

[Month of Rajab – A Time for Reflection](#)  
Tafsir on the Revelation “Waging War”

*Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm.* In Holy Qur’an, Allah (swt) says:

**Indeed the number of months with Allah is twelve lunar months in the register of Allah when He created the heavens and the earth. Of them, four are sacred. That is the straight way. So do not wrong yourselves during them. Fight all together against those who set up partners alongside of Allah, as they are waging war altogether on you, and know that Allah is of those who guard themselves. (9:36)**

Also Allah (swt) reveals in Qur’an in Surah Baqarah,

**And when your Lord sent on earth an emissary, they said, “Will You place upon it one who will corrupt it and shed blood? It is as we who hymn Your praise and sanctify You.” And He said, “Truly, I know that which you do not know.” (2:30)**

*Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm.* My dear brothers and sisters, and “welcome” to our guests. I pray to Allah (swt) that we all find the peace and the joy in this *jumah* on this day. The *sebab* of the occasion of the revelation of the above verse, which I recited of the months, was that the believers/*mu’minun* had traveled from Medina to meet the people of Mecca before the city was won by the Messenger of Allah (swt). “We were afraid that the *kafr* of Mecca will engage us in combat during the sacred month and Allah sent down this revelation: that the number of months on the sight of Allah (swt) is twelve. On the day when He created the heavens and the earth, four of these months were sacred. The names of these four months are Rajab, Dhul Qi’dah,

*Dhul Hijja, and Muharram. And one of these months was Rajab. The others come in order.”*

We have to understand what this means to us today. It is not just a month, and it is not just in preparation. We look closely at what is said in this revelation and in the [proper] context. The expression that ‘this is the right *dīn*’ means the right and proper calculation. In this sentence where Allah tells us, “Do not wrong yourself in these months” (meaning these four months), the meaning, of course, is implied that in these months, Allah has given certain prohibitions. If we are to understand them, [we see that] externally these prohibitions are one thing, but internally, they are a guidance for us. [They are] not just in preparation for the coming of Ramadan, for the month of Rajab, but also a preparation for our own mentality, a preparation for our world.

He tells us to be careful in observing our prayers, especially the middle prayer. Now many, many people as you know in Islam have taken these admonitions in the outer form only. What I hope to talk about, briefly, today is that when Allah (swt) says, for example, during these months you should not wage war, [we can see historically that could mean] waging war with swords and spears, and then with long rifles, and then nuclear weapons, and biological weapons, and now drones. Allah knows only what comes next. Who knows, [it could be] the mental wars that go on in people’s minds. What will be the next transmission of this war.

‘Waging war’ means one thing, of course, which is obvious. Of course, He is referring to the Meccans in an historical context, but He is referring to what is happening in the moment. It is not something that is just historical, or just has some social or political importance. We should also understand that it means to change your outlook, to change your mind, to put aside differences at this time, to try to find

other ways to understand what our relationship, to God, to Allah (swt) is. Of course, every day we should be pious. Every day we should care. Every day we should be careful. Every day we should remember Allah. Every day we should remember compassion. Every day we should remember justice. Every day we should remember mercy. Every day we should remember love. Every day we should remember friendship. Every day we should celebrate life, itself. And the truth of the matter is that most days we don't.

The technical terminology in Arabic, the linguistics of Rajab is a derivative noun. The meaning can be deduced from the fact that this trilateral root from which it derives conveys a certain idea – one idea with two additives, honor and veneration. In the speech of the *bedoui*, perhaps, as one ancient writer told us, the idea or the verbal noun/*tajib* is synonymous with *tazim*: to manifest, to magnify, to glorify, to honor, to venerate. It is the corresponding aspect of the verb, of its expression, “I have *venerated* the month of Rajab.” Is it a month that is being venerated? Or is it the act of veneration that is important? Is it a period of time? Or is it the capacity to honor something? It is the capacity to venerate, the capacity to see the Divine hand.

So here is this space of time – like today, the *jumah*. It is a time that Allah says we should come together – not just to worship like a Sabbath day – but to leave aside everything else. What happens five times a day? We are given this time to pause, to take a moment, or ten minutes, or twelve minutes, or however long it takes to pray, and to pause. Yes you are venerating the Divine, but how are you doing it? You are doing it inside by remembering/*dhikr*. I have to remind you that 99.9% of Arabic speaking people, when you ask them what *dhikr* means, will say, “Remembrance.” But how many will also understand that the trilateral also means “to penetrate”? It is not the popular form in which the word is used. But if we understand “to

penetrate,” it means to take this time to penetrate beyond the obvious and to see what is beyond the *hajub*, the veil.

Allah (swt) has set aside this month of Rajab, and then we have Sha’ban, and then we have Ramadan. These are months of reflection. They are not just months where we don’t have war, or where society, where people just fast [according to rules, such as] three days in Rajab, and then three days off, then you fast another three days in Rajab. Some people will say, “There are no rules. It is all *daif*. There is nothing really said about it.” They argue these points, but can you argue the benefit of reflection? Can you argue the benefit of veneration? Can you argue the benefit of just paying attention/*tawajjah*?

When we look more deeply, we see *murajib* comes from saying on the day of the argument and the passage known as the portocol of the Ba’nai Sai’d. On the day that the Prophet (sal) was taken from this world, he said,

*The immigrants, the ansar, were in dispute over the question of who would be appointed as leader, a tender subject here. So the helpers said, “Let one of us be a leader and one of you be a leader.” And the story is widely known, where al-Huba became so angry that he drew his sword and cried, “I am the much loved little rubbing post, their palm tree loaded with fruit. This is his way of saying that he is the mighty one among the people, the one who commands their obedience. The date palm was held in such great respect by the owners, who would take care to prop it up when it leaned too much on one side so that it wouldn’t break.*

*The term wujbah is applied to the structure that is erected to hold up the tree. As for the much rubbed little rubbing post, the jut’al was reference to the trunk*

*of the tall palm, which many camels like to rub themselves against. It has that rough side to it, and it relieves their itch. So the Bedouin put up little posts so the little camels could rub themselves against that too.*

*Rajab acquired its name because it was in this month that the Arabs got into the habit of propping up the fruit laden branches of the date palms to prevent it from breaking in the high winds. (Don't have the same seasons in certain parts of the world as we have. So even as the lunar calendar revolves, still it is very hot of the month.) So Allah says, "I have honored the date palm by propping it up." There are some who believe this refers to the net of thorns that keep the camels beyond its reach.*

For our purposes, then, the repetitive process is to get the people ready in constant remembrance of the glorification of Allah,

*The Angles raise their voices in the month of Rajab. They extol the majesty and the glory of Allah, and they praise Him and proclaim holiness. We should also note that sometimes this month is called the month of rajam with a mim, because it signifies the month in which Shaytan is pelted with the shooting stars from heaven, so that he can't cause any harm to the mu'min during that time.*

All these traditional meanings lead us to the same conclusion and that is to pay attention, to take time, to reflect, to realize where all of this comes from. Some say, that the letter *r* [in the word *rajab*] refers to *rahmat* of Allah, while the letter *jim* stands for the nobility and generosity of Allah (swt). And the letter *ba* stands for the *birr* or the magnificent kindness of Allah (swt). These three gifts come to us during this month. Or we should pay attention to that – the *rahmat*/compassion, the nobility and the generosity, and the beneficent kindness of Allah (swt). Again, what

does this lead us to understand? Human beings want to know the meaning of things. We don't want to just take things at face value. We wonder: what does it mean, why is this so important? And then when you have the language like Arabic or Farsi, languages that you can dive into the roots and you can understand the inner meanings of things, they start to reveal to you, meanings far beyond just ritualism.

This warning about war, interestingly, because of the history and when it is revealed, is an admonition for inner peace. Take the time for peace. Take the time for reflection. Withhold your hand and turn your attention towards the heart – *mutawajjah* – to pay attention. When you begin to understand what it takes to prepare ourselves for Ramadan, it has a lot less to do with food than it has to do with attitude. In the month of Rajab, we have the Isra Miraj also, this journey at the end of the month of the Prophet Mohammed (sal), [who travels] to the highest heavens where he meets all the *ambiyā*. He has conversations with them, and they expect his coming. All the angels greet him. This hagiographic kind of history really tells us something else. It tells us that if you prepare properly at the beginning of the month, you too are having a journey, an internal journey.

It is not a question of, "Did he really take the journey or did he not take the journey? Was his body carried or not carried? Did his foot hit the pitcher and did the pitcher fall over? Was the journey taken by the time the pitcher had fallen over? Quantum theory – the science of it is fantastic. But it is really about preparing for this journey. Just think about journeying. You have to think about the place and the time [of the Prophet (sal)]. Journeys took time. There were no high speed trains, planes, only camels going slowly in the desert against all odds, eating rough weeds in the desert. So rough, that if you pick them by hand, they cut you, but the camel can eat it. All of this is symbolic of what the trials and tests and the vicissitudes of life are, and the pains and the difficulties of war and loss that are referred to in these *'āyāt*.

So we need to extend our understanding. We have to realize that every day we have our prayers, and every day we have our challenges, and every day we are moving on a journey, *sayr-i-Llah*, towards Allah (swt). But we are also *sayr-ma-Allah*, we are also accompanied by that Divine. **Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of Allah:** there is no place or time where Allah is not present. So it is up to us to have the eyes. Allah says in Qur'an, **"You have eyes, but you don't see. You have ears, but you don't hear."** It is up to us to train our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and to be conscious of that Divine Presence, and then to live as if we are in that Divine Presence.

You hear in the opening recitation: "fear Allah." "Fear Allah" does not mean to be afraid. Fear Allah means to be piety, to have *adab*, to have respect as you do when you stand before someone of great eminence. You have that kind of respect, where you watch what you think, and you watch what you say, and you watch where your eyes are, and you don't want to do anything wrong. Each of us has had that experience, even with our teachers in school, even our parents. We don't want to disappoint in any way.

This is the time for re-grouping our consciousness, to remember and to remember also that we are not living the best of worlds, either. There are many corrupt things happening in the world around us, and we need to take the time and to remember that the blessings of God are everywhere, if we can understand them. Allah tells us that He prohibits the wrongdoing/*dhum* during the sacred month. It can be interpreted to mean that you don't kill any Arabs who are guilty of polytheism or who have broken some rule.

Abu Yazid Bistami (ra) whose grandfather was Sahru Shan, was a Zoroastrian born in Bistam in the NE part of Iran, famous for his pronouncements as the founder of the ecstatic drunken school of the mystics, *majdhub*, said, “*Wrong doing is the renunciation of obedience and the perpetuation of the acts of disobedience against Allah (swt).*” This really means putting something in the place of Allah or something in a place where it does not belong, in other words, *shirk*. We know from our very practical life how hard it is to be obedient, and how easy it is to be disobedient. For that purpose, we don’t want to forget that it is not just praying and making *wudu*, but it is our commitments to our Creator, our commitment to try and live a life that is good, and to learn the value of repentance, to try to change the ways in us that we need to change, and to ask for forgiveness when we don’t change.

“Waging war” takes on yet another meaning. It is just a battle between our self – our higher and lower nature, which I have been talking about in the *dars* in the last few days – the pull of the *rūh*/spirit upward, and the pull of the *nafs* downward. In the center of that is the *qalb*/heart, and the inclination of the heart to turn its attention upward. Upward means towards goodness, and toward love, and toward our neighbors, and toward our world, and to try and perform good acts, so that everyone benefits regardless of nationality or race or religion, if they have one or not.

This is the way we should look at what we can accomplish in this month as we prepare for our Ramadan, and to believe those things that most of us easily believe in the core of our hearts, that sound right to us, that the taste/*dhwaq* is correct. This tastes sweet; this tastes good; it must be good. Friday we are supposed to speak on Islam: we cannot look at this religion called Islam and say every model of it is wonderful—hardly... hardly. That is why I quoted Surah al-Baqarah about what the angels said: people will bring corruption upon this world. There is corruption in

this world—sometimes more, sometimes less—but corruption is a big problem. Everywhere we work with the people around the world, we ask them, “What is the biggest problem?” What is the biggest problem you are facing in Libya? What is the biggest problem you are facing in Morocco? What is the biggest problem you are facing in Egypt? What is the biggest problem you are facing in Ukraine? What is the biggest problem you in Tunisia? What do we hear? “Corruption. Corruption. Corruption.” We always hear that answer—always. What does it mean?

When you don't see people who are willing to reform, to re-look things, but who claim to reform, they are actually making more corruption. Allah says, “When it is said to them, **“Make not mischief on this earth,”** they say, **“We are reformers only.”** **Indeed, they are the ones that make mischief, but they realize it not.”** This term *fasad* means spoiling the order, disturbing the balance of justice by greed, by self-interest, by deception, by double-talk. In Qur'an, *fasad* is used 50 times. It can be in morals, or values, or in social systems, or in family systems, or in the educational system, in economics, in human relations. It is everywhere, corruption is everywhere. But it appears when people follow their lower nature, when they try to twist the truth and distort the facts. Instead of following the truth and the guidelines from Allah (swt), they ignore and they turn away from His message.

What is His message? It can be the Torah and the Ten Commandments. It is the Beatitudes of Jesus. It is the messages that we find in the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet (sal). Allah say in Surah al-Mu'minun: **“If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly, the heavens and the earth and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption. Nay, We have sent them their admonition, but nay, they turn away from this admonition.”** So it comes when people lie, and break promises, and don't care for their family ties or their relationships, when they cheat at their work, and so many different things happen.

But Allah says, **“But those who break the covenant of Allah after they have plighted their word thereto, and cut asunder those things that Allah has commanded to join, and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse, and on them is the terrible home.”** (13:25)

So we live in this world. It has been raining a lot here. You walk, even two days after the rain, three days after the rain, and the shoes are muddy. You walk today and it is a beautiful day today, but easy to get mud on your feet. So even with *wudu* and all the ritualistic things we do, we still get dirty. We are still encountering that. So again, we have the opportunity every day. Allah tells us, simply to stop, five times a day. Stop. Think. Pray. At the least, make *wufu qalbi*. At least, turn your attention to your heart and say the Name of Allah, and realize what it means. When the political order is unjust, and people’s rights are denied, and the little towns and villages become corrupt and filled with the mischief makers, as it says in Qur’an, then life loses its meaning and its purpose.

People don’t have the initiative, and they feel oppressed, and they don’t have the desire to change, and the environment becomes corrupt, and it becomes dirty, and people lose their good habits, and they lose their good adab toward one another. And then they kill each other for no reason, and the land and the livestock all suffer. We see that corruption around us. We need to stop. We need to take a moment. We need to care. It is the only way: if the people themselves take responsibility. Allah says that you cannot change a society until you change yourself. So we have to begin, obviously, with our self. And when we do that, *inshā’a-Llāh*, then some change will come within our own society.

This is some insight for all of us to remember, *inshā’a-Llāh*, for a time. When we turn our focus, as Muslims, we also enjoin our brothers and sisters in other paths or

religions or belief systems to join us in understanding why we do what we do. I hope it is not because you are supposed to, where you eat very little during the day and stuff yourself at night, and sleep during the day and work at night when your body is full. No, let us prepare ourselves properly. For those who cannot fast, or choose not to fast, or cannot fast because of their health, then understand that. There are things for them that we are praying for – their well-being and their love, *inshā'a-Llāh. Asalaam aleikum.*