Choosing some days and months and giving them preference over others

Praise be to Allah Who says (interpretation of the meaning): “And your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses.” [al-Qasas 28:68] The attribute of choosing or selecting is indicative of His Lordship and Oneness, and of the perfection of His Wisdom, Knowledge and Power. One aspect of His choosing and preferring is the fact that He has chosen some days and months and given them preference over others. Among the months, Allah has chosen four which He has made sacred, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): “Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months (in a year), so it was ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are Sacred. That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein…” [al-Tawbah 9:36] These months are calculated according to the movements of the moon, not the movements of the sun, as the disbeleivers do.

What are the Sacred months?

The Sacred Months are mentioned by implication in the Quran, but their names are not given. Their names are mentioned in the Sunnah: Abu Bakrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave his Farewell Sermon and said: “Time has completed its cycle and is as it was on the Day when Allah created the heavens and the earth. The year is twelve months, of which four are sacred, three consecutive months – Dhu’l-Qa’dah, Dhu’l-Hijjah and Muharram – and the Rajab of Mudar which comes between Jumaada and Sha’baan.” (Reported by al-Bukhari, no. 1741, in [Kitaab] al-Hajj, al-Khutbah Ayaam Mina; and by Muslim, no. 1679, in [Kitaab] al-Qisaamah, Baab Tahreem al-Dimaa’) It was called Rajab of Mudar because [the tribe of] Mudar did not tamper with its timing, unlike the rest of the Arabs, who used to tamper with the months and change their order depending on whether they were in a state of war or not. This was the postponing referred to in the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): “The

postponing (of a Sacred Month) is indeed an addition to disbelief: thereby the disbelievers are led astray, for they make it lawful one year and forbid it another year in order to adjust the number of months forbidden by Allah, and make such forbidden ones lawful." [al-Tawbah 9:37] It was also said that the reason why it was attributed to Mudar was because they venerated it and respected it so much, so it was attributed to them.

The reason why Rajab is given this name

Ibn Faaris said in Mu'jam Maqaayees al-Lughah (p. 445): The letters Ra', jeem and ba' form a root which indicates supporting and strengthening something with another thing. … Hence the phrase "Rajabtu'l-shay'" means I venerated it… It was called Rajab because they used to venerate it, and it is also venerated in Sharee'ah. The people of the Jaahiliyyah used to call Rajab Munassil al-Asinnah [the one that causes the sharp heads of weapons to be taken off], as it was reported that Abu Rajaa' al-'Ataaridi said: We would a rock, then if we found a better rock we would throw the first one aside and adopt the other. If we could not find a rock, we would make a pile of dirt, then we would bring a ewe and milk it over the pile of dirt, then we would do tawaaf around it. When the month of Rajab came, we would say Munassil al-Asinnah [the one that causes the sharp heads of weapons to be taken off], and we would not leave any spear or arrow that had an iron piece in it but we would take the metal head off and put it aside during the month of Rajab. (Narrated by al-Bukhari). Al-Bayhaqi said: the people of the jaahiliyyah used to venerate these sacred months, especially the month of Rajab, and they would not fight during this month.

The month of Rajab is a sacred month

The Sacred months have a special status, which applies also to Rajab because it is one of these sacred months. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "O you who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the Symbols of Allah, nor of the Sacred Month…" [al-Maa'idah 5:2] This means: do not violate their sanctity which Allah has commanded you to respect and forbidden you to violate, for this prohibition includes both vile deeds and vile beliefs. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "so wrong not yourselves therein…" [al-Tawbah 9:36] meaning, in the Sacred Months. The

pronoun here [translated here as “therein”] refers to these four sacred months, as stated by the Imam of the Mufassireen, Ibn Jareer al-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him). So we should pay attention to the sanctity of these four months, because Allah has singled them out for a special status and has forbidden us to commit sins out of respect for their sanctity, for sins committed at this time are even worse, because of the sanctity of the time which Allah has made sacred. Hence in the aayah quoted above, Allah has forbidden us to wrong ourselves even though this – i.e., wronging ourselves, which includes committing sins – is forbidden during all the months of the year.

Fighting during the sacred months

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “They ask you concerning fighting in the sacred months. Say: fighting therein is a great (transgression)…” [al-Baqarah 2:217] The majority of scholars state that (the prohibition of) fighting in the sacred months is abrogated by the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): “Then when the sacred months have passed, then kill the Mushrikeen wherever you find them…” [al-Tawbah 9:5], and other aayat and reports which are general in application and which include commands to fight them. Others say: it is not permissible to initiate fighting during the sacred months, but it is permissible to continue and conclude fighting, if it started at a different time. The fighting of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) against the people of al-Taa’if is interpreted in this way, because the fighting had begun at Hunayn in Shawwaal. The above does not apply to fighting in self-defence. If the enemy attacks the Muslim lands, it is obligatory for the inhabitants to defend themselves, whether that happens during a sacred month or not.

Offering Ateerah in the month of Rajab

During the Jaahiliyyah, the Arabs used to slaughter a sacrifice during Rajab as an act of worship towards their idols. When Islam came, teaching that sacrifices were to be offered only to Allah, this deed of the Jaahiliyyah was abolished. The fuqaha’ differed as to the rulings on offering sacrifices during Rajab. The majority of Hanafis, Maalikis and Hanbalis stated that the sacrifice of al-‘Ateerah

was abrogated. Their evidence was the hadith, “There is no Fir’ and no ‘Ateerah”, narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah. The Shaafa’is said that al-‘Ateerah had not been abrogated, and they regarded it as mustahabb (recommended). This was also the view of Ibn Seereen. Ibn Hajar said: this is supported by the hadith narrated by Abu Dawood, An-Nasa'i, and Ibn Maajah, and classed as saheeh by al-Haakim and Ibn al-Mundhir, from Nubayshah, who said: A man called out to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): We used to offer the sacrifice of al-‘Ateerah during the Jaahiliyyah in the month of Rajab. What do you command us to do? He said, Offer sacrifices, no matter which month is it… Ibn Hajar said: the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not abolish it in principle, but he abolished the idea of making this sacrifice especially in Rajab.

Fasting in Rajab

There is no saheeh report from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or from the Sahaabah to indicate that there is any particular virtue in fasting during Rajab. The fasting that is prescribed in Rajab is the same as that prescribed in other months, namely fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, and the three days of al-Beed, fasting alternate days, and fasting Sirar al-Shahr. Some of the scholars said that Sirar al-Shahr refers to the beginning of the month; others said that it refers to the middle or end of the month. ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to forbid fasting in Rajab because it involved resemblance to the Jaahiliyyah. It was reported that Kharashah ibn al-Harr said: I saw ‘Umar smacking the hands of those who fasted in Rajab until they reached out for food, and he was saying, This is a month which was venerated in the Jaahiliyyah. (al-Irwaa’, 957; al-Albaani said: it is saheeh). Imam Ibn al-Qayyim said: the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not fast for three consecutive months (i.e., Rajab, Sha’baan and Ramadan) as some people do, and he never fasted Rajab at all, nor did he encourage people to fast this month. Al-Haafiz ibn Hajar said in Tabayyun al-‘Ajab bimaa wurida fi Fadl Rajab: No saheeh hadith that may be used as evidence has been narrated concerning the virtues of the month of Rajab or fasting this month or fasting in any specific part of it, or observing Qiyaam al-Layl specifically during this month. Imam Abu Ismaa’eel al-Harawi al-Haafiz has already stated this before me, and

we have narrated this from others also. In Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah it states: with regard to fasting specifically in Rajab, we do not know of any basis in Sharee'ah for doing that.

Umrah in Rajab

The ahaadeeth indicate that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not do 'Umrah during Rajab, as it was narrated that Mujaahid said: 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and I entered the mosque, and there was 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Umar sitting near the room of 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). He was asked, "How many times did the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) do 'Umrah?" He said, "Four times, and one of them was in Rajab." We did not want to argue with him. We could hear 'Aa'ishah Umm al-Mu'mineen brushing her teeth (i.e., the sound of the miswaak) in her room. 'Urwah said, "O Mother of the Believers, did you not hear what Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan is saying?" She said, "What is he saying?" He said, "He is saying that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did 'Umrah four times, one of them in Rajab." She said, "May Allah have mercy on Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan, [the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)] never did 'Umrah but he witnesses it (i.e., he was present with him), and he never did 'Umrah during Rajab." (Agreed upon). It was reported by Muslim that Ibn 'Umar heard this and did not say yes or no. Al-Nawawi said: the fact that Ibn 'Umar remained silent when 'Aa'ishah denied what he said indicates that he was confused, or had forgotten, or was uncertain. Hence it is an innovated bid'ah to single out Rajab for making 'Umrah and to believe that doing 'Umrah in Rajab has a specific virtue. Nothing to that effect has been narrated, besides the fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is not reported to have made 'Umrah during Rajab at all. Shaykh 'Ali ibn Ibraaheem al-'Attaar (d. 724 AH) said: One of the things that I have heard about the people of Makkah – may Allah increase it in honour – is that they do 'Umrah frequently during Rajab. This is something for which I know of no basis, all I know is that it was reported in the hadith that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: " 'Umrah in Ramadan is equivalent to Hajj." Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his Fatawaa: As for singling out some of the days of Rajab for any kind of good deed, ziyaarah (visiting the House of Allah, the

Ka’bah) or anything else, there is no basis for this, because Imam Abu Shaamah stated in his book al-Bida’ wa’l-Hawaadith: specifying acts of worship at times that were not specified by sharee’ah is wrong; no time is to be regarded as better than any other except in cases where the sharee’ah gave preference to a certain act of worship at a certain time, or stated that any good deed done at this time is better than good deeds done at other times. Hence the scholars denounced the practice of singling out the month of Rajab for doing ‘Umrah frequently. But if a person goes for ‘Umrah during Rajab without believing that this has any particular virtue and because it is just a coincidence that it is easier for him to go at this time, then there is nothing wrong with that.

Bid’ah in the month of Rajab

Innovation in religion is one of the serious matters which go against the Book of Allah and the Sunnah. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not die until after the religion had been perfected. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “… This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion…” [al-Maa’idah 5:3] It was reported that ‘Aa’isha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever innovates something in this matter of ours which is not a part of it, will have it rejected.” (Agreed upon). According to a report narrated by Muslim: “Whoever does an action which is not a part of this matter of ours will have it rejected.” Some people have innovated a number of practices in Rajab, including the following:

- Salaat al-Raghaa’ib. This prayer became widespread after the first and best centuries, especially in the fourth century AH. Some liars fabricated this prayer, which is done on the first night of Rajab. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Salaat al-Raghaa’ib is bid’ah according to the consensus of the scholars of religion, such as Maalik, al-Shaafa’i, Abu Haneefah, al-Thawri, al-‘Oozaa’i, al-Layth and others . The hadith that is narrated concerning it is a lie according to the consensus of the scholars who have knowledge of hadith.

- It was reported that major events happened in the month of Rajab, but none of these reports

are true. It was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born on the first night of Rajab, and that he received his Mission on the twenty-seventh, or twenty-fifth of this month. None of this is correct. It was reported with an isnaad that is not saheeh from al-Qaasim ibn Muhammad that the Prophet's Night Journey (al-Israa') took place on the twenty-seventh of Rajab. This was denied by Ibraaheem al-Harbi and others. One of the innovations that take place during this month is the recitation of the story of the Mi'raaj, and celebrations to commemorate it on the twenty-seventh of Rajab, or singling out this night to perform extra acts of worship such as Qiyaam al-Layl or fasting during the day, or rejoicing and celebrating. Some celebrations are accompanied by haraam things such as mixing of men and women, singing and music, all of which are not permitted on the two Eids which are prescribed in Islam, let alone innovated celebrations. Add to that the fact that there is no proof that the Israa' and Mi'raaj happened on this date. Even if it were proven, that is no excuse for holding celebrations on this date, because nothing of the kind has been reported from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or from his companions, may Allah be pleased with them, or from any of the Salaf (early generations) of this Ummah. If it were a good thing, they would surely have done it before us. May Allah help us.

- Salaat Umm Dawood halfway through Rajab.
- The du'aa's which are recited specifically during Rajab are all fabrications and innovations.
- Visiting graves specifically in Rajab is bid'ah, because graves are to be visited at any time of the year.

We ask Allah to make us of those who venerate the things that He has made sacred and adhere to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) outwardly and inwardly, for He is the One Whom we should ask and He is Able to do that. And the close of our request is: praise be to Allah, the Lord of 'Aalameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists).