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Biography of the Author

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī 



Abu'l-Faraj, Zaynu'd-Dīn, 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan  was born in 736AH/1335CE in Baghdad. He inherited the name Ibn Rajab, by which he is more famously known, from his grandfather who was nicknamed 'Rajab' as he was born in the sacred month of Rajab.

He began his primary studies with his father and grandfather, who were both notable scholars of their time. He then travelled extensively to seek sacred knowledge throughout various Muslim lands, including Syria, Jerusalem, Egypt, Makkah and Madinah. On completion of his studies, he settled in Damascus and taught students of his own until the end of his life.

His most notable teacher was the great scholar and master Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. He also had the honour of studying under Zaynu'd-Dīn al-'Iraqī, Ibn an-Naqīb, Muḥammad al-Khabbāz, Dāwūd al-'Aṭār, Ibn Qādī al-Jabal, Aḥmad bin 'Abdul-Hādī al-Ḥanbalī, al-Ḥāfiẓ Al-'Alā'ī, 'Abu'l-Fatḥ al-Maydūmī and Nāsiru'd-Dīn bin al-Mulūk, may Allāh  have mercy on them all.

Ibn Rajab authored many works. Of these, the most famous in the West is his commentary of Imām Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīth, known as *The Compendium of Knowledge and Wisdom*, which has been translated into English. It is worth noting that Ibn Rajab himself initiated the work on *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, which is one of the most important commentaries of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. He passed away after completing seven volumes of this work up to the chapter of the funeral prayer. Twenty years later, Ibn Ḥajar completed this monumental work, and he is known as the main author of *Fatḥ-ul-Bārī*.

Of him, Ibn Ḥajar رحمته said:

(Ibn Rajab) was highly proficient in the science of Ḥadīth in terms of the names of reporters, their biographies, their chains of transmission, and awareness of their meanings.

Of him, Ibn Nāsirud-Dīn رحمته said:

The Shaykh, the Imām, the great scholar, the ascetic, the example, the blessing, the Ḥāfiẓ, the trustworthy, the authority, one of the ascetic Imāms and devout scholars.

Of him, Ibn Fahd al-Makkī رحمته said:

(Ibn Rajab), may Allāh have mercy on him, was a pious and self-disciplined Imām. The hearts inclined towards him with love, and the various groups united in acceptance of him. His gatherings for reminding the people were of great benefit and used to open the hearts.

Of him, Imām adh-Dhahabī رحمته said:

Our teacher, (Ibn Rajab), was one of the pious scholars; (he was) of those who renounced worldly life and abandoned positions of authority. He would speak out with the truth, even if it was bitter.

Ibn Rajab passed away in Damascus at the age of 59 on Monday, 4th RamaḌān 795AH/1393CE. He is buried in the Bāb aṣ-Ṣaghīr graveyard, and upon his bequest, he was placed next to one of the well-known Ḥanbalī scholars of the past generations, ‘Abdul-Waḥīd ibn Muḥammad ash-Shirāzī.

Ibn Rajab’s legacy still endures in 2022, and *in shā’ Allāh* - if Allāh wills - it will continue to be of benefit until the Last Day. This is a testimony to his sincerity and devotion to Allāh ﷻ. May his secret remain sanctified and perpetual divine outpourings of mercy descend upon his soul, *āmīn*.

The Virtue of Fasting

✽

It has been cited in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections¹ that Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said, *‘Every action of the son of Ādam is for him. One good deed is rewarded from ten times its equivalent to being multiplied by up to seven hundred. Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم says, “Except fasting, as it is indeed for Me exclusively, and I shall reward (the one fasting) for it. Indeed, he has abandoned his desires, food, and drink for My sake.” For the one fasting, there are two moments of joy: joy at the time of breaking the fast, and joy at meeting his Lord. The scent from the mouth of the one fasting is more fragrant to Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم than the fragrance of musk.’* In another narration it says, *‘Every action of the son of Ādam is for him except fasting; this is for Me.’*

It is related in a tradition of al-Bukhārī that [the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said], *‘Every (good) action is an expiation (for a bad deed), and fasting is for Me and I shall reward (the one fasting) for it.’* Imām Aḥmad has narrated it with slightly different wording, *‘Every (good) action of the son of Ādam is for himself an expiation (for a bad deed), except fasting; fasting is for Me, and I shall reward (the one fasting) for it.’*

As for the first tradition, in which the rewards of actions are multiplied, fasting is singled out exclusively. The reward of every single action is multiplied by at least ten to seven hundred times *except* for fasting, which is not restricted (in reward) to the multiplication of this amount. Rather, Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم multiplies its reward without restriction to a particular number, as fasting is from patience. Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم states: **Indeed those who observe patience shall be given their reward in full without measure.**² In reference to this, according to one narration, the

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī and *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim

² Qur’ān, 39:12

Prophet ﷺ called Ramaḍān *‘the month of patience’*.³ In another tradition cited by at-Tirmidhī, the Prophet ﷺ stated, *‘Fasting is half of patience.’*

Patience has three categories, all of which are encompassed in fasting:

- 1) Patience with obedience to Allāh ﷻ;
- 2) Patience with the prohibitions of Allāh ﷻ;
- 3) Patience with the decree of Allāh ﷻ that may be challenging.

For indeed, by (fasting) one is observing patience with obedience to Allāh ﷻ; patience with what Allāh ﷻ has prohibited for the one fasting with regards to desires; and patience with what the one fasting experiences (i.e., the discomfort of hunger, thirst and weakening of the body and lower-self⁴).

This state of discomfort that [sometimes] arises from good actions results in reward for the one who is in that state of obedience. Just as Allāh ﷻ states in reference to those who strive: **That is because they suffer neither thirst nor fatigue, nor hunger in the cause of Allāh, nor do they take any step to raise the anger of disbelievers, nor inflict any injury upon an enemy but is written to their credit as a deed of righteousness. Surely, Allāh wastes not the reward of the good-doers.**⁵

In reference to the virtue of the month of Ramaḍān, Salmān ﷺ narrates, *‘It is the month of patience, and the reward for patience is Paradise.’*⁶ In the tradition cited in [the work of] aṭ-Ṭabarānī, narrated from Ibn ‘Umar ﷺ it says, *‘Fasting is for Allāh ﷻ (alone), [and] no one knows the degree of reward (of this deed) except Allāh ﷻ.’*

The multiplication of the reward of actions is due to certain causative factors, such as the honour of place or time.

³ Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah

⁴ The word used in the Arabic text is نفس - *nafs*, which can be understood as the lower-self that urges to desires and appetites such as food, drink and intimacy, and sometimes rebellion. [Tr]

⁵ Qur’ān, 9:120

⁶ Ibn Khuzaimah

Sanctity of the place in which the action occurs: a good example is the reward for the ritual prayer, which is multiplied in the mosques of Makkah and Madinah, as established in the tradition of *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, ‘*A ritual prayer in this mosque of mine is better than one thousand ritual prayers in any other mosque except al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (the sacred mosque of Makkah).*’ Another narration adds, ‘*For indeed it is more virtuous.*’

Similarly, it has been narrated that (the reward) of fasting is multiplied (further) by virtue of the *Ḥaram* (sacred precinct), ‘*Whoever passes Ramaḍān in Makkah, [and] fasts and stands (in prayer) whilst present (in Makkah), it is easy for Allāh ﷻ to record for them the reward of one million Ramaḍāns observed elsewhere.*’⁷ [The tradition] also mentions other great rewards.

Sanctity of time: such as the month of Ramaḍān and the first ten days of Dhu’l-Ḥijjah. The tradition of Salmān ؓ indicates to us the virtue of Ramaḍān, ‘*Whoever does a voluntary good deed in it (Ramaḍān), has the reward of carrying out an obligatory act of worship in any another period. Whoever does an obligatory act of worship (in Ramaḍān), has a reward of seventy obligatory acts in any other period.*’

At-Tirmidhī narrates from Anas ؓ, ‘*The Prophet ﷺ was asked, “Which charity is the most virtuous?” He ﷺ replied, “That which is given during Ramaḍān.”*’ Other traditions cited in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections state that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, ‘*One ‘Umrah (voluntary pilgrimage) during Ramaḍān is given the reward of a Ḥajj (the obligatory pilgrimage),*’ or he ﷺ said that an ‘*Umrah in Ramaḍān earns a reward which is ‘equivalent to Ḥajj with me.*’

Another tradition narrates that, ‘*Indeed, the actions of the one fasting are multiplied (in reward).*’ Abū Bakr ibn Abī Maryam mentions that his *Shuyūkh* (teachers) would say, ‘When the month of Ramaḍān approaches spend in

⁷ Ibn Mājah

The Virtue of Recitation of the Qur'ān during Ramaḍān



Traditions also point to the preference of studying the Qur'ān during Ramaḍān, gathering for this purpose and reciting the Qur'ān to those who are more learned. In this lies an indication of the preference for the abundance of recitation of the Qur'ān during the month of Ramaḍān.

In the tradition of Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها who narrates from her father صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'Jibrīl عليه السلام would recite the entire Qur'ān to him صلى الله عليه وسلم once a year, and twice in the year of his صلى الله عليه وسلم passing away.'⁵⁵ In the tradition of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would study and review the Qur'ān with Jibrīl عليه السلام at night.' This indicates the preference of reciting the Qur'ān in abundance at night during Ramaḍān. For indeed the night severs preoccupation with the affairs of the day, gathers the mind, and engages the heart and tongue towards reflection, as per the verse, '**Indeed, worship in the night is more impactful and suitable for recitation.**'⁵⁶

The month of Ramaḍān has an exclusive relationship with the Qur'ān. Allāh عز وجل states: **The month of Ramaḍān is the one in which the Qur'ān was revealed.**⁵⁷ Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه stated, 'It was revealed in its entirety from the Sacred Tablet to the House of Grandeur⁵⁸ [in the lowest sky] on the Night of Power.' This is confirmed by the words of Allāh عز وجل: **Indeed We sent it (Qur'ān) down on the Night of Power.**⁵⁹ And also His words: **Indeed We revealed it (Qur'ān) on a blessed night.**⁶⁰ The tradition of 'Abīd ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم began receiving revelation of the Qur'ān in the month of Ramaḍān has already been mentioned.

⁵⁵ Al-Bukhārī

⁵⁶ Qur'ān, 73:6

⁵⁷ Qur'ān, 2:185

⁵⁸ *Bayt al-'Izzah*, is described as being in the heaven of this worldly dimension. Not much else has been mentioned about this. [Tr]

⁵⁹ Qur'ān, 97:1

⁶⁰ Qur'ān, 44:3

In the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad, Wā'thilah ibn al-Asqa' ﷺ narrated from the Prophet ﷺ 'The Scrolls of Ibrāhīm were revealed on the first night of the month of Ramaḍān, the Tawrah (Torah) was revealed on the sixth of Ramaḍān, the Injīl (Gospels) were revealed on the thirteenth of Ramaḍān, and the Qur'ān was revealed on the twenty-fourth of Ramaḍān.' The Prophet ﷺ would prolong his recitation in the night prayer during Ramaḍān more than usual. Ḥudhayfah ﷺ once prayed with the Prophet ﷺ on one night of Ramaḍān, and he ﷺ said, 'He ﷺ recited al-Baqarah, then an-Nisā', then Āle 'Imrān. Never did he ﷺ pass a verse that caused fear except he ﷺ would pause and supplicate. We had not even performed two cycles when Bilāl ﷺ came and gave the call to prayer [for *Fajr*]!' Imām Aḥmad and Nasā'ī cite 'He did not perform even four cycles of prayer [i.e., the night prayer]!'

‘Umar ﷺ ordered Ubayy ibn Ka‘ab ﷺ and Tamīm ad-Dārī ﷺ to stand in prayer with the people during the month of Ramaḍān. The Qārī would recite two hundred verses per cycle, to the point that some would lean on their staffs due to the long standing in prayer. They would not cease until the *Fajr* prayer. In one tradition, they would tie ropes between the pillars and support themselves by this means (to remain standing). In one tradition ‘Umar ﷺ gathered three masters of Qur'ān recitation and ordered for the quickest in recital to recite thirty verses with the people, the one who was medium-paced in reciting to do twenty-five verses, and that the one with the most prolonged recitation should do twenty verses. They would recite surah al-Baqarah in eight cycles of prayer during *Tarāwīḥ* of Ramaḍān. In the period of the next generation, the *Tābī‘ūn* (the successors of the Companions), those who would recite it (Sūrah al-Baqarah) in twelve (prayer) cycles would be viewed as being gentle (with the congregation). Ibn Manṣūr said that Ishāq ibn Rawāhah was asked, 'How much should one recite in *Tarāwīḥ* prayers during Ramaḍān?' 'Nothing short of ten verses,' he replied. It was then said to him, 'The congregation won't be pleased with that.' He said, 'Won't they be pleased? So then do not lead them in prayer if they are not pleased with the recital of ten verses from Sūrah al-Baqarah! Then, once you reach shorter verses, then recite the equivalent of ten verses from Sūrah al-Baqarah [in length] in each cycle of prayer.' Imām Mālik also

would dislike reciting less than ten verses [equivalent to 10 verses of Surah al-Baqarah in length].

Imām Aḥmad was asked about the traditions mentioned about ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and the different paces of recitation, and the difficulty it might impose upon people, particularly when Ramaḍān has short nights as the affair should only be guided by what the people can tolerate. So Imām Aḥmad addressed some of his companions with whom he was praying in Ramaḍān, saying, ‘These people are weak, so recite five, six, or seven (verses).’ The (one who asked the question) said, ‘I recited in this way [as directed by Imām Aḥmad] and completed the recital [of the entire Qur’ān] on the twenty-seventh night.’ Ḥasan said, ‘The one who ‘Umar رضي الله عنه ordered to lead the people in prayer would recite five to six verses.’ The statement of Imām Aḥmad alludes to adapting [the duration of] the recital based on the states of the believers, so as not to be a burden upon them. Others have also said this from among the jurists of the companions of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and others. Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه narrates, ‘The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stood for *Tarāwīḥ* on the twenty-third night for one third of the night, and on the twenty-fifth night for half the night. They asked him رضي الله عنه “Would you pray with us for the remainder of the night?” He صلى الله عليه وسلم replied, “*When a man prays with the Imām until he has departed, it is written for him (as if he prayed) for the remainder of the night.*”⁶¹

Essentially this elucidates that standing in night vigil for a third of the night, or half of it, is considered equivalent to standing in prayer for the entire night, provided that this is with the Imām. Imām Aḥmad acted on this tradition and would pray with the Imām until the Imām left (the congregation), and he would not leave until the Imām left. Some of the pious predecessors said, ‘Whoever stands for half the night (in night vigil) has indeed stood for the entire the night.’

The *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd cites a tradition narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who said, ‘*Whoever stands (in night vigil) and*

⁶¹ At-Tirmidhī