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Rabī'ul Awwal: The Blessed Month of the Prophet's Birth

The month of Rabī'ul Awwal holds immense significance for Muslims around the world, as it marks the birth of Nabi Muḥammad ﷺ, an event that changed the course of history. Following the remarkable signs surrounding the birth of Nabi Muḥammad ﷺ, his arrival was met with immense joy, reverence, and happiness. Born into the noble family of the Quraysh, he was entrusted to the care of his mother, Āminah bint Wahb. Despite the miraculous signs preceding his birth, Āminah faced the trials of motherhood with unwavering faith.

Immediately after his birth, Nabi Muḥammad ﷺ was placed in the care of his wet nurse, Ḥalimah al-Sa'diyyah RA, from the Banu Sa'd tribe. This was a common practice among the Arabs of that time, ensuring the child's health and nurturing in a rural environment. This practice highlights the important role that natural surroundings play in a child's development.

Ḥalimah RA, renowned for her virtuous character and lineage, accepted the responsibility with great honour and dedication. Her household was blessed abundantly with the arrival of the Nabi ﷺ, and she experienced many blessings and Barakah. Under her care, Nabi Muḥammad ﷺ thrived in the peaceful desert environment, which was believed to be beneficial for his health and growth.

The naming of the Nabi ﷺ was of great significance. His grandfather, 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, chose the name "Muḥammad", a name that was both unique and deeply meaningful. Muḥammad, meaning "the praised one," was selected in a prophetic manner, reflecting the honour and distinction of his future role. 'Abdul Muṭṭalib and other family members recognised the exceptional nature of this child and took great pride in giving him a name that would become revered by billions around the world. The significance of giving good Islamic names to our newborns is highlighted by the example of Nabi Muḥammad ﷺ, whose name, chosen with profound meaning and foresight, reflects the honour and distinction that names can bestow upon an individual.

Thus, from the very beginning, Nabi Muḥammad ﷺ was surrounded by an aura of blessing and significance, setting the stage for his pivotal role in shaping the course of history and guiding humanity towards everlasting peace, prosperity, advancement, and success.

- Maulana Burhaan Mehtar

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The Character of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the Role of Abstinence (from the unlawful) in the Life of a Muslim

The character of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ serves as the highest standard for Muslims who seek spiritual purity and closeness to Allah ﷻ (Qurb). A key characteristic of his noble character was his profound sense of self-restraint and contentment, known as 'Iffah (abstinence). This virtue involves refraining from unlawful desires and choosing what is Ḥalāl. The Prophet ﷺ emphasised this repeatedly, teaching that abstinence safeguards the soul from temptations and elevates spiritual excellence.

In one narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: ذُو سُلْطَانٍ مُقْسِطٌ مُوَفَّقٌ، وَرَجُلٌ رَجِيمٌ رَقِيقُ الْقَلْبِ لِكُلِّ ذِي قُرْبَى وَمُسْلِمٍ، وَغَفِيفٌ مُتَعَفِّفٌ ذُو عِيَالٍ

"The people of Paradise are three, a just successful ruler, a man who shows mercy to his relatives, and a contented man who refrains from what is unlawful" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim). This highlights that self-discipline, by avoiding what is forbidden and excessive desires, is a means to attain Paradise. The Qur'ān reinforces this in Sūrah An-Nazī'āt (79:40-41), stating that those who control their desires and fear Allah ﷻ will be rewarded with Paradise.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ continuously sought divine assistance in developing and maintaining virtues, including self-control and abstinence. One of his regular supplications was: "O Allah, I ask You for guidance, piety, self-control, and self-sufficiency". (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim) This simple yet profound prayer encapsulates the essence of a believer's journey towards spiritual and moral refinement.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ did not only live by the values of chastity and abstinence; he actively encouraged his followers to do the same. Chastity and abstinence are essential traits for a Muslim. They lead to personal spiritual strength, build family and community relationships, and protect societies from corruption. By controlling desires, a believer preserves his dignity, his family's honour, and ultimately helps cultivate a society grounded in ethical and spiritual principles.

Abstinence also extends to wealth, as demonstrated in the Ḥadīth where the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever refrains from seeking the wealth of others, Allah will provide for him". (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and Bukhārī) This principle of restraint also applies to speech, with the Prophet ﷺ stressing that Muslims should guard their tongues and speak only what is good. Additionally, restraint with food highlights the importance of consuming only what is lawful (Ḥalāl) and being content with it, avoiding excess.

The character of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ serves as a guiding example for Muslims, especially in the practice of abstinence. His teachings on controlling desires, avoiding unlawful wealth, and guarding one's tongue show that abstinence leads to spiritual growth and societal harmony. By following these values, Muslims can fulfill their duties to Allah, strengthen community bonds, and attain the reward of Paradise.

- Mufti Abdul Kareem



The Obligation of Seeking Knowledge

Anas ibn Malik (RA) reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: "ظَلَبَ الْعِلْمَ فَرِيضَةً عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ"

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim". (Sunan Ibn Mājah:244).

Seventeen Year Separation from Family

Abdur Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim al-Uṭaqi al-Miṣri was a scholar of the second century Hijri and a student of Imām Mālik RA. He explains his story: "I used to visit Imām Mālik everyday just before Fajr, as I found it most appropriate to ask him questions relating to Fiqh at that time. Sometimes, I would recline at his doorstep and sleep would overpower me. Imām Mālik used to proceed to the masjid and I would not even realise him passing by.

A slave girl would awaken me, saying, 'Your master has left. He is not negligent like you are! His age is forty-nine, and he regularly performs Fajr Ṣalāh with the Wuḍū he makes for 'Ishā' Ṣalāh.'

Ibn al-Qāsim continues, "I spent seventeen years at the door of Imām Mālik. I did not indulge in any business transactions during this time. One day, I was in his company, when the Ḥujjāj of Egypt arrived. Amongst them was a young man who was veiled. He greeted Imām Mālik and asked, 'Is there anyone amongst your students by the name of Ibn al-Qāsim? Imām Mālik RA, pointed to me. The young man came and kissed me on the forehead. I perceived a sweet scent emanating from his body, the scent that is common with young boys.

'To my surprise, this was my son! Ibn al-Qāsim had left in pursuit of knowledge, while his wife was pregnant with this young man.'

Lesson of the story.

The illustrious 'Ulamā' of Islam made great sacrifices in pursuit of knowledge. Poverty, hunger, separation from family and travelling over vast distances were some of the challenges they endured. But, in their quest for Islamic knowledge these difficulties were insignificant. It is due to their determined efforts that Islamic knowledge has been extensively and meticulously transmitted in its pristine form for generations.

Reference: Tartīb al Madārik: Vol.1, page: 53 (Pearls of the path)

- Maulana Eshfaq Akbar



Dhikr: A Path to Purifying the Soul

Dhikr refers to the remembrance of Allah ﷻ. Dhikr plays a crucial role in the purification of the soul. Through the lens of Tazkiyah, Dhikr is a powerful tool that helps a person cleanse their heart and draw closer to Allah ﷻ.

Tazkiyah is about purifying the heart from spiritual diseases like pride, jealousy, and greed. Dhikr helps in this process by constantly reminding the believer of Allah's ﷻ presence, keeping the heart focused on Him rather than worldly desires. When we engage in Dhikr, we fill our hearts with the remembrance of Allah ﷻ, which pushes out negative thoughts and distractions.

One of the key goals of Tazkiyah is to develop a heart that is at peace, known as a "heart that is tranquil" (Qalb al-Muṭma'innah). Allah ﷻ states in Sūrah al-Ra'd:

"الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ"

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction". (13:28)

Dhikr also helps to achieve Taqwa. As we remember Allah ﷻ frequently, our awareness of His presence grows. This makes it easier to avoid sins and bad habits because we know Allah ﷻ is watching over us. Allah ﷻ Himself highlights the greatness of Dhikr in the Qur'ān:

"وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ"

"And the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing)". (29:45) This verse reminds us that no matter what we do in life, the remembrance of Allah ﷻ is the greatest act we can engage in.

Lastly, the Prophet ﷺ emphasises the importance of Dhikr through this Ḥadith:

"الدُّنْيَا مَلْفُوتَةٌ، مَلْفُوتٌ مَا فِيهَا إِلَّا ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، وَمَا وَالَاهُ، وَعَالِمًا أَوْ مُتَعَلِّمًا"

"The world, with all that it contains, is accursed except for the remembrance of Allah that which pleases Allah; and the religious scholars and seekers of knowledge." (At-Tirmidhi)

-Maulana Tanzeel Haider

Importance of praying Ṣalāh with congregation (Jamā'ah)

The importance of praying Ṣalāh in congregation holds significant value in Islam. Congregational prayer, or Ṣalāt al-Jamā'ah, is highly emphasised, and carries immense rewards.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ taught that praying in congregation is much more rewarding than praying alone:

"عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: "صَلَاةُ الْجَمَاعَةِ تَفْضُلُ صَلَاةَ الْفَذِّ بِسَبْعٍ وَعِشْرِينَ دَرَجَةً"

Narrated `Abdullah bin `Umar: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "The prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times superior to the prayer offered by person alone." (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 645)

Congregational prayer also helps us stay disciplined and organised in our daily lives. The regular times for prayer remind us to be punctual and responsible.

Additionally, attending congregational prayers, particularly at the mosque, connects one to the community and strengthens ties with fellow believers. The mosque becomes a hub not just for spiritual growth, but also for mutual support, advice, and community activities.

In one Ḥadith, the Prophet ﷺ emphasises the benefit of performing Ṣalāh in congregation as a means of expiating sins:

"مَنْ تَوَضَّأَ فَأَسْبَغَ الْوُضُوءَ، ثُمَّ مَشَى إِلَى صَلَاةٍ مَكْتُوبَةٍ، فَصَلَّاهَا مَعَ الْإِمَامِ، غُفِرَ لَهُ ذَنْبُهُ"

"Whoever performs ablution properly, then walks to a prescribed prayer and prays it with the Imām, his sins will be forgiven." (Musnad Aḥmad:516)

In another Ḥadith, the Prophet ﷺ states that the angels pray for you from the moment you enter the mosque until you leave it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"لَا يَزَالُ الْعَبْدُ فِي صَلَاةٍ مَا كَانَ فِي مُصَلَّاهُ يَنْتَظِرُ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتَقُولُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ: اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ، اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْهُ، حَتَّى يَنْصَرِفَ أَوْ يُحْدِثَ"

"A person remains in a state of prayer as long as they are waiting for prayer in their prayer place, and the angels say: 'O Allah, forgive him, O Allah, have mercy on him,' until he leaves or breaks his Wuḍū' (ablution)." [Sunan Abu Dāwūd:471]

In summary, praying in congregation brings many benefits, both spiritually and socially. It helps us get closer to Allah ﷻ while building strong ties with our Muslim community.

- Dr. Shabbir Ahmed

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