

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

- 1 This religion is easy.
- 2 No one shall pull against this religion but will be defeated.
- 3 Therefore, seek what is right and what is close to it,
- 4 and be happy.
- 5 Seek the easier two ends of the day and a portion of the night.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 39.

From the Qur'an

- ﴿God desires that you have ease. He does not desire that you be afflicted with hardship.﴾ (2: 185)
- ﴿God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear. In its favour shall be whatever good it does, and against it whatever evil it does. Our Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden such as that You laid on those before us. Our Lord, do not burden us with what we do not have the strength to bear. Pardon us, and forgive us our sins, and bestow Your mercy on us. You are our Lord Supreme; grant us victory against the unbelievers.﴾ (2: 286)
- ﴿God wants to lighten your burdens; for man has been created weak.﴾ (4: 28)

The Narrator

According to the best reports, Abu Hurayrah's name was 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Şakhr al-Dawsī. 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 and was keen to learn and memorize the Prophet's hadiths. He was the companion who narrated the largest number of the Prophet's hadiths. He died in Madinah in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us that the religion of Islam is easy because its rulings and obligations are easy. Whoever pulls against it and tries to impose on it a strict approach will not be a winner. The religion itself will defeat him and he will find himself unable to continue. Therefore, a Muslim should be keen to do what is right and try to be close to what is right. The Prophet gives us the happy news of receiving a rich reward for the same.

He then tells us about the best times for offering worship. These are the start and end of the day and towards the end of the night.



Message and Meaning



The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions that the religion of Islam has the distinctive quality of having easy rulings and obligations, so that they are within human ability. It does not place any hard obligations on people like those that were included in earlier religions. For example, it was legislated for the Children of Israel that if a man committed a sin, his repentance would not be accepted unless he was executed. If impurity fell on his clothing, the stained part had to be cut off. Hence, God describes Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the following terms: 'He lifts from them their burdens and the shackles that weigh upon them'. (7: 157)

Another aspect of the easy nature of the Islamic faith is that its obligations are subject to ability. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Abandon whatever I forbid you. When I give you an order, fulfil it as best you can'.⁽¹⁾ No zakat is due from a poor or needy person; it is an obligation only to those who own what is above the stated threshold of zakat. Hajj becomes an obligation only to a person who is able to perform it, and has the ability to cover the expenses necessary, the physical ability and means to ensure safe travel. The same applies to prayer. A Muslim who is unable to stand up in prayer may offer his prayers seated or reclining or in whatever position he can. A traveller and a sick person may not fast during Ramadan but they fast when the traveller returns home and when the patient has recovered. A person who suffers an incurable disease need not fast but he compensates for fasting by feeding a poor person for each day of the fasting. Such relaxation of rules applies to all religious duties.

Yet another aspect of the easy Islamic approach is that it gives concessions to those who need them. Thus, obligatory prayers are offered differently during battle. A traveller shortens some obligatory prayers and offers two prayers at the same time. After having performed his first ablution, i.e. *wudu*, of the day, a person may later replace washing his feet by wiping over his footwear. This concession is available for one full day for a resident and for three days and nights for a traveller.



Whoever resorts to hardship instead of ease in respect of Islamic rulings, imposing on himself what is hard will ultimately fail and find himself unable to continue. He may feel himself strong and able to persevere with his self commitment, but he will ultimately feel bored or burdened and will seek what is easy. The Prophet's guidance is the best guidance. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ said: 'I shall spend the night in worship and fast during the day throughout my life'. When the Prophet was told of this, he told him not to do so. Instead, he ordered him to fast three days a month and to sleep a part of the night and to do his voluntary worship during a part. 'Abdullāh appealed for more, relying on his strength. The Prophet told him to fast one day each three days, but he said he could do more. The Prophet ultimately told him to fast on alternate days. When 'Abdullāh attained to old age and found himself unable to keep up his fasting, he said: 'I wish I had accepted the three days a month God's Messenger (peace

1 Related by Muslim, 1337.

be upon him) suggested. That would have been dearer to me than my family and wealth'.⁽¹⁾ This occurred because he did not wish to change what he was doing during the Prophet's lifetime.



Therefore, it is important to abide by what is right, which is the middle way between exaggeration and complacency. If we cannot do what is right and best, then we should endeavour to do what is close to it.

This is an order by the Prophet to maintain a middle course in worship. If one is unable to do what is best of voluntary worship and good deeds, one should try to do what is close to it. What cannot be attained in full should not be mostly abandoned.



The Prophet then gives his community the happy news that even though they fall short of attaining the best standard in their worship, God has prepared a rich reward for them, keeping it complete, undiminished.



The Prophet was aware that people cannot attend to worship at all times. Therefore, he advised them to make the best use of the times when they are fresh, which are the beginning and end of the day. He also encouraged them to do their voluntary worship in the best and most rewarding time, which is towards the end of the night.⁽²⁾



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1131; Muslim, 1159.

2 Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 1, p. 95.

Implementation

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) uses the particle *inna* at the beginning of the hadith. It adds emphasis to the following sentence and it is frequently used in literary works and by writers and speakers. It is easy and proper to use by advocates of Islam.

2

When we consider Islamic religious duties and their easy fulfilment, as well as the concessions given to those who are ill or disabled, we realize the extent of mercy God has bestowed on us and the care He takes of us. We should respond, expressing our love of God and demonstrating that we are eager to please Him by the fulfilment of duties and by adding voluntary worship.

3

The hadith implies that refusing to avail oneself of a concession when it is needed betrays an overbearing attitude that leaves a person at a loss. When a person is in need of a concession, then the proper attitude is to follow the Sunnah and implement that concession. It is wrong to make things too hard for oneself. If a traveller during Ramadan finds fasting too difficult, he should not fast. An ill person who is burdened by standing up to pray, should pray seated. If one is starving and has nothing available except carrion or some other forbidden food, he eats of it what ensures his survival.

4

It is not permissible to be overscrupulous in matters of religion, imposing on oneself what God does not require. Excessive strictness in worship is pedantic.

5

The hadith does not say that a person who is diligent in worship does wrong. What is wrong is to charge oneself with a burden which is too heavy.

6

To adhere to the Prophet's Sunnah is better than adding to it. To fast on some days and not fast on others, and to spend a portion of the night in voluntary worship and go to sleep is a better way than fasting all the time and spending the whole night in worship. When some of his companions felt that his voluntary worship was too little and wanted to add to it, he said to them: 'By God, I am the most God-fearing among you, but I fast on some days and not on others; I spend some time at night in prayer and I go to sleep; and I marry women. Whoever dislikes my way does not belong to me'.⁽¹⁾

7

The hadith provides evidence that the proper thing is moderation in voluntary worship, because imposing a hard task on oneself and tiring oneself leads to abandoning all. God has made this religion easy to follow, and therefore it will defeat anyone who pulls hard against it. Islam is based on making things easy, not hard.

8

It is far better for a dedicated believer not to overtax himself, which may eventually tire him out and cause him to stop his voluntary worship. He should be moderate so that he will continue for a long time. The Prophet says: 'The type of action God, the Exalted, loves best is what is done most regularly, even though it is little'.⁽²⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5063; Muslim 1401.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 6464; Muslim, 783,

9

What is required of a Muslim is to exert his effort in obedience of God and to endeavour to achieve perfection in every good thing. He should endeavour to achieve perfect humility in prayer, and try to do things as best as he can. For example, a student should strive to understand all his lessons well. Everyone should endeavour to stay away from all sinful actions and fulfil all duties. Having exerted his best efforts, if he achieves most of his aims, he will have done well and gained good reward.

10

Following the Sunnah is following the middle course between two opposite extremes: too much and too little. Man should never impose too much on himself in worship, and must not neglect duties or do what is forbidden.

11

That advocates of Islam and scholars should give people the happy news that God rewards those who attend to their Islamic duties and add voluntary worship is an aspect of the Prophet's Sunnah. They must never lead a person to despair of receiving God's mercy.

12

Everyone should choose the time when he is comfortable and energetic to do his voluntary worship. If one feels lazy or tired, one should rest. One can resume when one is fresh and comfortable. This applies to worship, study and life affairs generally.

13

To spread deeds of worship over the whole day, so as to do a little at different times, is better than to do them all at one time, as one may feel physically and mentally drained at the end.

14

One aspect of God's mercy is that he has neither made night worship obligatory nor urged us to spend the entire night in worship. The Prophet says in this hadith that we should seek 'a portion of the night', so as to lighten the difficulty of night worship. Had he wished otherwise, he would have urged us to dedicate 'the night'.

15

'Ā'ishah narrated: 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) had a straw mat and he used to make of it a small compartment where he prayed at night. He would then leave it flat to sit on it during the day. People used to join him in his prayer, and then there were many of them. He turned and said [to them]: "People, do only what you can comfortably do. God is not bored until you are bored. The sort of action God loves best is what is done regularly, even though it may be little". When the people in Muhammad's household did something, they would then do it regularly'.⁽¹⁾

16

Anas narrated: 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) came into the mosque and saw a rope tied to two pillars. He asked: "What is this for?" They said: "It is for Zaynab, when she prays. If she felt lazy or sleepy, she would hold on to it". The Prophet said: "Take it off. Let everyone of you pray when he is fresh. If he feels lazy or sleepy, he sits down"⁽²⁾.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5861; Muslim, 782.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 1150; Muslim, 784.

