



Est. 1923 as Jamiatul Ulama Transvaal

JUMU'AH LECTURE: THE MONTH OF RAJAB



WWW.MAHAJJAH.COM

THE MONTH OF RAJAB

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِیْنُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَنَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَیْهِ وَنَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شُرُوْرِ اَنْفُسِنَا وَ مِنْ سَيِّاْتِ اَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَّهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَ مَنْ يُّضِلِّهِ فَلَا هَادِیَّ لَهُ وَ نَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِیْكَ لَهُ وَ نَشْهَدُ اَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَ مَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهُ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَ اٰلِهِ وَ اَصْحَابِهِ وَ بَارَكَ وَ سَلَّمَ تَسْلِيْمًا كَثِيْرًا اَمَّا بَعْدُ فَاَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيْمِ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ الَّذِيْ اَسْرٰی بَعْدَهُ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْاَقْصٰی الَّذِيْ بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيْهِ مِنْ اٰیٰتِنَا ۗ اِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِیْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

The month of Rajab is indeed a blessed month of the Islamic calendar. It is one of the four months deemed sacred in the verses of the Noble Qur'an, Allah ﷻ states:

اِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِيْ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ مِنْهَا اَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ ؕ

Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allah [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred. [Tawbah: 36]

These four sacred months are: Rajab, Dhū al-Qa'dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, and Muḥarram.

Many significant events transpired in this auspicious month, the most famous of which and by which this month has become synonymous is the incident of Mi'rāj. It should be borne in mind, however, that there is a difference of opinion as to which exact month did this miraculous journey transpire. The narrations vary in this regard, and a number of scholars are inclined to this month.

Allah speaks of this in the noble Qur'an:

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْ اَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْاَقْصٰى الَّذِيْ بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيْهِ مِنْ اٰیٰتِنَا ۗ اِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِیْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ

Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing. [Isra: 1]

Two terms are used when speaking of this event:

- » Isrā': The journey from Makkah to Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem.
- » Mi'rāj: The journey from Bayt al-Maqdis to the seven heavens.

So this would be the first time the Prophet ﷺ set foot in al-Masjid al-Aqsa, as the Final Messenger of Allah, and it was here that he led all the previous Ambiyā' in ṣalāh. And the superiority of Islam and the Risālah of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ was cast in stone. While the narrations vary regarding the exact date and month in which this occurred, we find a unique history of Bayt al-Maqdis—its conquest—being attached to the month of Rajab. It is as if this month was marked by a phenomenal event that would reverberate through time.

Allah ﷻ at times awards special significance to the actions of the Ambiyā' or their belongings.

We find in the incident of Sayyidunā Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ that the river was the means of bringing Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ to Fir'aun, who then adopted him and raised him as his own, on the insistence of his wife. This was also the signal of Fir'aun's destruction—unbeknownst to him though—the one who would end his tyranny was brought to him by the river and the very river was the means used to end his life.

We find also when the brothers of Nabī Yūsuf عليه السلام returned with his shirt soaked in blood, Nabī Ya'qūb عليه السلام was overcome with grief such that it eventually led to blindness. Later when Nabī Yūsuf عليه السلام was reunited with his brothers, he sent his shirt with them to Nabī Ya'qūb عليه السلام and through which his eyesight was returned. The very item which began his grief was a means of joy and good health.

Similarly, we find that the month of Rajab has an unusual link to al-Masjid al-Aqsā. Perhaps it could be due to the incident of Mi'rāj having taken place in this month, through the blessings of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه and the conquest of al-Masjid al-Aqsā

By the 15th year after the hijrah, the Muslim armies had penetrated deep into Syria and Palestine. The Roman army had suffered a devastating defeat in the Battle of Yarmūk where an army of 40 000 Muslims defeated a Roman army of 400 000. Sayyidunā 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ رضي الله عنه was now making his way towards Jerusalem but had to face off against the Roman Commander Arṭabūn (Aretion) who was second only to the Roman Emperor himself. The Roman army was a 100 000 strong while the contingent under the command of Sayyidunā 'Amr رضي الله عنه numbered only 9000. Sayyidunā 'Amr رضي الله عنه apprised Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه of the situation, asking for reinforcements. Sayyidunā 'Umar replied, "We are going to pit our Arṭabūn against their Arṭabūn, let's see who wins." He meant that both the leaders were the wisest and best tacticians amongst their people, the scales tipping in Sayyidunā 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ favour due to him being the Companion of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and blessed with the promise of victory from Allah. And so in 15 A.H the two armies faced off, and the promise of Allah came to pass. The Romans were soundly defeated. Those who survived, Arṭabūn as well, fled to Jerusalem, taking refuge behind its fortified walls. This battle was known as the Battle of Ajnadayn, and it was this victory that Allah سبحانه وتعالى granted the Muslims at the hands of Sayyidunā 'Amr رضي الله عنه that led to the siege of Jerusalem and the ultimate liberation of al-Masjid al-Aqsā.¹

The city of Jerusalem was strongly fortified and virtually impregnable. The siege continued for four months, and the Muslim army was reinforced by the armies of Mu'āwiyah, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr, and Khālid ibn Walīd رضي الله عنه. This sowed terror in the hearts of the Romans, but still there was no victory and the sieged continued. The Muslims had to endure rain, snow, and bitter cold. Arṭabūn eventually wrote to 'Amr, "...You cannot gain any victory at Palestine, so accept the single victory you gained at Ajnadayn and return. Don't be fooled by that single victory or you will face the fate of all those who came before you." 'Amr رضي الله عنه responded, "I am going to take control of the very land under your feet!" and he instructed the messenger to observe the reaction of Arṭabūn when he reads the letter. Upon reading the letter he laughed and said, "The one who will conquer Jerusalem will be a man named 'Umar."² 'Amr رضي الله عنه wrote to 'Umar رضي الله عنه informing him of the new developments, and urged him to come to Palestine. 'Umar رضي الله عنه after consulting the Ṣaḥābah decided to set out to al-Masjid al-Aqsā.

Who is this 'Umar?

- » The great leader who would be seen walking in the midday sun, overcome with concern and grief, when asked where he was headed, the reply astonished them, "One of the camels of Ṣadaqah is gone missing and I am trying to find it."

Astonished by this they said, "Why don't you send of your servants to find it."

1 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*.

2 *Ṭabarī*, 4/433. The actual words he used were, "his name will have three letters." Implying that 'Amr is not the one as his name in Arabic is spelt with four letters (عمرو). 'Amr رضي الله عنه discerned from this that this was meant for 'Umar رضي الله عنه.

‘Umar رضي الله عنه replied, “If a young camel were lost on the banks of the Euphrates ‘Umar would be taken to task for it.”

They said, “Then at least wait till it is a little cooler.”

“The Fire of Jahannam is more intense in its heat,” came ‘Umar’s reply.¹

» ‘Amr ibn Maymūn narrated:

I saw ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه a few days before he was stabbed in Madīnah. He was standing with Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān and ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf to whom he said, “What have you done? Do you think that you have imposed more taxation on the land (of al-Sawād i.e. Iraq) than it can bear?”

They replied, “We have imposed on it what it can bear because of its great yield.”

‘Umar رضي الله عنه again said, “Check whether you have imposed on the land what it cannot bear.”

They said, “No, (we haven’t).”

‘Umar رضي الله عنه then said, “If Allah should keep me alive I will let the widows of Iraq need no men to support them after me.”²

» Yet Ḥasan رضي الله عنه reports that he sat before ‘Umar رضي الله عنه while he was delivering the Friday sermon one day, and he counted no less than 12 patches on his robe.³

» Western Historians too have written in praise of Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, Phillip Hitti writes:

Simple and frugal in manner, his energetic and talented successor, ‘Umar (634 - 644), who was a towering height, strong physique and bald-headed, continued for some time after becoming Caliph to support himself by trade and lived throughout his life in a style as unostentatious as that of a Bedouin shaykh... His irreproachable character became an exemplar for all conscientious successors to follow. He owned, we are told, one shirt and one mantle only, both conspicuous for their patch work, slept in the beds of palm leaves and had no concern other than maintenance of the purity of the faith, the upholding of justice and the ascendancy and the security of Islam and the Arabians.⁴

This is the great conqueror who sat out to take the keys for al-Masjid al-Aqsā, travelling alone with one donkey and one servant. Each taking turns to ride. And as they draw closer to al-Masjid al-Aqsā it was the slave’s turn to ride; his slave insisted that ‘Umar take his turn, but ‘Umar would not hear any of it. And so, holding the reigns of the camel, slave mounted and leader of the Muslim world on foot, Amīr al-Mu’minīn appeared before the Romans. This was the spectacle they needed to see, this was the way it was prophesised in their books. And the Romans handed over the keys and al-Masjid al-Aqsā came under the flag of Tawḥīd. Sayyidunā ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه entered the land of al-Masjid al-Aqsā in Rajab 16 A.H.⁵

Salāḥ al-Dīn and al-Masjid al-Aqsā

1 Ibn al-Jawzī: *Manāqib Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb*, pg. 513.

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 3497.

3 *Kanz al-Ummal*, 6/347.

4 Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1953, p. 175-176.

5 Īnās Muḥammad al-Bahjī: *Al-Wajīz fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, pg. 43.

The second time Bayt al-Maḡdis was retaken by the Muslims was in the sixth century after hijrah. The Crusaders had taken back Jerusalem in 492 A.H and the dreadful spectacle of that day stood in complete contrast with the peaceful Muslim occupation 500 years earlier. The western Historian Lane-Poole describes this event:

So terrible, it is said, was the carnage which followed that the horses of the Crusaders who rode up to the mosque of Omar were knee-deep in the stream of blood. Infants were seized by their feet and dashed against the walls or whirled over the battlements, while the Jews were all burnt alive in their synagogue.

He continues:

On the next day the horrors of that which had preceded it were deliberately repeated on a larger scale. Tancred had given a guarantee of safety to 300 captives. In spite of his indignant protest, these were all brought out and killed; and a massacre followed in which the bodies of men, women, and children were hacked and hewn until their fragments lay tossed together in heaps. The work of slaughter ended, the streets of the city were washed by Saracen prisoners.¹

Seventy thousand Muslims were estimated to have been killed by the crusaders.²

For close onto 90 years the Syrian countryside and Jerusalem was occupied by the Crusaders. Blood thirsty zealots, the likes of Reginald de Châtillon, who expressed the desire to cross over to Arabia with the fell design of sacking Makkah and Madīnah and taking the corpse of the blessed Prophet out of his grave! Upon hearing this, Salāḡ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī took an oath that he would personally kill Reginald.³

Who is this man taking this oath?

- » Salāḡ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī never performed ṣalāḡ alone for years even in sickness.
- » He was the sultan and king but zakāt never became wājib on him.
- » He spent his entire life striving in jihād such that he never got the opportunity to perform Ḥajj.
- » Someone once asked him why he does not smile, to which he replied, ““How can I smile and how can food and water taste good to me when al-Masjid al-‘Aḡsa is in the hands of the Crusaders!”
- » During the third crusade, Richard—the lion heart— fell ill, Salāḡ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī sent water and his own physician to tend to him.
- » Richard was once knocked off his horse and disarmed during the battle, Salāḡ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī sent him back with two horses.
- » This is why Richard eventually sued for peace, telling his own people, “You will never take the holy lands as long as Salāḡ al-Dīn stands guard.”
- » The great Sultan and liberator of al-Aḡsā who leaves this world leaving behind only, 46 dirhams and one dinār.⁴

This is the man who took that oath and on 24 Rabī‘ al-Ākhir 583 A.H he defeated the crusaders at Ḥittīn and fulfilled this oath. On Friday 27th Rajab 583 A.H, he entered al-Masjid al-Aḡsā. The Crosses removed and the flag of Tawḡīd once again raised high. The crusaders had killed 70 000 Muslims when they took Jerusalem, Salāḡ al-Dīn could have exacted an equal or worse revenge. But he chose the path of the Prophet ﷺ—who when he entered Makkah and forgave those who

1 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī: *Saviors of Islamic spirit*, 1/230

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, 231.

4 Ibid.

had wronged the Muslims—and so a truce was signed, and the Christians were allowed to pay ransom and leave the city. Once again when the Muslim leaders adopted the practices of the Prophet ﷺ, when they were humble and true servants of Allah; the keys to Aqsā were handed over to them. The Historian Lane-Poole writes:

The Muslim King taught the Crusaders the meaning of compassion.

Let this month of Rajab and the miraculous incident of Isrā' be a lesson for us: True victory can only be attained in following the practices of the Prophet ﷺ. Only when the men and women of this Ummah inculcate within themselves the qualities of these great heroes of Islam will the banners of victory be handed over to us. So the path to victory is clear, there is no obstacle to it but our own laziness. Qāḍī 'Ayyāḍ once said:

Know well whoever loves something then it will have a marked effect on him and he will imitate the one he loves. If he does not then he is not true in his love but just a mere claimant of it. The one who is true in his love for the Prophet ﷺ is the one on whom the signs of that love can be seen. The sign is that he adheres to his teachings, follows his Sunnah, practices upon his sayings and actions, and inculcates his mannerisms in times of ease and difficulty. Allah ﷻ says:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."^{1,2}

And for the beloveds of Allah nothing is impossible. All that awaits now... is for us to begin this journey.

May Allah guide one and all.

1 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 31.

2 Al-Shifā bī Ta'rīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā, 2/24.