



THE MONTH OF MUHARRAM

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Muḥarram is the first month of the Islamic calendar. Upon the commencement of a new year or month, the ṣaḥābah ؓ would learn (and recite) the following du‘ā:

اللَّهُمَّ أَدْخِلْهُ عَلَيْنَا بِالْأَمْنِ وَالْإِيمَانِ، وَالسَّلَامَةِ وَالْإِسْلَامِ،
وَرِضْوَانٍ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَجِوَارٍ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ

O Allāh! Bring it (i.e. this month) upon us with security, Īmān, safety, Islām, the pleasure of the Most-Merciful and protection from Shayṭān. (Aṭ-Ṭabarānī)

Virtues of Muḥarram

Muḥarram is one of the four sacred months mentioned in the Glorious Qur’ān,

Indeed! The number of months with Allāh is twelve months by Allāh’s Ordinance on the day that He created the heavens and the earth. From among them are four sacred (months); that is the right religion. So do not wrong yourselves in them... (9:36)

The specification of these four sacred months is found in a Ḥadīth of our Beloved Nabī ﷺ. Sayyidunā Abū Bakrah ؓ reports that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said,

Verily time has completed its cycle and returned to its original stage as it was on the day Allāh created the heavens and the earth. The year consists of twelve

months, four of which are sacred. Three of them occur consecutively; Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah and Muḥarram, (the fourth being) Rajab of Muḍar (named after the tribe of Muḍar as they used to respect this month more than the rest of the Arabs) which occurs between Jumādāl-Ākhir and Sha'ḇān. (Al-Bukhārī)

From out of the four sacred months, Muḥarram has been blessed with certain specific virtues. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said,

The most virtuous of fasts besides the month of Ramaḍān are (the fasts of) Allāh's Month of Muḥarram, and the best of ṣalāh besides the farḍ (compulsory) ṣalāh is the night ṣalāh (i.e. tahajjud). (Muslim)

The Day of 'Āshūrā (10th Muharram)

The tenth day of the month of Muḥarram is known as 'Āshūrā. It is one of the most important and blessed days in the Islamic calendar. Some 'Ulamā are of the opinion that before the fasts of Ramaḍān, the fast of the day of 'Āshūrā was compulsory upon the Ummah. This is stated in a Ḥadīth reported by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ that Nabī ﷺ ordered the observance of the fast of 'Āshūrā. However, when the fast of Ramaḍān became compulsory, then whoever wished, fasted and whoever desired (not to fast), did not fast. (Al-Bukhārī)

But Rasūlullāh ﷺ, nevertheless, continued to fast this day and encouraged his companions to do the same. Sayyidunā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says,

I did not see Rasūlullāh (ﷺ) eagerly await the fast of

any day, which he gave preference to over other days except this day, the day of ‘Āshūrā, and this month i.e. the month of Ramaḍān. (Al-Bukhārī)

Sayyidunā Ḥumayd ibn ‘Abdur-Raḥmān ؓ narrates that he heard Sayyidunā Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān ؓ on the day of ‘Āshūrā, during the year he performed ḥajj, saying on the pulpit,

O people of Madīnah! Where are your ‘Ulamā? I heard Rasūlullāh (ﷺ) saying, “This is the day of ‘Āshūrā. Allāh has not made its fasting compulsory upon you, but I am fasting it. Whosoever wishes, may fast and whosoever desires (not to fast), may leave it.” (Al-Bukhārī)

In another Ḥadīth, Sayyidunā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ narrates that Nabī ﷺ came to Madīnah and found the Jewish people fasting on the day of ‘Āshūrā. Nabī ﷺ asked them, ‘What is (the significance of) this day on which you fast?’ They replied, ‘This is a great day. On this day Allāh saved Sayyidunā Mūsā ؑ and his people and drowned Fir‘awn and his nation. Thus, Sayyidunā Mūsā ؑ fasted on this day as a token of thanksgiving, therefore we too fast on this day.’ Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, ‘We are more worthy of Mūsā and closer to him than you.’ Thereafter, Nabī ﷺ fasted on this day and ordered (his Ṣaḥābah ؓ) to fast on this day. (Muslim)

Recommended Deeds

1. One should fast as much as possible during the month of Muharram and especially on the day of ‘Ashūrā, as

Sayyidunā Abū Qatādah ؓ narrates that Nabī ﷺ was asked regarding the fast of the day of ‘Āshūrā. Nabī ﷺ replied,

It is a compensation for the (minor) sins of the past year.’ (Muslim)

NOTE: It must be borne in mind that wherever a promise of forgiveness of sins is made upon the fulfilment of some action, it is only the minor sins that are forgiven. The major sins are not forgiven without true tawbah (repentance).

In another narration, Sayyidunā Abū Qatādah ؓ reports that a man asked Nabī ﷺ regarding the fast of the day of ‘Ashūrā. Nabī ﷺ replied, ‘It is (equivalent to) fasting a (whole) year. (Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān)

2. One should also observe the fast of the 9th or 11th Muḥarram. Sayyidunā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ said, ‘When Rasūlullāh ﷺ observed the fast of the day of ‘Āshūrā and ordered (his Ṣaḥābah ؓ) to also fast, they said,

O Rasūlullāh (ﷺ)! It is a day revered by the Jewish people and the Christians.’ Rasūlullāh (ﷺ) said, ‘The coming year, if Allāh wills, we will fast on the ninth (also). (Muslim)

In another narration Nabī ﷺ said,

Should I live until the coming year, I will definitely fast on the ninth (also). (Muslim)

In another narration, Nabī ﷺ has been reported to have

encouraged his Companions ﷺ to fast on either the 9th or 11th Muḥarram (with the day of ‘Āshūrā). He ﷺ said,

...Fast a day before it or a day after. (Al-Bayhaqī)

‘Allāmah Ibn ‘Ābidīn Ash-Shāmī ﷺ has mentioned that to fast only on the day of ‘Āshūrā is makrūh tanzīhī.

3. One should be generous to one’s family and dependants and spend on them more than usual. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ﷺ reports that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said,

One who generously spends on his dependants and his family on the day of ‘Āshūrā, Allāh will grant him abundant (sustenance) for the rest of that year. (Al-Bayhaqī, At-Targhīb wat-Tarhīb)

There has been a difference of opinion regarding the authenticity of this Ḥadīth. However, Muḥaddithīn like Imām Bayhaqī, Ibn Hibbān ﷺ, Ḥāfiẓ ‘Irāqī and Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar have accepted it as reliable and it is also supported by the practice of senior Muḥaddithīn. The great Muḥaddith, Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyaynah ﷺ said, ‘We have tried this for fifty or sixty years and have only seen goodness (from it)’.

The above two actions; fasting and spending generously on one’s family, are the only actions of Muḥarram substantiated from the Aḥādīth.

Acts to Refrain From

1. It is absolutely clear that the significance of the day of

‘Āshūrā is from the time of Nabī ﷺ. However, many people attribute its significance to the martyrdom of Sayyidunā Ḥusayn ؑ and regard it as a day of mourning. The martyrdom of Sayyidunā Ḥusayn ؑ was indeed a great tragedy, but Islām is not a religion of mourning.

The pages of Islamic History are filled with the blood of the martyrs. Should we begin to mourn the martyrdom of the Ṣaḥābah ؓ alone, every other day would be a day of mourning. Thus, to attribute the significance of ‘Āshūrā to the martyrdom of Sayyidunā Ḥusayn ؑ is baseless. Therefore, the baseless customs of mourning and displaying grief upon the martyrdom of Sayyidunā Ḥusayn ؑ must be discarded. If mourning was permissible, then the day of the demise of Rasūlullāh ﷺ would have been more worthy of mourning.

2. The following misconceptions with regard to ‘Āshūrā are baseless:
 - This is the day in which Sayyidunā Ādam ؑ was created.
 - This is the day in which Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm ؑ was born.
 - This is the day on which Qiyāmah will take place.
 - Whoever has a bath on the day of ‘Āshūrā will never get ill.
3. Another misconception is that the month of Muḥarram is an unlucky month; as a result, some people believe

that marriage ceremonies should be avoided in this month. This concept is again contrary to the teachings of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

4. Some regard the tenth of Muḥarram as a day of ‘Īd. They indulge in adornment, applying surmah (collyrium), wearing new clothes, spending lavishly and cooking a particular type of meal which is not generally prepared. All these actions are regarded as sunnah according to their belief, whereas no authentic narration can be found sanctioning and permitting such actions.

Let us observe this great day according to the way of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and the Ṣaḥābah ؓ and refrain from all innovations which deprive us of blessings from Allāh ﷻ. May Allāh ﷻ guide us all upon the Straight Path and save us from every act which brings His Displeasure. Āmīn.

Important Events which Took Place in Muḥarram:

1st Muḥarram: Martyrdom of Sayyidunā ‘Umar ؓ.

10th Muḥarram: Sayyidunā Mūsā ؑ and his followers were saved from Fir‘awn and his army; Sayyiduna Nūḥ ؑ was saved from the flood; and Sayyidunā Ḥusayn ؑ was martyred.

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