

Islamic New Year

Marking the Beginning of a New Era

Prophetic era can be divided into two major phases—Prophet Muhammad SAW’s time in Makkah and that after his migration to Madinah. Allah SWT ordered His Prophet to migrate from Makkah to Madinah in the month of Muharram; a journey whose effects were so profound that Muslims date their calendar from it.

Muslims across the world celebrate first of Muharram as the New Year. How should it really be celebrated? Is it enough to have some sweets and some talk about the story of the migration? No. It is a reminder and a lesson that needs to be studied in order to fully understand its significance. This in turn should generate personal reflection and questions for self evaluation. What did *hijrah* (migration) really mean? What makes it so great? What makes it so significant? How does it affect my life? How can I be inspired from it?

Almost all the Muslims know about the story of the migration of Prophet SAW. Today, by the will of Allah *Jalla-Jalalahu* we will dig deeper into the matter to extract messages for ourselves from it. Let’s examine what the New Year is all about, where it is coming from, and what makes it so significant. We can never understand it unless we understand the thinking and aspirations of the Muslims who performed it and those who supported them. Hopefully, by the time we finish this essay, we will be able to examine ourselves and hopefully InshaAllah internalize their thinking, actions and achievements.

Hijrah:

- What does hijrah mean?
- Who are the migrants?
 - To what and where?
- What is the purpose?
- What was their goal?

In order to answer these questions, two elements need to take center stage: Sacrifice and Love.

Let's begin by questioning which of the following are higher in rank and importance:

- The men who migrated or the ones who supported them?
- The action of migration in itself or the ability and quality of those who carried it out?
- Or was it their faith which outweighed everything else to the point they were willing to sacrifice even their lives for it?
- Or the achievement and hope for the future that they were waiting for?
- Or the sense of responsibility for the covenant between them and their Lord which enabled them to always look ahead at the purpose of their lives and the message that they had embraced?

From the Cave to the First Muslim Nation:

Time passes by and every event prepares us for what is coming ahead; all according to the great divine plan. We might not know its purpose at the moment but the faith in Allah SWT gives us the wisdom and patience we need to be ready for when the time comes. Just like when Muhammad SAW hid in the small cave on the Mountain of Thaur, little did he know that it would become the most important day of his life; for his message, for the sincerity of his faith, and for hope for himself and mankind. This became the day that Allah SWT chose for Muslims to reflect over and think about, the day they celebrate their New Year, the beginning of the history of Islam, and a new era to the da'wah to Allah. This was the day of inception of the first Muslim Nation on earth. This was the day that caused all future battles, tragedies, hardships, openings, victory and spread of Islam on earth.

Our great history began when honest souls ran away from the oppression and persecution in order to protect their faith and carry themselves from darkness to light. It was the day when men chose their Creator and His will above everything else. In fact, we can say that the Creator chose the day for His Own Prophet and gave it to Him as a gift in order to bring a new era in the history of mankind. This migration wrote the ultimate story of sacrifice, bravery, and honor of a few men for their faith; the men who truly believed in the promise of their Lord that after every hardship there is ease.

If you will not aid him, Allah certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Grieve not, surely Allah is with us. So Allah sent down His tranquillity upon him and

strengthened him with hosts which you did not see, and made lowest the word of those who disbelieved; and the word of Allah, that is the highest; and Allah is Mighty, Wise. (9:40)

It was a brilliant time full of wisdom for the beginning of a new era in human history. The conditions and souls were so ready that no revolution, blood, or killing was needed for it to happen. Immigration was an event in history when da'wah to Allah became of utmost significance. Some scholars debate whether it is the birth of the person that is important or the things he achieves in life; in particular referring to the significance of the birth of Prophet SAW versus his immigration to Madinah. This begs us to question what makes the birth of a person significant. It is the things that the person achieves that elevate his birth and signify his existence. How many people born and die without leaving behind any trace? The point of discussion is to emphasize the importance of events occurring in a person's life. What makes one life greater than the other is how the person deals with the situations presented to him and makes the most of them. Our life is a string of events and the way we deal with these events and the stands we take determines our place in history. If the life is lived without any achievements and without taking any real stands for a cause, what is the value of its birth?

Birth is the beginning of human life after which the soul is guided. Allah chose the Prophet SAW and gave him the responsibility of receiving revelation and guiding humanity. The immigration was an attempt at guarding the revelation, saving it and elevating it above everything else including family, tribe, land, comfort, even life itself.

History is not measured by victories, rather by beliefs, actions and their outcomes. The day of migration was a display of immense faith, hope, belief in Allah SWT and His revelations after all the uncertainties, weaknesses, inability of spreading or even living the message in Makkah. On top of it, it was an action entirely shrouded by mystery and 'unknown'; the time of Prophet's migration was unknown until the last moment when Jibraeel arrived with the orders from the heaven, the details of the place he was headed to were unknown to him as well as the circumstances of leaving and his arrival at the new destination. Yet this 'unknown' was overpowered by his immense faith and hope in his Lord.

How many of us complain about the present and worry about the future, yet do not take any action to resolve the situation? We are so paralyzed by the fear of unknown and the loss of status quo that we refuse to take any actions and thus deprive ourselves from great hope and future that might be awaiting us. Even as a nation we blame governments, leaders, and situations instead of taking responsibility and asking what we can do as individuals in order to bring about change.

It was the opposite with our Prophet SAW. Instead of complaining, once his situation became intolerable, he immigrated and set his hopes and efforts on changing the future. This was a display of ultimate internal victory when unshakable faith in their Lord caused a handful of men to change the course of history. Without them and their actions Islam would have never spread. This was the beginning of a new future for mankind.

This day saw ordinary people becoming extra ordinary with their support of their Prophet for a noble cause, while willing to sacrifice their lives, families and belongings. It was the day that joined two men—a Prophet and his companion—going to a destiny which was the destiny of future of mankind. Abu Bakr RA became Prophet's companion on this momentous journey on the orders of Allah SWT. It was an honor bestowed on him due to his unwavering faith and unrelenting support of the Prophet. He displayed ultimate level of sacrifice by giving everything—his wealth, family, and his own self—to Allah and his Prophet, to the point no one till the end of time can reach the level of Abu Bakr RA. His faith was so close to the faith of the Prophet that Allah SWT honored him by mentioning him in the same ayah along with the Prophet SAW. Prophet SAW said:

'If the imaan of Abu Bakr was placed on one side of the scale and the imaan of the ummah on the other the imaan of Abu Bakr would outweigh it'. (Sunan ad-Daarimi)

Ali ibn Abi Talib RA was willing to sacrifice his life by sleeping on Prophet's bed in order to help him hide his migration and leave the house unsuspected. Asma bint Abu Bakr RA, the young girl who brought the fugitives food and treaded the barren desert alone set an example of bravery and honor towards her faith for generations to come.

Their support was not only to their Prophet but it was support for the message and everyone living the message. It was the message and belief that they were living, as well as the message that they were living for. None of these Muslims were thinking about themselves, their personal affairs or their material comforts. They were all engaged in living Allah-u-Akbar and making Allah SWT great everywhere and in strengthening their belief, elevating it and spreading it.

You can read the details of the journey and you will be shocked by the amount of sacrifice, determination, love and devotion that they displayed; as well as the concrete anchored faith in their hearts which was stronger than mountains and more powerful than any wind or storm. It was almost like a complete battle but unlike any other battle because it was not

fought with any equipment or ammunition but rather with their belief, love, devotion, elevation and obedience to their Creator.

Faith Conquers Odds:

The faith of the Prophet and his companions was like an unleashed force which conquered everything in its way. It allowed them to migrate from their beloved land leaving behind their most treasured possessions, their homes, their comfort because everything was worthless when compared with what Allah SWT had in store for them. Their faith in the destiny that Allah had promised them in return for their devotion and obedience was so high that they were willing to sacrifice everything for it. Their goal was to illuminate not only their own hearts and bodies with their faith but the entire earth. It was the end of an era of darkness and the beginning of an era full of hope, light, peace, struggles and sacrifices for the elevation of the message.

We have to stop in here for a moment and ask ourselves how many of us are defeated because of condition, environment, relationship, material or social status or even weakness or fear of the unknown? How many of us are afraid of the future or are crying, blaming and complaining about our past and thus unable to go forward.

Where are we from those two men on a night when all odds were against them? When there was a large bounty on their heads and multitudes looking for them. There was only one element that was sustaining them—their faith and the support of their Lord in which they believed. We can go to the details and study them but anyone who examines them will come to the conclusion that it was the mercy, will and support of the Almighty Lord SWT that saved them.

We need to stop in here and reflect over which is more important—our faith and the future of this faith, or our weaknesses and circumstances. An honest reflection will bring us to the conclusion that our preoccupation with our personal situations is actually a sign of selfishness and negligence towards our faith for which the entire humanity is hungry.

Mankind is Hungry for Guidance:

Any time the humans are living without divine guidance, they generate a hostile environment. They are confused, lonely, deceived, in darkness and waiting for a savior. They need someone to elevate their souls and to take them from this chaotic state to guidance, peace, tranquility, and oneness of their Creator. A person can never attain true peace and happiness until his soul recognizes and is united with His Creator.

Today we are in a chaotic state because of our weak faith and lack of vision for the future—our future as well as the future of our families, society and mankind. Why? Because we are selfish and only think about our own momentary comfort to the point we are willing to sacrifice our faith and our future in this life and the hereafter.

How far have we come from that night which generated light and illuminated the earth! What goal those people had and what price they paid for it!

Do I have a goal?

Do you have one?

When studying the lives of the companions of Prophet SAW one almost feels a sense of urgency, responsibility, honor, and championship. They were all aiming towards and living for one thing: the deliverance of message of Islam to humanity. Everything besides it, including their personal lives, was meaningless!

Today we study about the migration of our Prophet SAW and his companions and we say WOW, or we feel good about it, or we might cry over the things they endured but how many of us wonder how we can be with them? How can we be like them?

This raises the following questions:

What does the word immigration mean?

Linguistically it means to leave; to get out; and to move.

Leave or move from where to where?

The scholars have said that this is a move from:

- darkness to light;
- ignorance to knowledge;
- worshipping each other/idols/nothing to worshipping the Almighty Lord, the only one worthy of this honor;
- being stuck with our culture and habits (even if they are bad and harmful) to the obedience of the of the Almighty and teachings of His Prophet SAW;
- the present lifestyle and material madness to the hereafter, to Paradise and to the life of infinite happiness;
- the diseases of the heart to the purity of the heart;

- selfishness and personal greed to the benefit of all humanity;
- the injustice and oppression against myself and others to the justice and kindness to myself and others;

Thus migration is of many levels and takes many forms. It starts with an internal migration of thought and desires to reach the love and pleasure of Allah SWT, and it is the most beautiful kind of migration. No messenger and Prophet reached his high status with Allah SWT without carrying out one or the other type of immigration.

Are you ready to immigrate to your Lord? Are you ready to experience the real happiness of your soul and body? Are you willing to take a stand for your faith and fulfill your covenant to your Lord by living and spreading His message to mankind?

Today humanity is in a very desperate situation. We are faced with myriad of problems from economic crisis to injustice and oppression against each other, massive killings, uncertainty of goal and direction, to running without a break in the maze of material world. We are tired, fatigued, lost and we forget that sooner or later we will die.

Today we can celebrate the New Year but when are we really going to internalize its true meaning and migrate to our Lord and His message? Majority of mankind is in a state of heedlessness from their Lord; when are we doing to realize our responsibility of bringing them back to Allah. This is the only hope of bringing peace in this world and achieving success in this life and the hereafter.

Message from the Lord in His Own Words:

I will share with you some of the verses from Holy Quran about this issue and once you read them you will know how important it is to be on the journey of migration yourself as well as supporting the immigrants. May Allah SWT make us among those until we reach Him with His pleasure, *Ameen*.

The verses below explain the word immigration:

In arrogance; talking nonsense about the Quran, and left him like one telling fables by night. (23:67)

And uncleanness do shun, (74:5)

He said: Do you dislike my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will certainly revile you, and leave me for a time. (19:46)

And bear patiently what they say and avoid them with a becoming avoidance. (73:10)

When compiled, the word migration in the words of Allah SWT according to these verses means to leave, to shun and to avoid.

Now I am going to give you verses explaining significance of immigration and status of a migrant:

And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones. (59:9)

Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah these hope for the mercy of Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (2:218)

So their Lord accepted their prayer: That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other; they, therefore, who fled and were turned out of their homes and persecuted in My way and who fought and were slain, I will most certainly cover their evil deeds, and I will most certainly make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow; a reward from Allah, and with Allah is yet better reward. (3:195)

Surely those who believed and fled (their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and their souls, and those who gave shelter and helped-- these are guardians of each other; and (as for) those who believed and did not fly, not yours is their guardianship until they fly; and if they seek aid from you in the matter of religion, aid is incumbent on you except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty, and Allah sees what you do. (8:72)

And (as for) those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped, these are the believers truly; they shall have forgiveness and honorable provision. (8:74)

And (as for) those who believed afterwards and fled and struggled hard along with you, they are of you; and the possessors of relationships are nearer to each other in the ordinance of Allah; surely Allah knows all things. (8:75)

Those who believed and fled (their homes), and strove hard in Allah's way with their property and their souls, are much higher in rank with Allah; and those are they who are the achievers (of their objects). (9:20)

And those who became fugitives for the cause of Allah after they had been oppressed, We verily shall give them goodly lodging in the world, and surely the reward of the Hereafter is greater, if they but knew; (16:41)

Yet surely your Lord, with respect to those who fly after they are persecuted, then they struggle hard and are patient, most surely your Lord after that is Forgiving, Merciful. (16:110)

And (as for) those who fly in Allah's way and are then slain or die, Allah will most certainly grant them a goodly sustenance, and most surely Allah is the best Giver of sustenance. (22:58)

The next two verses are very important messages for all of us:

Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say: In what state were you? They shall say: We were weak in the earth. They shall say: Was not Allah's earth spacious, so that you should have migrated therein? So these it is whose abode is hell, and it is an evil resort. (4:97)

And whoever flies in Allah's way, he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources, and whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (4:100)

Allah SWT continues on to say:

They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike; therefore take not from among them friends until they fly (their homes) in Allah's way; but if they turn back, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them a friend or a helper. (4:89)

And the Messenger cried out: O my Lord! surely my people have treated this Quran as a forsaken thing. (25:30)

Another important message for all of us:

And Lut believed in Him, and he said: I am fleeing to my Lord, surely He is the Mighty, the Wise. (29:26)

This is the message and a reminder for all of us today:

And (as for) the foremost, the first of the Muhajirs and the Ansars, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them forever; that is the mighty achievement. (9:100)

Allah SWT says:

Certainly Allah has turned (mercifully) to the Prophet and those who fled (their homes) and the helpers who followed him in the hour of straitness after the hearts of a part of them were about to deviate, then He turned to them (mercifully); surely to them He is Compassionate, Merciful. (9:117)

And let not those of you who possess grace and abundance swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah's way, and they should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (24:22)

The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves, and his wives are (as) their mothers; and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of Allah to inheritance, one with respect to another, than (other) believers, and (than) those who have fled (their homes), except that you do some good to your friends; this is written in the Book. (33:6)

(It is) for the poor who fled their homes and their possessions, seeking grace of Allah and (His) pleasure, and assisting Allah and His Messenger: these it is that are the truthful. (59:8)

Mentioned below are a few sayings of the Prophet SAW regarding the topic of *hijrah*:

Abdullah Ibn 'Umar that he Prophet said:

"The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and the emigrant (muhajir) is the one who abandons what Allah has forbidden." (Bukhari)

The Prophet (saw) said:

"Ibaadah (worship) during the time of turmoil is like migrating to me (hijrah)." (Muslim)

Al-Nawawi (rh) said: "What is meant by turmoil here is *fitnah* and when there is a great deal of confusion among people. The reason why worship during such times is of great virtue is that people become careless about it and are distracted from it, and no one is devoted to it except a few."

'Umar b. al-Khattab narrated that the Prophet (S) said:

"Deeds are [a result] only of the intentions [of the actor], and an individual is [rewarded] only according to that which he intends. Therefore, whosoever has emigrated for the sake of Allah and His messenger, then his emigration was for Allah and His messenger. Whosoever emigrated for the sake of worldly gain, or a woman [whom he desires] to marry, then his emigration is for the sake of that which [moved him] to emigrate." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Please read the verses and the *ahadeeth* (sayings of the Prophet SAW) that I shared with you and read the rest of my articles about emigration. An honest humble advice from my heart to you is to go to my website and read articles or watch videos titled “journey of victory vs. journey of defeat”. Take some time digesting the topic and then ask yourself whether you are on the journey of victory or defeat.

Always remember this sentence and don't forget it: ***No blaming, no complaining!***

Always take responsibility of your faith and your life; don't blame any individual, place or even the cursed shaytaan. Immigration is first and foremost a status of the heart; you will never be able to physically emigrate unless you migrate inside. And none of this will ever happen unless the love of Allah and His message supersedes all other feelings in your heart.

Please also take some time out to read my articles about jail and you will understand what I am talking about.

The Signs to Look for in a Companion:

Emigration taught us many lessons one of which is Prophet SAW's wisdom and ability to choose the right partners and companions. We see that from all the companions around him, Prophet SAW chose Abu Bakr RA and Ali RA along with some other selected few. I would like to emphasize here the importance of picking and choosing the right person who can assist and support me during different stages of my life to achieve my goal. Humans are social creatures; we need each other in life. But who do we need and for what purpose? Below I will mention a few characteristics that will help you select the right companions in life.

1. **Intellect:** This includes a person's ability to analyze things, fast comprehension, the ability to move, act and react properly when situation arises with wisdom and humility.
2. **Leadership:** The ability to take leadership of a task and action, coming up with new ideas, team work skills, ability to utilize situations for one's own benefit or benefit of others.
3. **Bravery:** Ability to stand up for one's beliefs and to share them without hesitation or embarrassment.

4. Ability to give and receive criticism: A sign of a successful person is his ability to give and receive constructive criticism and be able to analyze it, study it and make the necessary changes.

For example some people criticize others without any substance, often just to put the person down or to display his faults. This is not what we are talking about. We mean the one who gives substantial positive criticism and shows where the problem lies and how it can be corrected. He is not a baseless talker but a participant by word and action and always aims for the goodness and benefit.

These are some of the main elements. However they will be devalued if not combined with the right package of personality traits. These personality traits are the base upon which the person stands and what holds everything else in place. These traits are the integrity of the person, his soul, character, honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, sense of responsibility and will to succeed, humbleness and humility and his desire to always want to give meaning generosity. Another trait to look for in a companion is consistency in his actions and behavior. It is a sign of reliability and honesty and shows that the person is honorable and stable; it assure you that you will find him when you need him, he will deliver if he commits and will fulfill his promises.

When we study the journey of emigration of Prophet SAW, we find each personality in its rightful place ready to deliver what was needed and expected of it. It shows the deep insight of Prophet SAW on picking individuals for different tasks just like a great manager managing a company.

My goal in discussing this is to emphasize the importance of seeking out people with quality. We should first and foremost develop these qualities in ourselves so we can be successful at our assigned roles in life; and secondly to seek the individuals with qualities of integrity and leadership in order to include them in our lives in whatever capacity we can— whether it be as a spouse, neighbor, friend, partner in job or journey, or anything else. It also emphasizes the responsibility of parents to carefully study their children and pick out their strengths and weaknesses and develop them to be productive and successful leaders.

May Allah SWT accept us to be among the chosen ones and among the elevated ones who will enjoy the company of blessed Prophet SAW and his companions. *Ameen, Ameen Ya Rabb Al Alameen*. May Allah put blessing, light and acceptance in everything we say and we do.