

Ruwa

Beliefs and Practices on *Laylah al-Barā'ah* or *Laylah al-Nisf min Sha'ban*.¹

Mawlana Irshaad Sedick

Traditionally the night of the 15th of *Sha'ban* or *Laylah al-Barā'ah* is known as *Ruwa aand* in Cape Town, South Africa. Every year on this night, Muslims gather in their local *masjid* to commemorate this night as one of *die groot aande* (the big nights). The ubiquitous practice throughout the Cape would then be to recite *sūrah Yāsīn* three times. Each recitation would be followed by a special supplication (as seen below) and in the past each recitation would be accompanied by 3 specific intentions, although this part is fairly uncommon these days. These intentions are; 1. to be blessed with a long life spent in the obedience of Allah; 2. to have calamities diverted; and 3. for independence of having to ask people along with a good ending to one's life. Thereafter the *imām* would address the gathering with a short talk about the significance of the night.

This paper seeks to explore the origins of these practices and the beliefs which espouse them. I will attempt to shed light on the Islamic legal ruling pertaining to the belief of the significance of this night, the practice of gathering therein, reciting *surah Yāsīn* thrice, with those intentions, and reading the special supplication after each recitation. In a previous paper titled, *Sha'ban and Laylat al-Barā'ah - What you need to know*, I have addressed the significance of the month of *Sha'ban* from various aspects, including the issue of fasting there in generally and on the 15th day especially, and thus I will not revisit those issues in this paper.

The Origins

As with many other religious and spiritual practices of the Cape, such as the *Rātibal-Haddād*, the aforementioned practices of the 15th of *Sha'ban* stem from the *Tasawwuf* practices of Tarim, Haḍramawt in Yemen.

After 'Asr on the 14th of *Sha'ban* the scholars in Tarīm lead the people on a visit of the Zanbal graveyard. At the grave of al-Faqih al-Muqaddam they read *sūrah Yāsīn* three times with the same three intentions as mentioned above. After each recitation they read the special supplication (which is the exact supplication read in the Cape

¹Layl means night in Arabic. Al-Barā'ah means .Laylah al-Nisf min Sha'ban means the night of the half of the Islamic month Sha'ban.

and many other parts of the world). Thus it may safely be concluded that the practice stems from the *sūfi* practice of the *Bā'Alawi tarīqah* (spiritual order) of Yemen.

Further Origins

The entire ritual i.e. *Yāsīn* X 3, with those intentions and the *du'āh* appears to be based on the belief that the 15th of *Sha'bān* is **in fact** the night in which decree is dispersed, books of deeds are sealed with new ones opened, and the affairs of the forthcoming year are entrusted to the Angels. Where does this belief come from?

The answer to this question is a combination of a Quranic verse, the *tafsīr* of this verse and a number of *aḥadīth* of varying degrees of authenticity.

Firstly the verses in the *Qur'ān* – At the beginning of *sūrah al-Dukhān*, Allah ﷻ makes mention of a night, a blessed night, a night in which He sent It (the *Qur'ān*) down and the night in which is decreed every *ḥakīm* (well measured, calculated and wise) matter:

(1. Ha Mim.) (2. By the manifest Book that makes things clear.) (3. We sent it down on a blessed night. Verily, We are ever warning.) (4. Therein (that night) is decreed every matter, Hakim.) (5. As a command from Us. Verily, We are ever sending,) (6. (As) a mercy from your Lord. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.)

Which night is this? Exegetically speaking, how would one determine the exact nature of this night? These questions are important since the practices which have been elaborated on earlier stem from the opinion that this night is the 15th night of the month of *Sha'bān*. Thus the primary question arises; where does this opinion come from and is it the orthodox and majority view?

To answer this question we turn our attention to the science of *Qur'ānic* Exegesis or *Tafsīr*. The erudite scholars of *Qur'ānic* Exegesis (*mufasssīrūn*) unanimously express that the primary source of exegesis for the *Qur'ān* is the *Qur'ān* itself. This is expressed in the exegetical Arabic idiom, “*al-Qur'ān yufasssīruba ḍuhuba ḍan*” (unambiguous sections of the *Qur'ān* elucidate the ambiguous sections thereof). The next undisputed source of *Qur'ānic* Exegesis (according to the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*) is the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The third source of orthodox exegesis lies within the opinions of the students of the Prophet ﷺ, namely the *sahābah* (companions), followed by their students, the *tābi'īn* (successors).²

² This epistemological hierarchy of the sources of *Qur'ānic* exegesis is taken from the classical and contemporary, traditional works of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (the Sciences of the Qur'ān). For a classical

The *Qur'ān*'s Exegesis:

The aforementioned *āyāt* of *sūrah al-Dukhān* bare a remarkable resemblance to another well-known passage in the *Qur'ān*, namely, *sūrah al-Qadr*. Observe the similarities between these two sets of *āyāt* (*al-Dukhān* and *al-Qadr* respectively):

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
حَم (1) وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (2) إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ (3) فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ
حَكِيمٍ (4) أَمْرًا مِنْ عِنْدِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ (5) رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (6)

(1. *Ha Mim.*) (2. *By the manifest Book that makes things clear.*) (3. *We sent it down on a blessed night. Verily, We are ever warning.*) (4. *Therein (that night) is decreed every matter, Hakim.*) (5. *As a command from Us. Verily, We are ever sending,*) (6. *(As) a mercy from your Lord. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.*)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (1) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (2) لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ (3) تَنْزِيلُ
الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ (4) سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ (5)

(1. *Verily, We have sent it down in the Night of Al-Qadr.*) (2. *And what will make you know what the Night of Al-Qadr is*) (3. *The Night of Al-Qadr is better than a thousand months.*) (4. *Therein descend the angels and the Ruh (Gabriel) by their Lord's permission with every matter.*) (5. *There is peace until the appearance of dawn.*)

Both passages speak of the night in which *IT* (the *Qur'ān*) was revealed, except that the one is more detailed than the other. Whilst *sūrah al-Dukhān* calls it a *blessed* night, *sūrah al-Qadr* elaborates which *blessed* night that was i.e. the Night of *Qadr* (divine decree). Furthermore, *sūrah al-Dukhān* speaks of the phenomenon of the decree of “every well-measured/*hakīm* matter”, and *sūrah al-Qadr* addresses this same phenomenon, but with more detail i.e. *therein descend the angels and the Rūh (the archangel Gabriel) by their Lord's permission with every matter.* It is thus quite clear that the *āyah* in *sūrah al-Dukhān* refers to *Laylah al-Qadr* and not *Laylah al-Nisf min Shā'bān*.

Where, then, did the other opinion (that *sūrah al-Dukhān* refers to *Laylah al-Nisf min Shā'bān*) come from? In the *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr, the author attributes this opinion to one of the successors, a student of the companion, 'AbduLlāh ibn 'Abbās, by the name of 'Ikrimah.

The following is an extract from the *Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr*:

source, refer to Jalaluddīn al-Suyūṭī's *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. For a more contemporary source, refer to *Manāhil al-'Irḥān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad 'Abdal-'Azīm al-Zurqānī.

يقول تعالى مخبرا عن القرآن العظيم: إنه أنزله في ليلة مباركة، وهي ليلة القدر، كما قال تعالى: {إنا أنزلناه في ليلة القدر} [القدر: 1] وكان ذلك في شهر رمضان، كما قال: تعالى: {شهر رمضان الذي أنزل فيه القرآن} [البقرة: 185] وقد ذكرنا الأحاديث (1) الواردة في ذلك في "سورة البقرة" بما أغنى عن إعادته.

ومن قال: إنها ليلة النصف من شعبان -كما روي عن عكرمة- فقد أبعد النجعة فإن نص القرآن أنها في رمضان. والحديث الذي رواه عبد الله بن صالح، عن الليث، عن عقيل عن الزهري: أخبرني عثمان بن محمد بن المغيرة بن الأحنس أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "تقطع الأجال من شعبان إلى شعبان، حتى إن الرجل لينكح ويولد له، وقد أخرج اسمه في الموتى" (2) فهو حديث مرسل، ومثله لا يعارض به النصوص...

وقوله: {فيها يفرق كل أمر حكيم} أي: في ليلة القدر يفصل من اللوح المحفوظ إلى الكتابة أمر السنة، وما يكون فيها من الأجال والأرزاق، وما يكون فيها إلى آخرها. وهكذا روي عن ابن عمر، وأبي مالك، ومجاهد، والضحاك، وغير واحد من السلف. وقوله: {حكيم} أي: محكم لا يبدل ولا يغير.

Allah tells us that He revealed the magnificent *Qur'ān* on a blessed night, *Laylah al-Qadr* (the Night of Decree), as He says elsewhere: (Verily, We have sent it down in the Night of *Al-Qadr*) (97:1). This was in the month of *Ramaḍān*, as Allah tells us: (The month of *Ramaḍān* in which was revealed the *Qur'ān*) (2:185). We have already quoted the relevant *ḥadīths* in (the *tafsīr* of) *sūrah Al-Baqarah*, and there is no need to repeat them here. Whosoever says that this refers to *Laylah al-Niṣf min Sha'bān* (the night of the half of *Shā'bān*), as reported from 'Ikrimah, then that opinion is far from the truth, since the unambiguous text of the *Qur'ān* proclaims that the revelation commenced in *Ramaḍān*. The *mursal*³ *ḥadīth* which is reported by 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mughīrah ibn

al-Akhnas, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "decrees are set out from *Sha'bān* to *Sha'bān* to such an extent of who a person will marry, the children to be born and the names of those decreed to die". This type of evidence (*mursal ḥadīth*) cannot override unambiguous and authentic evidence.

(Therein (that night) is decreed every matter, *hakīm*) means, on *Laylah al-Qadr*, the decrees are transferred from *Al-Lawḥ Al-Mahfūz* (the divinely preserved tablet which contains the knowledge of everything) to the (angelic) scribes who write down the decrees of the (coming) year including life spans, provisions, and what will happen until the end of that year. This was narrated from Ibn 'Umar, Mujāhid, AbūMālik, Ad-Ḍaḥḥāk and others

³ A *mursal ḥadīth* refers to a statement of the Prophet as reported by a Successor (*tābi'ī*), without mentioning who the intermediary is, thus having a missing link in its chain of transmission. However, as I have presented in my previous paper on the significance of the 15th night of *Sha'bān*, there are other evidences of various strengths which also allude to some issues of decree which take place on this night, such as the names of those to die in the year to come and the presentation of the books of deeds to Allah Y. Allah Y knows best.

among the pious predecessors of the first three generations of Muslims. The word “*ḥakīm*” refers to decided or confirmed matters which cannot be changed or altered.

This extract of exegesis by Ibn Kathīr proves that only one successor (*tābi‘ī*) i.e. ‘Ikrimah, the freed slave of ‘AbduLlāh ibn ‘Abbās, held the view that the opening verses of *sūrah al-Dukhān* refers to *Laylah al-Nisf min Sha‘b ān*. His view apparently contradicts the exegesis based on the primary sources of *tafsīr*, namely, the *Qur’ān* itself, the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ (in his elaboration of the events of *Laylah al-Qadr*⁴), the views of the companions and the overwhelming majority of successors as well. In the sciences of *Hadīth*, such a view would be deemed anomalous/*shādh* (when a reliable narrator contradicts one or a group of more reliable narrators).

In light of this information, it seems as though the motivation for the recitation of *sūrah Yāsīn* thrice with those intentions does not really coincide with the significance of this particular night, but rather with the night of *Laylah al-Qadr*.

Furthermore, whilst reciting *sūrah Yāsīn* or any other *sūrah/s* of the *Qur’ān*, whether once, twice or three hundred times is completely permissible or even recommended, the following must be stated: the institutionalisation of specifically reciting this *sūrah*, three times on this specific night with these specific intentions, does not come from the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ, nor his illustrious companions. This, by itself, does not render the traditional practice of reciting *sūrah Yāsīn* three times as problematic. But if this practice becomes ritualistic, such that people believe that it is a part of the legislated sunnah/ shariah and that it must be done in this particular way, on this particular night and for those specific intentions, then it would result in innovating into the religion that which is not part of it. In other words, despite the apparent misunderstanding of the significance of this night, the practice of reciting *sūrah Yāsīn* thrice is still acceptable, as long as the general public know that this traditional practice is not obligatory nor sunnah. If people believe that “it must be so” then it poses a problem.

The Supplication (*Du‘āh*)

اللهم يا ذا المن لا يمن عليه احد يا ذا الجلال والإكرام يا ذا الطول والانعام، لا إله إلا أنت ظهر اللاجئين و جار المستجيرين و امان الخائفين اللهم ان كنت كتبتني عندك في ام الكتاب شقيا أو محروما أو مطرودا أو مقترا علي من الرزق فامح اللهم بفضلك شقاوتي وحرمانني وطردي واقتار رزقي وثبتني عندك في ام الكتاب سعيدا ومرزوقا للخيرات فانك قلت وقولك الحق في كتابك المنزل على لسان نبيك المرسل يمحو الله ما يشاء ويثبت و عنده ام الكتاب.

إلهيا التجاليا لأعظم في ليلة النصف من شهر شعبان المعظم المكرم التي يفرق فيها الكلام حكيمو بيبر ما

⁴Any classical work of *tafsīr* would be replete with the significance of *Laylah al-Qadr* as taught by the Prophet ﷺ.

نتكشفتنا من ابلاء ما نعلمو ما لا نعلمو ما انتبها علمنا انك انت الاله عز الاكرم.
وصلنا لله جلسينا محمد وعلنا هو صحبه وسلم.

*AllāhummayāDhā 'l-Mannilāyamannu `alayhiaḥad,
yāDhā 'l-Jalāli wa 'l-IkrāmyāDhā 'ḥ-Ḥūliwa 'l-An `ām.
Lāilāhaila Anta.*

*Ḥahara 'l-lāji 'īnwaJāru 'l-mustajirīn wa Amānu 'l-khā 'ifīn.
Allāhumma in kuntakatabtanī `indaka fī ummu 'l-Kitābi
shaqīyan aw maḥrūman aw maṭrūdan aw muqataran `alayya mina 'r-rizq
famḥu-llāhumma bi-faḥlikashaqāwatī wa ḥurmāni wa ḥurdī
wa iqtārarizqī wa thabitnī `indaka fī ummi 'l-kitābisa `īdan
wa marzūqan li 'l-khayrāti
fa-innakaqulta wa qawlu 'l-ḥaqq
fī kitābik al-munzal
`ala lisāninabīyyika 'l-mursal:
yamḥullāhumāyashā'u wa yuthbitu wa `indahU Ummu 'l-Kitāb.
Ilāhī bi 't-tajallī al-ā`azhami fī lalayti 'n-niṣṣī
min shahrisha `bāni 'l-mu`azhami 'l-mukarrami
'llatīyufraqufihākulluamrinḥakīmin wa yubram,
an takshifa `annā mina 'l-balā`imāna`lamu
wa mālāna`lamu wa mā Anta bihiā`alamu
innaka Anta al-A`azzu 'l-Akram.*

Wašalla-Allāhu `alā sayyidinā Muḥammadin wa `alāālihi wa šāḥbihi wa sallam.

O Allah, Tireless Owner of Bounty. O Owner of Sublimity, Honor, Power, and Blessings.

There is no Allah except You, the Support of refugees and Neighbor of those who seek nearness, Guardian of the fearful.

O Allah, if you have written in Your Book that I be abject, deprived, banished, and tight-fisted,

then erase O Allah, through Your bounty,
my misery, deprivation, banishment, and stinginess
and establish me with You as happy, provided with blessings,
for surely You have said—and Your Word is True—

in Your Revealed Book on the tongue of Your Messenger,
“Allah blots out or confirms what He pleases, and with Him is the Mother of Books.” (13:39)

My God, by the Great Manifestation of the Night of the middle of the Noble Month of Sha`bān

“in which every affair of wisdom is made distinct and authorized,”(44:4)
remove from us calamities—those we know and those we do not know,

and Thou knowest best—for surely You are the Most Mighty, the Most Generous.
May Allah bless Muhammad and his Family and Companions.

Analysis of the Du'ah:

The first observation about this supplication is that it is not a Quranic, nor Prophetic supplication and does not stem from the teachings of the companions or successors either. Again this is arguably not a problem as one is allowed to supplicate to Allah in any way which is appropriate, bearing in mind that the supplications of the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* are always superior.

There are however, two problems with this specific supplication. Firstly the supplication clearly addresses the night of the 15th of *Sha'bān* as the night in which divine decree is dispersed. This has already been rectified above with the exegesis of the opening verses of *sūrah al-Dukhān* i.e. it takes place on *Laylah al-Qadr* and not on the 15th night of *sha'bān*.

The bigger problem however is one involving *'aqīdah* or creed. In the supplication there is a plea to Allah to change divine decree which has been written in the *Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* (the divinely preserved tablet which contains the knowledge of everything).

There are two types of decree (*qada*) according to classical traditional *'aqīdah*. One is called *mu'allaq* or suspended decree. This type of decree can change based on ones supplications, good deeds, charities or because of some difficulty one might experience etc. This is what the Prophet ﷺ meant when he said that nothing changes decree except *du'ah*. The second type of divine decree is absolute, unchangeable or *mubram*. This type, according to classical traditional Islamic creed cannot change and asking Allah to change it is tantamount to asking Allah for that which He has forbidden.

One could possibly debate these technicalities, but the question is why should someone debate them? This is not a supplication which was taught by the Prophet ﷺ or his companions, so why would one insist on defending and repeating it when there are hundreds if not thousands of authentic, sound and problem free supplications from the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* which may be recited at any time? If there is no reason other than tradition and culture, then it is unacceptable to perpetuate a supplication that contains elements which challenge well established orthodox beliefs.

The Great Virtue of this night.

There is great virtue of *Laylah al-Nisf min Sha' b ān* which is clearly mentioned in the following evidences:

From Abdullah bin Amr, “ The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Allah ﷻ inspects His creation on the night of the half of *Sha' b ān* and forgives all of His slaves except for two, those who harbour ill feelings and the murderer”[Ahmad and others]⁵

“Allah ﷻ inspects His creation on the night of the half of *Sha' b ān* and forgives all of His slaves except for two, the polytheist and those who harbour ill feelings”.⁶

Similar narrations are mentioned in other books as well, such as the Sunan of Ibn Mājah, the Sunan of Tirmidhī, the Muṣannaf of Ibn Abī Shaybah, the books of al-Bayhaqī, the Musnad of al-Bazzār and others.

Al-Mubarakpuri (Commentator of the *Jami'* of Imām at-Tirmidhī) writes, after relating many *aḥādīth* about the importance of this night, “You should know that a sufficient number of *ḥadīth* has been narrated confirming the virtues of the 15th night of *Sha' b ān*” ... “The sum of all these *aḥādīth* presents strong evidence against the one who thinks there is no proof for the virtue of the 15th night of *Sha' b ān*” and Allah knows best. [Tuḥfatul Aḥwadhī Volume 003: Page. 365-367]

What may be drawn from the ḥadīth regarding *Laylah al-Barā'ah*, besides the tremendous virtue of Allah's forgiveness on the night, are the lessons about who will not be forgiven and the warning to not be from amongst them.

The two types of people mentioned the most are the *mushrik* (polytheist) and the *mushāḥin* (the one who harbours ill feelings).

Shirk (polytheism) is of two kinds, the major and the minor. The major form of *shirk* is the heinous crime of actually associating partners with Allah's ﷻ divinity. The minor form is less conspicuous and much more difficult to detect, as it is a hidden quality within the spiritual heart. It is called *riyā* (doing some act of worship for the sake of being noticed by others or for some other achievement, besides earning Allah's ﷻ pleasure) and is a quality that may emanate at the time of performing any kind of *'ibādah* (act of worship). The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

⁵Shu'aib al-'Arna'ūṭ, in his notes on the *Musnad Ahmad*, says that it is authentic due to supportive evidence; this particular chain is weak due to 'Abdullah bin Lahī'ah.

⁶*Silsilah as-Sahīḥah* of al-Albāni, who says that it is authentic and he references the following compilations of hadith: al-Ṭabrānī; Ibn Ḥibbān; al-Bayhaqī; Majma' al-Zawāhid of al-Haythamī.

warned us to beware of the *shirk al-aṣghar* (the minor form of *shirk*) and when he ﷺ was asked to elaborate he ﷺ responded that it is *riyā*.

By Allah ﷻ depriving the *mushrik* of His ﷻ forgiveness, both the major and minor forms of *shirk* are included and the manner in which to ensure one's safety from such deprivation is the rectification and reformation of the heart which is the factory of our intentions. When the machines of the factory (the heart) are working properly, then the products (the intentions) would have no flaws.

The *mushāḥin* (the one who harbours ill feelings such as enmity or grudges) is also deprived. It is therefore necessary to rid oneself of all such 'destroyers of the soul' before *Laylat al-Barā'ah*, lest we be deprived of Allah's forgiveness.

What is required in order to free oneself from *shahnah* (ill-feelings), is to inspect your heart and to be very honest withoneself. 'Do I have any such feelings against anyone, whether they wronged me or not? Is this worth missing out on Allah's ﷻ forgiveness?'

One should also make sure that no one harbours such ill feelings against you, thereby saving them from being deprived of Allah's Mercy and to save yourself from the punishment of harming others, if you have done something that caused those feelings. One should not seek the forgiveness and good relations of those with whom terms are already of a good nature, but rather with those who, between you and them there is no peace, friendship or Islamic love.

Among those who will also not be forgiven as mentioned in the various narrations (some of which are weak) are: Those who cut family ties, those males who drag their clothing (out of pride) beneath their ankles, those who habitually drink wine (addict) andthe fornicator/adulterator (all these people will only be excluded from the general forgiveness of the night, if they have not repented).

One cannot help but to notice that Allah ﷻ has made the condition of His forgiveness on this great night that one should not befrom the aforementioned categories of people. It appears as though Allah ﷻ is preparing His slaves for the holy month of *Ramaḍān* in two ways. Firstly, by ridding them of evils (such as corrupted intentions, ill feelings, bad habits like drinking alcohol or taking drugs and fornication to mention a few) that would deprive them of *Ramaḍān*'s blessings in any case and secondly by then forgiving His slaves, so that they may enter the holy month of *Ramaḍān* with a clean slate, ready to derive maximum benefits from the glorious month.

The Gathering in the *Masājid* on This Night.

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalī, in his *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif*, discusses that in the time of the successors, they started differing over whether they should gather in the mosques for collective worship on this night or whether they should remain in their homes and worship individually. This means that there is a precedent among the pious predecessors of the first three generations of Muslims for gathering on nights such as these, but this is only mentioned here for the benefit of those who feel that they need a precedent to gather in the mosques on a specific night. In reality, just as the issue of reciting *sūrah Yāsīn*, gathering in the mosques is generally always a good thing. The only time it becomes problematic is when people start believing that they must or are recommended to gather on a specific night such as the night under discussion, when the Prophet ﷺ and his companions did not specifically recommend that. If it is well known that it's not a Sunnah, but a good custom then it should not be a problem. When people start frowning upon those who do not join communal gatherings for occasions such as these, then caution should be taken as it may be a sign that a custom has become an institutionalised act of worship.

The Reality

This is purely my own opinion and observation. It appears to me as though many people amongst the general public *do* believe that *sūrah Yāsīn* must be recited thrice, that the *du'āh* must follow it and that one must go to the mosque on this night. If that is not the case, then all one has to do is say, “let's not gather for *Ruwa* this year and instead let's make *'ibādah* (worship) at home with our families”, or perhaps at the masjid, say to the gathering, “this year we will not be reciting *Yāsīn* nor will we make the specific *du'āh* which we usually do, but instead we will learn the tafsīr of *sūrah Yāsīn* or the verses of *Ramaḍān* which will help us in the coming days” etc. What would the community's response be? If we can envisage that we could, with some wisdom make those suggestions or similar, without causing havoc and upsetting the majority, then I believe that there is no problem with the traditional practices. If we can't fathom the idea of mentioning that, because of the reactions which we know we might receive, then we have to ask ourselves, “is it still just an acceptable and praiseworthy custom which brings the community together in the *masjid* or have we innovated into Allah's religion that which He did not?”

There are no SPECIFIC OR PRESCRIBED acts of *'ibādah* from the *Qurān* or authentic *Sunnah* that I am aware of, but any good deeds performed with the right intention on this night such as *Ṣalāh*, recitation of *Qurān*, *Dhikr* or *'Itikāf* may be performed, as long as it is known that it is voluntary and any person who does not wish to take part is not blame-worthy of anything. Allah knows best.