

Rabi' al-Awwal: The Birth of the Prophet, the Islamic State, and the Caliphate

The 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal should appropriately be commemorated by Muslims, even if doing so is not a religious obligation. It marks the birth date (mawlid) of the greatest of mankind, elevated by Allah (swt) as the Seal of the Prophets. He is Muhammad (saw), whose birth and entire life were truly extraordinary, making him the most exceptional human being not only in this world but also in the Hereafter.

The distinction of Rabi' al-Awwal lies not only in it being the month of his (saw) birth, but also the time he was appointed as a Messenger, although this is not a matter of scholarly consensus. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin al-Husayn bin 'Ali al-Mas'udi (d. 346 AH) recorded in his book, at-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf, as follows: فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَى النَّاسِ كَافَّةً يَوْمَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ لِعَشْرِ خَلُونِ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَبِيعِ الْأَوَّلِ... وَلَهُ ﷺ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَرْبَعُونَ سَنَةً وَتَوَزَّعَ فِي أَوَّلِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ مِنَ الذُّكُورِ، بَعْدَ إِجْمَاعِهِمْ عَلَى أَنَّ أَوَّلَ مَنْ خَلُوَ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَبِيعِ الْأَوَّلِ... “Then, when he reached the age of forty, Allah 'Azza wa Jalla sent him as a Messenger to all of mankind on a Monday, ten days into the month of Rabi' al-Awwal... The Messenger of Allah (saw) was forty years of age at that time. There is a difference of opinion regarding the first male to believe in him, following their consensus that the first female to believe in him was Khadijah.”

Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Qastallani (d. 923 AH), in al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah bi al-Minah al-Muhammadiyah, likewise records several opinions concerning the beginning of the Prophetic mission. Among them, he cites Ibn 'Abd al-Barr as holding that the Prophet (saw) was sent on Monday, eight days into Rabi' al-Awwal, while another opinion places it at the beginning of Rabi' al-Awwal: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً... وَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبْدِ الْبَرِّ: يَوْمَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ لِسِتِّينَ مِنْ رَبِيعِ الْأَوَّلِ سَنَةً إِحْدَى وَأَرْبَعِينَ مِنَ الْفِيلِ. وَقِيلَ: فِي أَوَّلِ رَبِيعٍ: بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ، وَرَسُولًا إِلَى كَافَّةِ النَّفْلَيْنِ أَجْمَعِينَ “And when the Messenger of Allah (saw) reached the age of forty... Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said: (He was sent) on a Monday, the eighth of Rabi' al-Awwal, in the 41st year of the Elephant. It was also said: at the beginning of Rabi' al-Awwal, Allah sent him as a mercy to all the worlds, and as a Messenger to all mankind and jinn.”

Such is the profound significance of Rabi' al-Awwal. It is not merely the month of the Prophet's (saw) birth, but also the month in which he (saw) was elevated to Prophethood.

Rabi' al-Awwal: The Hijrah and the Birth of the Islamic State

Perhaps many are unaware that Rabi' al-Awwal is also the month of the Prophet's (saw) emigration (Hijrah), which culminated in the establishment of the Islamic State in Madinah. In other words, Rabi' al-Awwal is the birth month of the Islamic State, a State that altered the course of world civilization previously dominated by the Roman and Persian empires. At-Tabari noted in his book, Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk: حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ حُمَيْدٍ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا سَلَمَةُ، عَنْ ابْنِ إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ، قَالَ: قَدِمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمَدِينَةَ يَوْمَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ، لِاثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ لَيْلَةً خَلَتْ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَبِيعِ الْأَوَّلِ “Narrated to us by Ibn Humaid, who said: Narrated to us by Salamah, from Ibn Ishaq, from az-Zuhri, who stated: The Messenger of Allah (saw) arrived in Madinah on a Monday, after twelve nights had passed in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal.”

Al-Bukhari narrated in his Sahih from Ibn Shihab, from 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, who recounted: وَسَمِعَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ بِالْمَدِينَةِ مَخْرَجَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ مِنْ مَكَّةَ... فَتَلَقَّوْا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ بِظَهْرِ الْحَرَّةِ، فَعَدَلَ بِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ، “And the Muslims in Madinah heard the news of the departure of the Messenger of Allah (saw) from Makkah... thus

they went out to receive the Messenger of Allah (saw) at Zahr al-Harrah, and he then turned right with them until he halted with them at the quarters of Bani 'Amr bin 'Awf. That occurred on a Monday in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal...”

Furthermore, Ibn Hibban narrated in his Sahih from al-Bara', who shared: **أَنَّ قُدُومَهُ ﷺ الْمَدِينَةَ “That his (saw) arrival in Madinah took place on a Monday, after twelve nights had passed in Rabi' al-Awwal.”**

Therefore, the prestige of Rabi' al-Awwal is further magnified as it marks the month wherein the first Islamic State was established, thereby enabling the implementation of the Islamic Sharia within the context of society and statehood in utmost majesty and prosperity.

Rabi' al-Awwal: The Demise of the Messenger and the Birth of the Caliphate

Apart being the month of the birth and appointment of Muhammad (saw) as a Messenger, Rabi' al-Awwal is also the month of his (saw) demise. According to the famous views among a number of historians, the Prophet (saw) passed away on the exact same date he was born: Monday, 12 Rabi' al-Awwal, in the 11th year of the Hijrah, precisely during the forenoon (Duha) of that day.

On that very Monday, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq was elected through a meeting at the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah as the first Caliph of the Muslims. He was given the pledge of allegiance (Bay'ah al-In'iqad) by the Ahl al-Hall wa al-'Aqd on that day, and on the following day (Tuesday), he received the pledge of obedience (Bay'ah al-Ta'ah) from the general Muslim populace in the mosque. Once these proceedings were perfectly completed, Abu Bakr led the burial of the noble body of the Messenger (saw) on that night.

Thus, Rabi' al-Awwal serves as the date of the Messenger's (saw) demise, while simultaneously marking the birth of the Caliphate (Khilafah) as a continuation of the Islamic State established by the Prophet (saw). Abu Bakr was the first of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Khulafa' ar-Rashidun), leading the entire Muslim ummah under the aegis of the Caliphate – an institution subsequently carried on by the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and finally the Ottomans.

Re-establishing the Caliphate as the Greatest Sunnah

Given the multitude of momentous events that transpired, the commemoration of the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal should not be confined solely to remembering the birth of the Messenger of Allah (saw). It must also encompass the birth of the Islamic State and the Caliphate, serving as a reminder to all Muslims to work toward its restoration.

If the birth of the Messenger (saw) is worthy of remembrance, then the birth of the Islamic State and the Caliphate is not only worthy of remembrance but is an obligation to be fought for and reinstated. This is because the work to establish the Islamic State was the very essence of the Prophet's (saw) mission, thus constituting his (saw) greatest sunnah.

Had the Islamic State not been an obligation, the Messenger of Allah (saw) would undoubtedly not have established it; the Rightly Guided Caliphs would not have sustained its existence; the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman Caliphs would not have defended its continuity.

The collapse of the Caliphate on 28 Rajab 1342 AH (March 3, 1924) signified the fall of an Islamic ruling system built since the era of the Prophet (saw), consequently imposing a legal implication regarding the obligation to revive it. Moreover, the majority of scholars assert that the Caliphate is the most paramount obligation (Ahamm al-Wajibat), rendering the effort to restore it as the greatest sunnah that every Muslim is duty-bound to pursue.

It is exclusively through the Caliphate that the religion of Allah can be implemented comprehensively (Kaffah); Muslims are united under a single leadership; the dignity, wealth, blood, and lives of Muslims are safeguarded; the enemies of Allah (swt) are defeated, and the opening of new lands (Futuhah) can be undertaken; humanity is guided from darkness into light; a magnificent Islamic civilization is constructed; and the mercy of Allah (swt) can spread to all corners of the universe.

It is from this perspective that the Mawlid and Rabi' al-Awwal should be viewed. The Messenger of Allah (saw) struggled for 13 years in Makkah and 10 years in Madinah, and it is inconceivable that his 23 years of works were confined merely to Solah, Saum, Zakah and Hajj. Evidently, he (saw) did not merely cultivate personal morals; he built a society, a state, and indeed shaped the world with Islam. All of these constitute his Sunnah and must be emulated by each and every Muslim.

It is deeply unfortunate when the Mawlid of the Prophet (saw) is celebrated on a grand scale, yet his (saw) Sunnah is adopted only in matters of worship (Ibadat) or marriage (Munakahat), while matters pertaining to transactions (Muamalat), social interactions, politics, economics, governance, the judiciary, punishment (Uqubat), international treaties, Jihad, and foreign policy are discarded and replaced with doctrines imparted by colonialists. This is the tragic reality witnessed across Muslim lands today.

On this basis, every Muslim who genuinely loves the Prophet (saw) is obligated to strive for the resumption of the Islamic way of life by re-establishing the Caliphate – mirroring the Prophet's (saw) work to establish the first Islamic State. Only through this path can the religion of Allah (swt) be applied comprehensively (Kaffah), thereby ensuring that a Muslim is truly walking upon the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saw).

Conclusion

Verily, the event of the Prophet's (saw) birth cannot be dissociated from the birth of the Islamic State, the Hijrah, and the birth of the Caliphate. Each event represents a continuous thread of his (saw) noble struggle, which was further perpetuated by his Companions. The fall of the Caliphate in 1924 was indeed a catastrophe for the Muslim Ummah, yet simultaneously, it opens a space and opportunity for us to strive just as the Messenger of Allah (saw) strove especially in restoring the greatest Islamic State – an opportunity that none of us should squander.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Abdul Hakim Othman

Official Spokesperson of Hizb ut Tahrir in Malaysia