

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The literal meaning of Muḥarram is “forbidden, sacred and worthy of reverence.” It is one of the four months about which Allāh ﷻ states:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ

“Indeed, the number of months with Allāh is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allāh [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred months.”

[*al-Tawbah*:36]

These four sacred months were explained by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to be: Dhul-Qa‘dah, Dhul-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab.

[*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*]

Prior to the advent of ‘Islām, these months were considered sacred even by the Pagans of Arabia. It was forbidden to wage war and fight during these sacred months, which resulted in complete peace. Consequently, they performed *Ḥajj* during the first three months and ‘*Umrah* in the fourth.

Muḥarram is the first month of the ‘Islāmic *Hijrī* calendar. The *Hijrī* calendar is based on the *Hijrah* (migration) of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, its actual application began in 17 A.H. during the caliphate of ‘Umar Farūq ﷺ. He dispatched letters to his governors which did not bear any date. The governor of Yemen, ‘Abū Mūsā ‘Ash‘arī ﷺ brought this concern before ‘Umar ﷺ. He set up a small committee to resolve this issue wherein it was decided that the *Hijrī* calendar will begin from the *Hijrah* of Muslims from Makkah to Madinah. Therefore 622 A.D. became 1 A.H. and since the decision to migrate was made at the end of the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah, and the first moon to rise after

this was that of Muḥarram, it became the first month of the *Hijrī* calendar. [*Fath al Barī*]

The origin of the *Hijrī* calendar serves as a great reminder of the sacrifices, devotion and love of those who migrated for Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ.

The Beginning of a New Year

Time is indeed a great blessing from Allāh ﷻ, rolling diligently along its own set pattern and speed. It waits for no one and it passes us quickly. Time will come and go, as Allāh ﷻ has decreed, but what remains written in “Time” is how each person utilized that time. The beginning of each New Year makes the one gone by the past. At the same time the coming New Year brings with it new opportunities and the motivation to start afresh.

This upcoming Muḥarram is a great blessing, it is a chance to reflect upon our former years and to plan on how to lead better and more purposeful lives for the future. Let us make the most of this great blessing and enhance our lives by engaging in beneficial activities and righteous deeds. We can now hope to turn transient seconds into definite opportunities for securing reward in our favour, striving to make eternal success our destiny and saving ourselves from eternal ruin.

Junaid Bāghdādi said:

“Assess each moment of life by evaluating how close you have come to Allāh ﷻ, how far you have distanced yourself from Shaiṭān, how close you have come to Jannah and how far you have moved away from Jahannam.”

Begin the New Year with a fresh

resolution and a pristine motivation.

Gear up for it physically and mentally, making a resolve to:

- Strengthen your relationship with Allāh ﷻ.
- Return to your worships with renewed enthusiasm and diligence.
- Improve upon serving your parents well and giving relatives their rights.
- Refocus on the moral upbringing of your family and children.
- Plan further learning and self-development.
- Seek to participate in social works for the benefit of those less fortunate than yourselves in the society.

Historical Events

- It is the month in which Allāh ﷻ granted victory to Prophet Mūsā ﷺ and his nation, *Banī ‘Isrāīl* over Pharaoh. [*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*]
- The famous episode of the “Year of the Elephants” took place in this month in which *Abraha*, together with his army of elephants, attempted to destroy the Holy Ka‘ba.
- ‘Umar ﷺ was unable to survive his wounds from his assassination attempt and attained martyrdom on the 1st of Muḥarram, 23A.H.
- The Prophet's grandson Ḥussain ﷺ, along with his family members, were martyred on the 10th of Muḥarram, 61 A.H. in the plain of Karbala.

Muḥarram and Fasting

The significance of fasting in Muḥarram can be best understood by the *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

أَفْضَلُ الصِّيَامِ بَعْدَ رَمَضَانَ شَهْرُ اللَّهِ الْمُحَرَّمِ

“The most excellent fast after Ramaḍān is in

Allāh’s month, Muḥarram.” [*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*]

In light of this *Ḥadīth* we must make the most of this important month. The *Ḥadīth* does not mean that one has to fast the entire month but that each fast in Muḥarram holds more reward with Allāh ﷻ than voluntary fasts in any other month.

Fasting on the 10th of Muḥarram

Fasting on any day of Muḥarram holds a reward with Allāh ﷻ, but the 10th of Muḥarram, known as ‘*Āshūrā*’ has more significance as compared to other days.

‘A‘īshah ﷺ narrates:

“The people used to fast on ‘*Āshūrā*’ before the fasting of Ramaḍān was made obligatory. And no that day the Ka‘bah used to be covered with a cover. When Allāh ﷻ made the fasting of the month of Ramaḍān compulsory, Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ said: “Whoever wishes to fast (on the day of ‘*Āshūrā*’) may do so; and whoever wishes to leave it can do so.” [*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*]

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ continued to fast on the day of ‘*Āshūrā*’ even after fasting in Ramaḍān was made obligatory.

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas ﷺ narrates:

“When Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ came to Madīnah, he observed the Jews fasting on the day of ‘*Āshūrā*’, so he asked them about it. They said, “It is a day of great importance. This day Prophet Mūsā ﷺ and his nation were freed, Pharaoh and his nation were drowned and hence Prophet Mūsā ﷺ fasted as a token of thanksgiving. Thereby, we follow him by keeping this fast.” To this Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, “We are closer to Prophet Mūsā ﷺ in association than you.”

Hence, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, himself fasted on this day and asked his companions to do the same. [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim]

Regarding the fast of the Day of ‘Āshūrā’, ‘Abu Qatādah ؓ narrates that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ also said:

صَيَامُ يَوْمِ عَاشُورَاءَ أَحْتَسِبُ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ السَّنَةَ الَّتِي قَبْلَهُ

“I believe that Allāh will forgive the sins of the past year in return of the fast of ‘Āshūrā’.”

[Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim]

‘Abu Qatāda ؓ also narrates:

سُئِلَ عَنْ صَوْمِ يَوْمِ عَاشُورَاءَ فَقَالَ يَكْفِي السَّنَةَ الْمَاضِيَةَ

“Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was asked about the fast of ‘Āshūrā’ and he said, “It is an expiation for the sins of the past one year.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim]

Resembling Acts of Non-Muslims

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ expressed his desire to fast on the 9th of Muḥarram along with the 10th in order to avoid resemblance with the Jews. ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas ؓ narrates that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ fasted on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ and recommended his Companions to do the same. To this the community replied, O Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, this is a day revered by the Jews and Christians. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ replied, “Next year, Inshā Allāh, we will join it with the fast of the 9th.”

However, the Prophet ﷺ died before the next ‘Āshūrā’.

Nevertheless, it is recommended to observe fast of the 9th along with the 10th of Muḥarram. In case the fast of the 9th is missed, it can be made up by keeping a fast on the 11th of Muḥarram instead.

We learn from the Holy Qur’ān itself as well as the authentic Sunnah that it is important that Muslims consciously strive to avoid

resemblance with non-Muslims, whether it is in worship, beliefs, habits, lifestyle or traditions of any kind. The beloved Messenger ﷺ is also reported as saying:

مَنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ

“Whoever imitates a nation is considered one of them.” [Sunan ‘Abū Dawūd]

Observing the Sanctity of Muḥarram

Regarding this sacred month Allāh ﷻ has also said:

فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ

“Do not wrong yourselves in these months.” [al-Tawbah:36]

This means that in this month we should strive to excel in righteous deeds, perform additional acts of worship i.e offer *Nafl*, give charity and remember Allāh ﷻ.

We should make a conscious effort to avoid displeasing and disobeying Allāh ﷻ, we must be more careful to not indulge in any acts which are considered a sin or an innovation or discouraged in the *Dīn*. There are many opportunities to attain great reward during this month and we should strive our utmost to avail each of them.

During the sacred months, fighting is prohibited and peace is guaranteed. When observing the sanctity and reverence of this month it is incumbent on us that we also,

- Avoid all types of quarrels, arguments, and disputes.

- Respect the life, wealth and honour of our fellow beings.

‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abbās ؓ narrates that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said the following

during his Farewell Pilgrimage:

“Your blood, wealth and honour are as sacred upon each other as the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this city of yours.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī]

Is this message of our beloved Messenger ﷺ not enough for us?

- Avoid hurting others by the tongue or by hand.

- Do not disrespect or revile any of the blessed companions of Prophet ﷺ.

- Let go of all grudges and spread the message of peace and friendship by your words and actions.

May Allāh ﷻ grant us the ability to walk on the Right Path.

Amīn.



To find out more about Muḥarram, listen to the audio lecture:

“Muḥarram al-Ḥarām, Sal e Nou ka Paigham”

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THE SACRED MONTH OF MUḤARRAM



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