

MUHARRAM

Shahrullah

The Sacred Month of Allah

The word "Muharram" derives from the Arabic root " ḥ-r-m (ح ر م)" meaning **sacred** or **forbidden**. It is one of the four months in which warfare is haram and is uniquely known as "Shahrullah" , the Month of Allah, holding the greatest virtue after Ramadan.

Quranic Foundation — Surah At-Tawbah (9:36)

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

"Indeed, the number of months ordained by Allah is twelve—in Allah's Record¹ since the day He created the heavens and the earth—of which four are sacred. That is the Right Way. So do not wrong one another during these months. And fight the polytheists together as they fight together against you. And know that Allah is with those mindful of Him"

— Surah At-Tawbah, 9:36

Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) explained: *sins committed in these sacred months are more serious, and good deeds carry a greater reward than in other months.*

Hazrat Abu Bakra (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The division of time has turned to its original form which was current when Allah created the heavens and the earth. The year is of twelve months, of which four are sacred: three consecutive — Dhul Qa'dah, Dhul Hijjah, and Muharram — and Rajab of Mudar, which comes between Jumada al-Akhirah and Sha'ban."

— Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 3197 | Sahih Muslim, No. 1679

History of Muharram

Pre-Islamic Sanctity: The sacredness of Muharram predates Islam. Even in the age of Jahiliya, the Arabs, as descendants of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), recognized these four months and considered fighting during them forbidden. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Surah At-Tawbah 9:36)

Rescue of Prophet Musa (AS), Ashura: When the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived in Madinah and found the Jews fasting on the 10th of Muharram, they explained it was the day Allah saved Musa (AS) and drowned Pharaoh's army. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "I am closer to Musa than they," and ordered Muslims to fast. (Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 2004)

When Musa AS stood before the sea with Firawn's army behind him, there seemed to be no way out of any worldly solution. Yet he remained certain in Allah's help and said, "Indeed, my Lord is with me; He will guide me." (Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Verse 62). This teaches us that true tawakkul is trusting Allah even when the path is not visible. When

we place our reliance upon Him, He can make ways beyond our imagination. Allah says in the Quran "And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him a way out"(65:2)

Battle of Karbala, 10 Muharram, 61 AH (680 CE): Husayn ibn Ali (رضي الله عنه), the beloved grandson of the Prophet (ﷺ), refused to pledge allegiance to the Umayyad caliph Yazid I, standing firm for truth and justice. With only 72 companions, including women and children, he faced an army of thousands in the plains of Karbala, Iraq. He was martyred on the 10th of Muharram, along with most of his male family members. His sacrifice remains one of the most profound symbols of standing against oppression in Islamic history. (Encyclopedia Britannica — Battle of Karbala | Sahih Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

Hazrat Hussain (R.A)'s stand at Karbala against Yazid was solely because of the abolishment of the ways of Khilafat and introducing Kingship. He stood up against injustice and upheld truth for he knew that what had been done would affect the whole ummah. It shows us that even when all odds are against you and a few are on your side, even then you stand for the truth.

The Day of Ashura & Its Virtues

Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, is the most important day of this month. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"It expiates the sins of the preceding year."

— **Sahih Muslim, No. 1162**

On this day, we are encouraged to fast (9th and 10th), give Sadaqah, seek forgiveness, perform extra prayers, increase Quran recitation, and avoid all sin.

Virtue of Fasting in Muharram

The Prophet (ﷺ) placed the greatest emphasis on fasting during this month, second only to Ramadan. Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) reported:

أَفْضَلُ الصِّيَامِ بَعْدَ رَمَضَانَ شَهْرُ اللَّهِ الْمُحَرَّمِ

"The most excellent fast after Ramadan is in Allah's month, Al-Muharram."

— **Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 1163 | Also narrated in Tirmidhi**

The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about fasting specifically on the day of Ashura and said:

"It expiates the sins of the preceding year."

— **Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 1162**

It was further narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) intended to fast on the 9th as well, to distinguish Muslims from the Jewish practice:

Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) narrated:

"If I live until next year, I will fast the ninth day (of Muharram) too."

— **Sahih Muslim | Sunan Ibn Majah**

This month has been likened to Ramadan in its virtues and spiritual weight. As Muslims, we must view Muharram as an opportunity to draw closer to Allah. Keeping in view its sanctity, we must respect it, remain obedient to Allah, and reflect on the vast history of the tenth of this month. In this manner, we shall follow the commandments of the Prophet (ﷺ) and earn the pleasure of our Lord.

References

1. *Quran — Surah At-Tawbah (9:36)*
2. *Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 3197 | Sahih Muslim, No. 1679 — The Four Sacred Months (Abu Bakrah)*
3. *Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 2004 — Fasting on Ashura (Ibn Abbas)*
4. *Sahih Muslim, No. 1163 — Best fast after Ramadan (Abu Hurairah)*
5. *Sahih Muslim, No. 1162 — Ashura expiates sins*
6. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir — Commentary on Surah At-Tawbah 9:36*
7. *Encyclopedia Britannica — Battle of Karbala (October 10, 680 CE / 61 AH)*