

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Reflections at the Onset of The New Hijri Year

Ustādh Abu Eesa Niamatullah

With the advent of the New Year, I always find it beneficial to reflect on ones actions and achievements in the previous year and make some plans for the coming year, alongside that all-important firm resolve to set realistic resolutions to carry out insha'Allāh, and hopefully turn it in to a year of *'ibadah* and happiness.

Let us first remind ourselves of the history of what exactly the “*Hijri Year*” is:

The *Hijri* year is based upon the first year that the Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) made the migration from Makkah to Madīnat'l-Munawwarah. It is narrated in *al-'Uqūd'l-Duriyyah* of ibn 'Ābidīn (2/335) that the reason for the starting of the *Hijri* calendar was that *Sayyidina* 'Umar b. al-Khattāb (*radhy Allāhu 'anhu*) was presented with a contract that was printed with “valid only until Sha'bān”. 'Umar asked, “Is that the Sha'bān just gone or the coming Sha'bān?” Because of that, he ordered for the date to be included and the Companions of that time agreed to start the date from when the Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) made *Hijrah*, and they chose the first month to be Muharram. This calendar was started in 17h as confirmed by Imām al-Nawawi.

It is also narrated from Ibn 'Asākir on the authority of Sha'bi (*al-Shamārīkh fi 'Ilm'l-Tārīkh*, Imām al-Suyūti, p. 23),

“That the Companions realised that a calendar was required but they differed on when to start it from. Some suggested the advent of the Prophethood whereas others suggested the death of the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) but 'Umar said, “No, rather we'll start from his migration for it was that which distinguished between the truth and falsehood.” And thus it was so established.”

So that's the history of the *Hijri Year*. Now what to do when it comes upon us.

At such an occasion when we open a new chapter in time, it is a good opportunity for everyone to reflect – on **time** itself.

Normally when it comes to the Gregorian New Year such as 2008 in modern day non-Islamic civilisations, it is from their *Sunnah* to do a few things: they review everything that happened in the previous year, good and bad; they look to the future and try to re-

affirm their plans in the long-term; and finally, they pledge to make key changes in their lives for the better.

The Muslim *Ummah* should recognise that it has a greater obligation with respect to these reflections. In fact, such reflections should be occurring on a daily basis, and not just on the 1st of January 2008. In any case, at least for those who aren't in this excellent habit of self-audit and accounting ones internal state and performance of good deeds regularly, then the beginning of Muharram provides a nice opportunity to actually think about what we're doing with ourselves. This accounting of course was the natural action of the Prophetic Generation, and we know that 'Umar (*radhy Allāhu 'anhu*) said:

حاسبو أنفسكم قبل أن تحاسبوا

Account yourselves now before you are accounted.

i.e. identify your weak points and failures now and rectify them quickly before the key audit comes. And it won't be KPMG or Accenture doing that auditing, and it won't be an audit where you can fiddle the sums, tick the boxes yourself and blag your way out, but rather this will be the Day of Standing, the Day that the real *hisāb* will be done.

We all know this as Muslims but we conveniently forget it, or worse ignore it. Surely then, now that the mind is fresh at the beginning of this new dawn, we should recognise that this is our *life* we're talking about, our *Deen* and our future? The one thing that we'll all regret later is not using our time wisely – not using the limited hours we've been given in this temporal world to increase our good deeds to provide evidence **for** us and using these few hours to seek forgiveness for our bad deeds in order to not stack up the evidences **against** us. We don't want to be those who:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو ثُبُورًا وَيَصْلَى سَعِيرًا إِنَّهُ كَانَ
فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحُورَ بَلَى إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا

As for the one whose book will be given to him from behind his back, he will pray for death, and will enter the blazing fire. He had been joyful among his people. He thought he would never revert (to Allāh). No! Indeed his Lord was watchful over him.

(al-Inshiqāq, 10-15)

And:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيهِ وَلَمْ أَدْر مَا حِسَابِيهِ

As for him who will be given his book in his left hand, he will say, "Oh, would that I had not been given my book, and I had never known what my account is!"

(al-Hāqqah, 25-26)

And:

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا

يُعَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

And the book (of deeds) will be placed (before them), then you will see the guilty people scared of its contents and saying, "Woe to us! What kind of book is this?! It has missed nothing, minor or major, but has taken it into account." Thus they will find whatever they did present before them, and your Lord will not wrong anyone.

(al-Kahf, 49)

None of us want to be in a situation like that, and we all know that we have to do more good and refrain from the bad, so what's holding us back? The answer is **a lack of concern and lack of respect for time itself.**

As for being concerned my friends, then be concerned. Be *very* concerned. Hellfire. No Paradise. No Brainer.

As for time, then here we are at the top of the New Year and we should look to our lifestyles, our priorities and change our lives around what Allāh wants from us and not what *we* want.

We're in the winter now, and it is at this time that although we get the cold and miserable weather especially here in the North, we shouldn't miss the blessings either! Have you noticed the short days and the long nights? *Sayyidina 'Eesa ('alayhis-salām)* used to say:

"The day and night are two treasure troves so look to what you put in them."

Imām Hasan al-Basri said:

"Every single day of this worldly life calls out: O people! I am a new day, and I am witness to all that which is performed in me, and once the sun has set, I will not return back to you until Yawm'l-Qiyāmah!"

These are the days to fast folks! For those who are obsessed with food then you couldn't get it easier with such an early sunset, certainly from a hunger point of view. As for controlling your tongue, your eyes and your heart, then there won't be a shorter period to struggle for than in these winter months.

As for the nights, then no, it's not just to sleep longer in hibernation for the killer days and nights of the British summer – we're not bears, we're humans! – rather it's an opportunity to start some small habits of the night that we're not used to like studying extra at night-time, getting up to pray a little *tahajjud* and feel the real value of what prayer *should* be, or waking in the morning and taking advantage of the later *Fajr* times to read some Qur'an before that because

وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

And establish the recital at dawn. Surely, the recital at dawn is well attended.

(al-Isrā', 78)

Also, with the start of the new month Muharram, know that the Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

أفضل الصيام بعد رمضان شهر الله المحرم، وأفضل الصلاة بعد الفريضة صلاة الليل

The best of fasts after Ramadhān is the month of Allāh Muharram, and the best of prayers after the obligatory ones are the night prayers. (Muslim)

Clearly then with Muharram upon us, we should respond to this narration with increased fasting and night prayers, especially when it has been made easier for us from His blessings and also because the 9th and 10th of Muharram are to be fasted for the reward of an entire year's sins being wiped out. Now that's pretty good business by anyone's standards.

Of course, we are not trying to emulate the non-Muslims in how they choose certain times to be good or bad or blessed according to them, but rather we should certainly recognise and believe that Allāh *jalla wa 'alā* closes the lunar *Hijri* year with the great month of *Hajj* and *'ibādah* and then He opens the New Year with fasting, praying and *'ibādah*, so the year begins with good and ends with good. And know that Imām al-Tabarāni narrates a *Hadīth Qudsi* which is considered slightly weak by some scholars that the Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

"Allāh says, "O Son of Adam! Remember me at the beginning of the Day for an hour and at the end of the day for an hour and I will forgive you for the (minor sins)

between that." (al-Hilyah, 8/213)

‘Abdullāh Ibn al-Mubarak in explanation said:

“Whoever completes the day in dhikr of Allāh, the entire day is written for him as if he was in dhikr.”

Perhaps then that we should also seize this moment at the beginning of this new “day” and start it in *dhikr* and good deeds in the hope that we may end this New Year 1429 in *dhikr* and good deeds and hopefully be from those that might get the whole year written as if in good deeds!

May Allāh *jalla wa ‘alā* bless this New Year for us and make it one where we get closer to Him and increase in our worship, and make that worship a benefit for our hearts in this life and our abode in the Hereafter, *amīn*.

(based upon Latā’if al-Ma‘ārif of Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali)