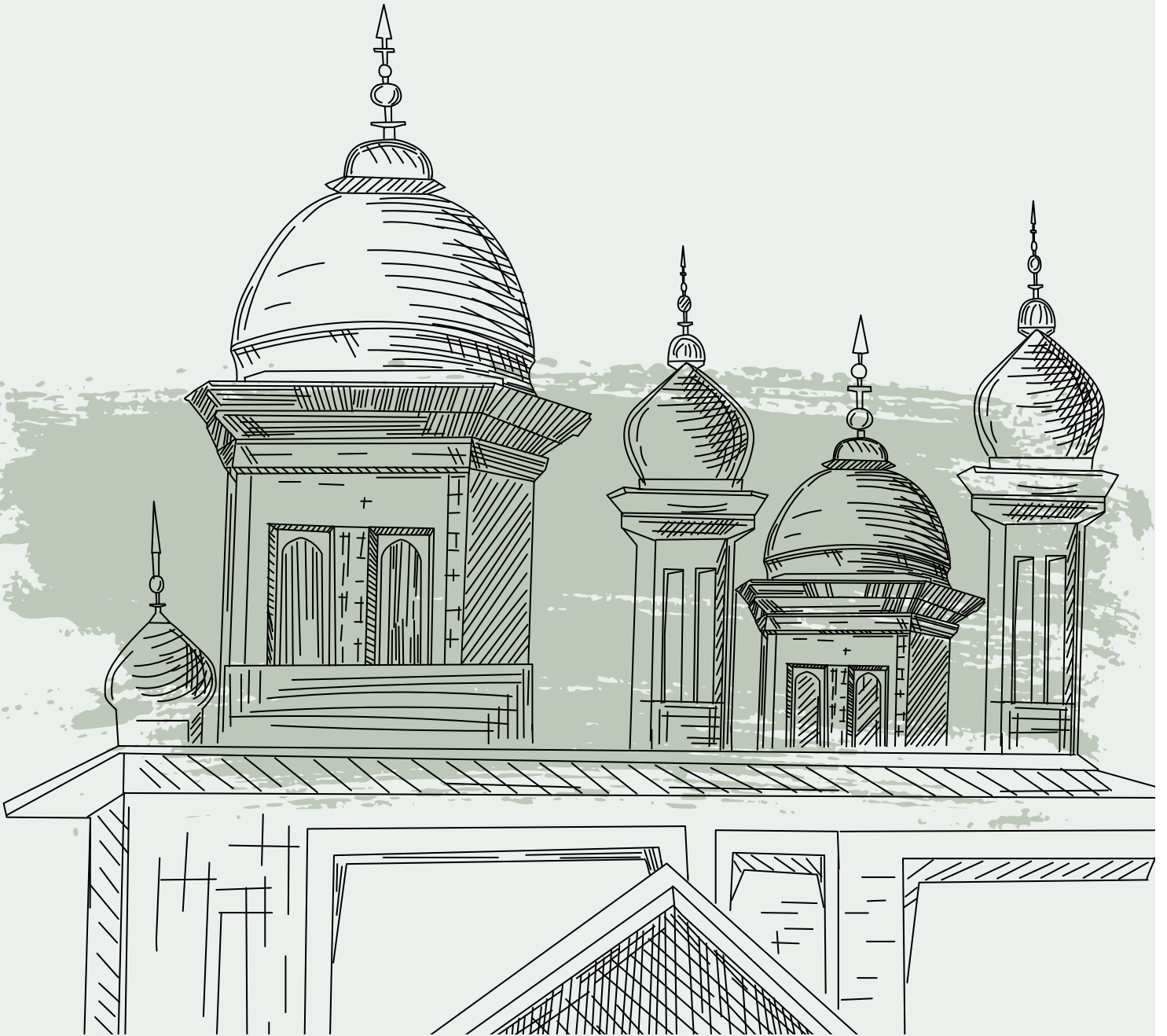
6

Everyone has two ways to earn God's forgiveness: one is hard but the hardship is coupled with the pleasure of obedience of God and being close to Him. This way is doing night worship on every night of Ramadan. The other way is easier, limiting one's worship to the Night of Power only. The first way gives complete certainty, while the second relies on probability. Needless to say, the certain way is much better.



7

Ibn Rajab said: 'The ones in love find the nights numerous. They count them awaiting the ten nights of every year. When they have these, their wait is over and they can serve the One they love'.<sup>(1)</sup>



1 Ibn Rajab, *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif*, p. 204.

