

A Season of Worship

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The months of Rajab and Sha'bān are holy months with special opportunities for the worship and remembrance of Allah. These two months are a preparation for the coming of Ramadhān, the holiest month of the Islamic year. Together, these three months form a season of worship -- a season of spiritual rebirth and growth.

The Holy Prophet (s) has said: *Rajab is the month of Allah, Sha'bān is my month, and Ramadhān is the month of my Ummah.* Other than the special prayers prescribed for these months, fasting, seeking forgiveness, and being watchful over one's deeds are highly recommended. This season of worship, with all its emphasis and encouragement on *Tbādah*, can raise the believer to great spiritual heights. To understand the benefits of a season of worship, consider the following.

1. Proof of the love and mercy of Allah We often become heedless of our duties towards God, and become engrossed in worldly affairs. It is because we lead such busy lives that we need a season of worship. Left to ourselves, we would seldom get a chance to boost ourselves spiritually. In His mercy, Allah has kept a special time, encouraging us to worship intensely by multiplying the reward of worship during that time, and emphasizing the sanctity of the season. This turns us towards Allah, and brings closeness to Allah as well as a decrease in attachment to the world. The effects of this, if done rightly, will last well beyond the season. This is a clear demonstration of Allah's love for His creatures as He encourages them to get close to Him, even though there is no benefit for Him in it.

Imam Zaynul 'Ābidīn (a) says in Du'ā No. 45 of *as-Sahīfa as-Sajjādiyyah*:

*So they remember You for Your kindness
they thank You for Your Blessings
they pray to You by Your command
and they donate for You in order to seek Your increase
In all this lies their deliverance from Your wrath
and their triumph through Your good pleasure* (Passage 16)

2. **A chance for erasing past sins** Even though we all carry a heavy burden of sins, we do not often take the time to seek forgiveness for them. The season of worship is a time of *Istighfār*, a time to plead for forgiveness. The special Du'ās of these months all include acknowledgment of the wrongs we have done, and invoke sincerely for forgiveness and safety from the punishment of Allah. *Istighfār* not only gives us hope that our burden has become lighter; it also helps us move forward. A heavy burden of sins is an impediment to spiritual progress, and only if the burden is removed can we go on. It is also a time for new resolutions to stay away from sins.

3. **An opportunity to improve** When we worship more than usual, seek forgiveness more often, and generally are more attune with Allah and His commands, it is natural that we examine ourselves and the lives we lead. The season of worship is a time to cleanse all that is impure in us and a chance to start afresh. Every year, the season rejuvenates the believers. It is incorrect to think that believers will only be virtuous for these months and then revert back. It is impossible to go sincerely through such a period of worship and forgiveness, without its effects carrying over into the rest of the year.

Thinking of the benefits of the season of worship helps us realize that it is a great blessing for us. It is not a burden imposed upon us, but a glorious chance offered by the Creator. So long as we live, He will give us this opportunity every year to get closer to Him and improve our position. It is up to us to make the most of these months.

