Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allāh, then follow me, [so] Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.” [Al-Qur’ān 3:31]

Ibn Kathir (rh) records in relation to this ayah in his Tafsir, the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said Whoever commits an act that does not conform with our matter (religion), then it will be rejected of him [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2550, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1718]

As we enter this month of Rabi ul Awwal, many dedicate significant time to remembering the Prophet (SAW) regularly.

The caller to pray (muadhin) starts his call by first extolling Allah’s greatness (calling Allahu akbar) and then follows it by proclaiming the Declaration of Faith, or shahadah. The first half of this Declaration is to testify to: laa ilaha illa’Llāh – ‘There is no god worthy of worship but Allah’. The second half bears witness to: muhammadun rasulu’llah – ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ The first half affirms the doctrine of belief in the oneness of Allah(tawhid) and the second statement is the method by which to live out and implement this doctrine.

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah obliges on each believer certain rights, all of which have been mentioned in the Qur’an. Scholars explain that these rights are seven in number:

1. To Believe in Him

This does not mean to merely believe he was a true, historical figure of seventh century Arabia, but to believe in his prophethood (nubuwah) and in Allah’s message (risalah) to him too. The Qur’an says: Believe, therefore, in Allah and His Messenger, and the light which We have sent down. [64:8]

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came to the graveyard and said: “Peace be upon the abode of believing
people, and if Allah wills we will join you soon. **Would that we could see our brothers.**”

The Sahaba said: Are we not your brothers, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “You are my companions. Our brothers are those who have not come yet.”

They said: How will you recognize those of your ummah who have not come yet, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “Do you not see that if a man has a horses that have white blazes and white feet among horses that are all black, will he not recognize his horses?”

They said: Of course, O Messenger of Allah. He said: “They will come to me with bright faces and limbs (like the white markings of a horse) because of the traces of wudoo’. [Muslim (249)]

It was narrated from Anas ibn Maalik (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Glad tidings to the one who believed in me and saw me, and **sevenfold glad tidings to the one who believed** in me but did not see me.” [Ahmad]

This includes believing that Prophethood ended with him as the Qur’an declares: Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets; and Allah has knowledge of all things. [33:40] Needless to say, when a thing is “sealed”, it is complete and so there can be no further addition to it. In a like manner, the Prophet Muhammad sealed the cycle of prophethood and brought it to a close: he is the last Prophet, after whom there will be no prophet.

Henceforth, revealed truths shall be revived and reanimated by scholars and renewers, but never again by prophets. That our Prophet, upon whom be peace, is khatim al-nabiyyin – “the Seal of the Prophets” – is also confirmed in many hadiths; one of which says: ‘There will arise among my nation thirty liars, all of them claiming to be a prophet. But I am the final Prophet; there will be no prophet after me.’ [Muslim, no.2889; Abu Dawud, no.4252]
2. To emulate his Example

Given that Allah says about His beloved Prophet, peace be upon him:

Yours is indeed a tremendous character [68:4] it should come as no surprise to enlightened minds that imitation of the Prophet, peace be upon him, is also a right we owe him.

The Qur'an states: Say: “If you love Allah, then follow me.” [3:31] Elsewhere it tells us: You have in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful example. [33:21] One celebrated hadith says: ‘Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of me.’ [Al-Bukhari, no.5063; Muslim, no.1401]

No doubt, within the overall obligation of ittiba‘ – to “follow” or “emulate” him – there are certain matters where emulation is mandatory, and other places where it is highly encouraged and urged, but not obligated (there are even some matters recorded about his life that are just descriptive, not prescriptive).

3. To Love and show respect to him (SAW)

Love of the Prophet is what distinguishes believers in their perfection of faith, as one hadith says: ‘None of you believes until he loves me more than his father, his children and the whole of mankind.’ [Al-Bukhari, no.15; Muslim, no.44]

In the masjid of the Prophet(SAW), there was a minbar which had 3 steps. He would sit on the third step and put his blessed feet on the second step. When Sayyidina Abu Bakr (RA) became khaleef, after the Prophet(SAW), sit on the second step and put his feet on the first step. When Sayyidina Umar (RA) became khaleef, after the Prophet(SAW), sit on the first step and put his feet on the ground. When Sayyidina Uthman (RA) became khaleef, after the Prophet(SAW), he would put his feet on the fourth step. Nobody would sit on the third step where the Prophet(SAW) used to sit.

A prophet of Allah(SWT) is a unique person acting as a link between the people and their Creator. Unfortunately, previous nations have gone to extremes some making them divine or attributing all human weaknesses and sins to them. In Islam there is a beautiful and delicate balance, the Prophet(SAW) is the perfect human being, but not divine. He speaks for
Allah(SWT) but he is not Allah(SWT). He is the object of our gratitude, respect and, allegiance but not the object of our worship.

Allah(SWT) raised him (SAW), telling us that Allah and His angels are constantly raising the rank, status and honour of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the Qur’an states the following: Certainly, Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Send blessings upon him and salute him with a worthy salutation. [33:56]

It’s important to note here that Allah(SWT) first undertakes this action, then all the angels and then the believers are commanded to follow this practise. Secondly, it shows the Prophet(SAW) needs Allah’s blessings and is dependent on Him(SWT). Indeed we have come to know of the most perfect human being and we found him to be an abd (servant) of Allah(SWT) which gives us balance which is lost in other religions.

Julaybib(RA) was a man from Madinah who was:

- short in height
- deformed in appearance
- his lineage was not known and no one knew who his parents were
- he had no clan to protect him and no tribe willing to accept him as their own
- even the small children of Madinah would tease & mock him
- owing to his disabilities no one would allow him to sit in their company.

He survived as best he could, many a lonely night in Madinah he spent wondering the streets in despair, tears of desperation would run down his cheeks, there was no one willing to offer him love or compassion, he had no family and not a single friend in the world. Life for him was a lonely struggle.

He heard about the coming of a Prophet of Allah to Madinah and he would go and sit in the company of the Prophet ﷺ and entered Islam and was now Julaybib (RA) – a part of the community of believers. He would sit and listen intently, rarely speaking, out of shyness he kept his gaze lowered. He now, had the best of friends in the Prophet of ALLAH ﷺ; those
days of loneliness and despair were over, for the Best of creationﷺ had arrived.

One day as he was sitting in the Company of the Prophetﷺ, The Messenger of ALLAHﷺ asked him: “O Julaybib – ask for something... is there anything you desire?” He raised his head slowly and said in a shy voice; “O Messenger of ALLAHﷺ, ALLAH has blessed me with your companionship, I get to sit at your blessed feet and hear your blessed words, what more could I desire”.

The Prophet of ALLAHﷺ asked: “How would you like to get married my dear Julaybib?”

He smiled shyly wondering who would want to marry him. “Yes messenger of ALLAHﷺ I would like that.”

The Prophet of ALLAHﷺ went to the house of a prominent and noble Sahabee from amongst the Ansar. He said “I have come to ask for your daughters hand in marriage”. The Sahabee was overjoyed he said: “O Messenger of ALLAHﷺ what could be a greater blessing than this.”

The Prophetﷺ said: “I do not ask of her for myself. It is for Julaybib رضي الله عنهم that I am asking.”

The Sahabee was left stunned: “For Julaybib?” he asked in bewilderment. “Yes for Julaybib رضي الله عنهم” replied The Messenger of ALLAHﷺ.

He said: “Let me consult with my wife.” He went and told her. “The Prophet of ALLAHﷺ has asked for your daughters hand in marriage, for Julaybib (RA).” She started crying and wailing: “No not Julaybib anyone but Julaybib (RA) I will never allow this.”

Upon hearing the commotion, the daughter arrived. It is said that she was so beautiful that there was none among the women of the Ansar who could compete with her beauty. She was shy, modest and would spend her days & nights in worship.

The daughter asked what was happening; she was told that the Prophet of ALLAHﷺ wants your hand in marriage for Julaybib (RA). As the Mother continued her crying and wailing, the daughter spoke, she said “O my Mother, fear ALLAH, think of what you are saying, are you turning away the Prophet of ALLAHﷺ. ‘O my Mother, it does not suit a believer to make their own decision once ALLAH and His Messengerﷺ have decided on a matter.

Do you think that the Prophet of ALLAHﷺ will disgrace us? How blessed is the status of (RA)
that ALLAH and His Messenger ﷺ are asking for your daughters hand on his behalf. Don’t you know that the angels themselves envy the dust on the feet of one who is a beloved of ALLAH and His Prophet ﷺ.

Ask the Prophet ﷺ, to send me Julaybib (RA) for there is no greater privilege than for me to be blessed by such a husband. The Prophet of Allaah ﷺ has arrived with such a wonderful gift, yet my Mother you cry and wail.”

The Mothers heart being filled with remorse said:“Stop, my daughter, don’t say another word, indeed I have erred, I repent and I repent a 1,000 times over for as of this moment there is no one who I would prefer for you than Julaybib (RA)”

The following day the Nikaah was made. Uthman (RA) and Ali (RA)present Julaybib a gift of money to help arrange the feast of Walimah, and to purchase accommodation.

A short time later on an expedition Julaybib (RA)was martyred.

On the day of the expedition his Father in law, had pleaded with him:“O Julaybib (RA) this is just an expedition, it is not a compulsory Jihad, it is Fardh Al-Kifaayah, it is a voluntary Jihad, and you are newly married, so spend some time with your wife.”

Julaybib (RA) the one who had spent a lifetime in despair had now found a loving wife. But listen to his response to the Father in law’s request.

He said “O my father, you say a strange thing, my Beloved Prophet ﷺ is in the battlefield facing the enemies of Islam and you want me to sit at home with my wife, nay I will sacrifice my blood and my soul rather than see my Prophet ﷺ facing hardship while I sit at home in luxury”.

The diminutive Julaybib (RA) was indeed a strange sight carrying a sword almost the same size as him. The Sahabah stared in wonderment at him – sweet and gentle Julaybib (RA)was transformed in to a Lion. “Who dare wage war upon my Prophet ﷺ?” He said, as he charged into the ranks of the enemy.

After that battle the Prophet of ALLAH ﷺ, asked the Sahabah to go and to see if anyone was missing from their families and clans. Each one returned accounting for all his family members. Then the Prophet ﷺ spoke with tears in his eyes he said: “But I have lost my Beloved Julaybib (RA) go and find him.”

They found his diminutive body lying next to 7 of the enemies he had slain in the battle.
The Prophet of ALLAH ﷺ asked for a grave to be dug, as the Prophet of ALLAH ﷺ held the body of Julaybib (RA) he said: *O’ ALLAH he is from me and I am From Him*, he repeated this 3 times.

The companions wept profusely, “May our Mothers and Fathers be sacrificed for you O’ Julaybib ользم الله عنه, how great is your status!”

Thus, a Sahabee who had once lived as an outcast, shunned by the society around him.

He loved ALLAH and His Messenger ﷺ and reached such a high status. He who was not good-looking was blessed with a beautiful wife. He who was poor was blessed by a wealthy wife. He who had no family or status, was blessed by a wife with noble status & lineage. He who had lived in loneliness and despair, was loved by ALLAH and His Messenger ﷺ. He had the Messenger of ALLAH ﷺ say: “O Allaah he is from me and I am from him.”

It is said: “That upon his martyrdom, that the sky itself was filled with thousands of angels who had come to participate in his Janazah”.

Julaybib(RA) ‘The Lonesome one’ had become a beloved of Allaah, and His Prophet ﷺ, he was lonely no more. Such is the status of the lovers of the Prophet ﷺ. As for his wife, it is said that there was no widow whose hand was more sought after in marriage than hers. [Saheeh Muslim Book 031, Hadeeth Number 6045]

Anas ibn Malik reported: A bedouin asked the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, “When is the Hour?” The Prophet said: *Maa a’dadta lahaa?* What have you prepared for it? The man said, “Love for Allah and his messenger.” The Prophet said: *Anta ma’a man ahbabta* You will be with those whom you love. [al-Bukhārī 3435]

### 4. To Send Blessings (Salat) and Salutations of Peace (Salam) Upon Him

When telling us that Allah and His angels are constantly raising the rank, status and honour of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the Qur’an states the following: Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Send blessings upon him and salute him with a worthy salutation. [33:56] The hadith literature records: ‘Whosoever invokes one blessing upon me, Allah will send ten blessings on him.’ [Muslim, no.384] And: ‘**Those closest to me on the Day of Resurrection are those who invoke most blessings upon me.**’ [Al-Tirmidhi, no.484] And: ‘**The miser** is he who, whenever I am mentioned in his
presence, does not invoke blessings upon me.’ [Al-Tirmidhi, no.3546]

As for what it means for Allah to “bless” or “send salat” on the Prophet, Abu’l-‘Aliyah, a famous tabi’i, explained: ‘Allah’s salat is His extolling him to the angels; the angels’ salat is their supplication [for him].’ The majoritarian view seems to be the one al-Tirmidhi records: ‘It is related from Sufyan al-Thawri and others from the people of knowledge that salât of the Lord is His mercy, and salat of the angels is their seeking forgiveness for him.’

Hence Allah blesses the Prophet by the constant effusion of mercy descending upon him; such divine mercy referring to: light, knowledge, revelation, support, protection, swift response to prayers, exalting in rank and nearness to Him, honourable mention of him, as well as other things that only Allah and His Beloved know. The angels bless the Prophet by praying for him and supporting him. The believers, by invoking Allah’s blessings upon him. As for salutations (salam), it is praying for protection, safety and peace upon him.

Imam al-Shafi‘i has written, ‘no blessing, be it seen or unseen, has ever descended on us by which we gained spiritual or temporal gain, or by which spiritual or temporal harm was repelled, except that Muhammad, upon whom be peace, was the reason for it; the leader to its goodness; director to its guidance; protector from its destruction and evil that oppose righteousness; Warner against what brings ruin; ever ready with sincere advice for guidance and warning. So may Allah’s blessings be upon him and his family, as His blessings are upon Abraham and his family. Indeed You [Allah] are Praiseworthy, Majestic.’ [Al-Risalah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 16-17]

Ibn Mas‘ud reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

أوَلَى النَّاسِ بِهِ يَوَضُّ الْقِيَامَةَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ عَلَيْ صَلَاةً

The closest of the people to me on the Day of Resurrection are those who invoked the most blessings upon me. [Sunan At-Tirmidhi]

مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيْ وَاحِدَةَ صَلَّى اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَشَرًا

Whoever sends blessings upon me once will have Allah send blessings upon him ten times. [Muslim 408]
Shall I tell you about the most beloved to me and the closest to my assembly on the Day of Resurrection? They are those with the best character. [Ahmad 6696]. In another narration, it states “and the furthest from my gathering on the Day of Resurrection will be the pompous, the extravagant, and the arrogant. [Tirmidhi 2018]”

Once ‘Umar bin Khattab (RA) said to his nation: The supplication is stopped between the heaven and the earth and nothing of it ascends, till you invoke blessing on your Prophet. [Tirmidhi]

“Of your best days is Friday. On it Adam was created; and on it his (soul) was taken; and on it is the blowing (of the Trumpet); and on it is the Swoon. Therefore, increase in sending your Salat upon me, for your salat upon me are presented to me.” They said: “O Messenger of Allah! And how will our Salat upon you be presented to you after you have perished?” He replied: “Indeed, Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, has prohibited the earth from (destroying) the bodies of the Prophets.” [Narrated by Abu Dawud in his Sunan #1047, Ibn Khuzaimah #1733 and Ibn Hibban #910 in their respective Saheehs, and Hakim in Mustadrak 1/278 He said, It is authentic on the conditions of Bukhari and Zahabi agreed.]

Based on this Imam Shafe‘e used to say, “I love to send plenty of salat upon the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) all the time and I love it more so on the day of Jumuah.” [Kitabul Umm 1/546]

In summary, we have talked about the importance of believing in the Prophet(SAW), learning about his life and true faith necessitates that we be guided by his message and obey its demands:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him when you hear him speak. [8:20] He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah. [4:80]
One hadith declares: ‘All my nation will enter Paradise save those who refuse.’ They asked: O Messenger of Allah, who would refuse? He replied: ‘Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, whoever disobeys me has in fact refused.’ [Al-Bukhari, no.7280]

A story is told of a student who asked a sheikh: “I want to see Prophet Muhammad in my dream, what is the formula? How can I see the Prophet in my dream?”

The Sheikh told him: “Come over this evening, and I will show you how you’re going to see the Prophet.”

The student came over and the sheikh welcome him, sat him down and then brought a jug of water for him. The Sheikh poured a full glass and gave it to the student who politely accepted. On his first sip, he realised it was the saltiest water he had tasted so he lowered his glass. The Sheikh insisted that he finish the glass so with great difficulty, he drank until it was completed and then placed it on the table and asked “Sheikh, didn’t you say you would show me how to see the Prophet(SAW) in my dream?” The Sheikh said yes but first drink some more. With great difficulty and cajoling, the student was impressed to drink glass after glass until the jug was finished.

At this point the Sheikh said “Now go and sleep and in the morning I’ll teach you how to see the Prophet in your dream” So the man went to sleep and in the morning the sheikh asked him: “What happened last night? Anything out of ordinary?”

He replied: “I dreamt about rains and rivers, I saw oceans.” So all his dreams were about water. The Sheikh told him: “Your intention was sincere so your dream was in conformity to what you were truthful regarding; and if you were truthful regarding your love for the Prophet, you would’ve seen him in your dream”.

Similarly, if we occupy our time learning about the Prophet(SAW), following his beautiful example and sending salaah upon him, our love for him – sallAllahu alayhi wa sallam – would
increase inshaAllah.