

Week 27

Rajab and Tawba

IN 1985 I WAS a brand new Muslim and Ramadan came in the summer. It was hot. It was humid. I was fasting. It was the most wonderful month of my life. As years passed, Ramadan moved into the winter, but every year when the temperature began to creep up I would sniff the air and feel that Ramadan was near.

The Islamic calendar brings with it that which helps us 'sniff the air'. Every year the two months that precede Ramadan arrive to greet us and escort us into that most loving of months: Ramadan.

Rajab, a month of *tawba* (repentance) and Sha'ban, a month of reconciliation.

Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه said that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would say at the beginning of Rajab, "O God, bless us in Rajab and Sha'ban and bless us in Ramadan." (*Musnad al-Imām Ahmad*)

« كان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إذا دخل رجب قال:
اللهم بارك لنا في رجب وشعبان وبارك لنا في رمضان. »

Rajab is a sacred month. The practice of the sanctification of months goes back to Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and was affirmed by Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. These are months

in which killing is forbidden and safety and peace reign.

Rajab is also the month in which Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was given the gift of the Isrā' and Mirāj – his trip to Jerusalem and to the heavens.

Rajab, according to many of the 'ulamā', is a month of repentance and forgiveness. If we are to consider that Ramadan is right around the corner, and that a requirement of our faith is *tawba* (repentance), then it makes excellent sense to utilize Rajab, a month of peace, to make peace with our Lord, to seek forgiveness, and to offer a complete *tawba*.

Tawba:

Allah عز وجل says: **O you who believe, repent to Allah, a genuine repentance.** (66:8)

We who claim to believe are required to continuously repent from our sins, our mistakes, our shortcomings: all that stands in the way of a life of joy and light under the shade of God's pleasure. Too often, we are so involved in seeing the wrongful deeds of others that we have a limited view of our own shortcomings. Rajab offers us the opportunity to forget about everyone else's sins for a while and focus on our own. It is worthwhile to spend some time before Rajab in retreat and reflection... Where are you with Allah? Where is Islam in your life? Compare your state this month with your state last year before Ramadan: are you closer to Allah or further away?

✓ Questions to ask:

1. Am I attached to a particular sin?

Do I read, watch, or listen to *haram*? Do I read chick lit or sexually explicit books? Do I listen to music that turns my heart toward haram feelings and actions?

Do I watch internet videos that need to be turned off when someone enters my room?

2. Is there a basic of Islam that I take lightly (don't find very important)?

Do I sleep through Fajr prayer every day? Do I wear clothing that the Prophet ﷺ would disapprove of? Do I neglect zakat by saying to myself, "I pay a lot in charity – I don't have to worry about zakat."? Yet zakat is the *fard* (required act), and charity is the *summa* (extra deed).

3. Do I neglect my basic duties?

If I am a student, do I neglect my studying, leaving it to the last minute and then "cramming"? If I am an employee, am I often late to work? Or do I barely do my job, taking as many breaks as possible? Regarding any relationships (marital, parental, familial or friendship) do I give my all? Or do I hold back, checking to see what I am getting in return?

4. Do I have my priorities straight?

How do I spend my time? Do I waste more time than I use productively? Do I measure ideas and lifestyles against Islam instead of the other way around? Do I spend more time on Facebook than on religious duties?

5. Is there something in my very character that I need to work on?

Am I stubborn? Am I stingy? Stingy with money? Stingy with emotion? Stingy with time? Am I cynical? Do I have a negative outlook on life and therefore on the blessings of Allah?

The truth is that *tawba* is never-ending because we, as human beings, make mistakes; we fall short; we sin. It is true that along the way our sins and mistakes will (should) change as we learn to avoid some, and then find ourselves falling into others. We will then have to make *tawba* from

the new sins...and the process goes on. There will never come a day when any one of us reaches perfection.

Thus, Rajab is a gift to us – a time to reflect on the past year, to seek forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, to wash away the darkness of distance and wrongdoing. It is a month to prepare for the upcoming opportunity of Ramadan.

Our *tawba* in the month of Rajab is a breeze that, if collected together, could be the gale that is needed to lift our *umma*, for the forgiveness of each of us adds to the release of our *umma* from hardship. May Allah ﷻ accept our repentance, forgive us, and bless us, our families, and our countries with His miracle.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Repent to Allah; indeed I repent one hundred times per day." (*al-Suyūfī*)

«استغفروا ربكم، إني أستغفر الله وأتوب إليه كل يوم مائة مرة.»

Thus, the repetition of '*astaghfirullah*' was a habit of our Prophet ﷺ – he who was forgiven and promised the reward of his Lord. Over time, the '*ulamā*' have, through experience, set the number 70,000 as a goal to be reached in the month of Rajab. In order to reach 70,000 *istighfār* in the month of Rajab, you will need to do approximately 2,500 per day. These can be divided into the prayers (500 each prayer) or the morning and evening (1250 morning, and 1250 evening) or just done throughout the day. Together we can make our individual and our collective *tawba*. May Allah accept it! *Āmīn*.

Reflection

Run through the questions in the essay. Is there one that particularly rings true for you? Is there a particular area in which you feel you need to make *tawba* or, on the other hand, are there things you know you are doing wrong but for which you do not really feel the need to

