

I`tekāf

Monthly Taleem Focus Slides
June 2015

اعتكاف

What is I`tekāf?

- I`tekāf literally means to stay in one place
- In Islamic terminology I`tekāf means to stay in the mosque while fasting with the intention of doing Iba'da (عبادة)
- It can be done anytime of the year but Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to do in the last 10 days (عشرة) of Ramdhan. Thus if performed as such, it can be called مسنون اعتكاف (i.e. according to Sunnah)
- The person who performs the I`tekāf is known as Mu`takif معتكف (plural Mu'takifin معتكفين)
- The personal area where Mu'takif stays in, is called Mu'takaf معتكف

I`tekāf before Islam

- Just like Allah says in Quran about fasting that it was prescribed for nations before Islam (2:184), I`tekāf was prescribed for earlier nations

وَعَهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٦﴾ (البقرة: ١٢٦)

- ‘and We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, saying, ‘Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain therein for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate in Prayer’ (Al-Baqarah:126)

وَإِذْ ذُكِرَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾
فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾ (مريم: ١٧-١٨)

- ‘And relate *the story of Mary as mentioned* in the Book. When she withdrew from her people to a place to the east, and screened herself off from them, then We sent Our angel to her, and he appeared to her in the form of a perfect man’ (Maryam:17-18)

- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to go to cave of Hira to pray even before Islam which was a kind of I`tekāf

I`tekāf of Holy Prophet^{sa}

- Allah's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم used to practice I`tekāf in the middle ten days of Ramdhan and once he stayed in I`tekāf till the night of the twenty-first and it was the night in the morning of which he used to come out of his I`tekāf. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever was in I`tekāf with me should stay in I`tekāf for the last ten days, for I was informed (of the date) of the Night (of Qadr) but I have been caused to forget it. (In the dream) I saw myself prostrating in mud and water in the morning of that night. So, look for it in the last ten nights and in the odd ones of them. (Bukhari Kitabul I`tekāf)
- Initially Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم used to stay in I`tekāf in the middle ten days but after the dream described above he started performing it in the last ten days
- In the last year of his life he stayed in I`tekāf for 20 days (Bukhari Kitabul I`tekāf)

Blessings of I`tekāf

- There is great blessing for believers who perform the I`tekāf
- Holy Prophet ﷺ said “A Mu`takif lays himself in front of his Lord and says that I shall not move from here until you shower your mercy on me” (Durre Manthur Vol 1 pg. 202)
- Holy Prophet ﷺ further said “A person who stays in I`tekāf for one day for seeking the pleasure of his Lord, Allah places three ditches between him and the hell, the distance for each one which is greater than the distance between the East and the West” (Durre Manthur Vol 1 pg. 202)
- Holy Prophet ﷺ said regarding a person who is performing I`tekāf, “He is refraining from sin and he will be given a reward like that of one who does all kinds of good deeds” (Ibn Majah Kitabul Sayam)

Duration of I`tekāf

- Holy Prophet ﷺ used to start his I`tekāf on the morning of 20th of Ramdhan after Fajr prayers
- Since in those days the exact length of the month was not known ahead of time so sometimes the I`tekāf was 10 days and sometimes it was 11 days
- Even now when the length of the month is known ahead of time the I`tikāf should be started on the morning of 20th of Ramdhan since there are more blessings in it (Friday sermon by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IVth Feb 09, 1996)
- I`tekāf ends after Maghrib prayers on the last day of Ramdhan
- This year Ramdhan in USA will be of 30 days so you should start the I`tekāf on July 7th after Fajr and end it on July 17th after Maghrib

Where to do I`tekāf?

- I`tekāf should be done in a mosque where regular congregational prayers are offered
- If someone is living in an area where no mosque or dedicated salat center exist then one can perform I`tekāf at home in an area of the house where salat is normally offered
- If a separate area or privacy is not available in the mosque then women may perform I`tekāf at home but preference should be given to the mosque if available. Holy Prophet ﷺ and his wives used to perform I`tekāf in Masjid Nabwi
- Permission should be sought from local President or the mosque administration to build a Mu'takaf in the mosque
- Providing food for each Mu'takif is the responsibility of his family although in larger mosques sometimes to mosque administration may provide the meals

Leaving mosque during I`tekāf?

- Leaving mosque during I`tekāf is not allowed unless it is for a “legitimate need”
- “Legitimate need” is generally defined as going to washroom, taking a needed shower, etc. However, in most mosques showers and restrooms are available so even that excuse is not valid anymore
- Hazrat A`isha^{ra} says that during I`tekāf when she used to come home for using the washroom, if anyone was sick in the house she would ask about their health while walking by and would not stay for any matter
- Once Prophet’s wife Hazrat Safia^{ra} came to meet him at the mosque during I`tekāf. Holy Prophet ﷺ left the mosque to escort her back to her house because it was late at night and the house was some distance away from mosque (Sunan Abu Daud)
- Person can attend the religious programs that might be happening inside the mosque such as Darsul Quran

Miscellaneous Issues Related to I`tekāf

- Keeping fast is mandatory for I`tekāf
- For women, if menstrual cycle starts during I`tekāf then they must end their I`tekāf
- If one is unable to keep fast due to a medical reason or old age then one should spend his time in prayer and Dhikr according to ones ability. However, it cannot be called I`tekāf
- Masnoon I`tekāf (مسنون اعتكاف) is for 10 or 11 days. However, if one is unable to stay for the full I`tekāf then one should make intention for however many days he is able to stay. One day or even less can be spent in I`tekāf and it's reward is with Allah. It should be encouraged to keep the spirit alive. Allah will grant that person the ability to perform longer I`tekāf in future years
- A Mu`takif is not prohibited from speaking to others during I`tekāf (and in fact it is discouraged to stay completely quiet). However, one should refrain from idle talk and other people who are not performing I`tekāf should not engage a Mu`takif in unnecessary talk

What to do during I`tekāf?

- One should spend one's time in
 - Offering Nawafil (نوافل)
 - Doing Tilawat of Quran (تلاوتِ قرآن)
 - Dhikr-e-Ilahi (ذکرِ الہی)
 - Durood (درود)
 - Istighfar (استغفار)
 - Reading books of Ahadith
 - Reading books of Promised Messiah^{as} and other religious texts
- One should refrain from
 - Total silence
 - Engaging in idle talk
 - Excessive sleep
 - Reading non-religious books
 - Spending time on gadgets (except to read religious books)
 - Disturbing other Mu`takifin
 - Any business or job related activity
 - Leaving the mosque without a legitimate reason

Night of Destiny ليلة القدر

- As explained earlier the hadith from Sahih Bukhari, Holy Prophet ﷺ advised us to seek Lailatul Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramdhan
- Hazrat Masih Ma'ud^{as} said that if the night of 27th falls on Friday then it is often the night of Lailatul Qadr based on his experience
- Hadrat 'A'isha^{ra} relates that I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'O Prophet of Allah! If I realize that the night is the Lailatul Qadr what should I pray?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ stated that you should pray the following:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوفٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

“O Allah! You are the Great Pardoner, You love those who pardon others. Hence I seek Your pardon” (Tirmidhi Kitabud Da'wat)