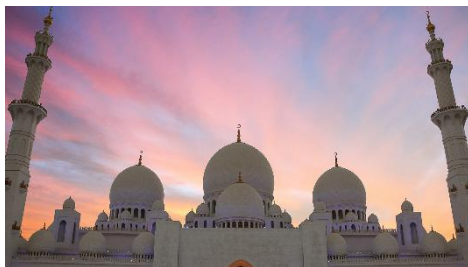


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## The Virtues of The Month of Muharram

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Allāh – in His infinite Wisdom – has designated the month of Muḥarram with a distinction unlike any other: it is referred to by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as “Shahr Allāh al-Muḥarram” – the Month of Allah.<sup>1</sup>



Whenever Allah connects something to Himself – – whether a place, a time, or an action – it is a sign of its distinction and the obligation to treat it with the appropriate reverence as legislated in the Sharī‘ah.

As Imām Ibn Rajab al-Ṣalṣī رحمه الله said: the attribution of Muḥarram to Allah elevates its status and encourages believers to treat it with reverence and honour: just as we say "Bayt Allāh" (the House of Allah) for the Ka‘bah and "Naqat Allāh" (the she-camel of Allah) for the miraculous animal given to Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, likewise this month is a time selected by Allah for elevated sanctity and reward.<sup>2</sup>

Muḥarram opens the Hijrī calendar. But our approach to the Islamic year is not like the non-Muslims and people of worldly celebrations. We do not throw fireworks or countdown clocks. Rather, we begin with reflection, submission, and recognition of Allah’s Rubūbiyyah — that Allah alone controls time, benefit, and harm. The beginning of the year is not about self-made resolutions; it is a reminder that our hearts must be aligned with what Allah wants from us, and that He alone brings success, benefit and harm.

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<sup>1</sup> Muslim, ḥadīth 1163

<sup>2</sup> Laṭā‘if al-Ma‘ārif

In the coming sections, we will explore how Muḥarram stands apart as one of the sacred months, what deeds are most beloved within it, how the early Muslims approached it, and how we are to avoid cultural distortions or innovations introduced over time.

## **Muḥarram Is One of the Four Sacred Months**

Allah says in the Qur’ān: “Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve [in a year] in the register of Allah [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred.”<sup>3</sup>

These sacred months, as explained by the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and clarified by the Salaf, are Dhū al-Qa’dah, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram, and Rajab. The sacred nature of these months is not based on human assignment but by the command of Allah — a command established since the very day He created the heavens and the earth, as the verse itself affirms. Therefore, they hold weight in both the unseen decree and in the rulings of the Sharī‘ah.

Imām Qatādah رحمه الله said regarding this āyah: “Righteous deeds during the sacred months are greater in reward, and oppression during them is greater in sin — even though oppression is always serious, but Allah magnifies matters as He wills.”<sup>4</sup> This is a call to heightened mindfulness. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ did not treat these months like any other. They recognised their weight and restrained themselves from acts of injustice, disputes, and heedlessness. Likewise, they increased in righteous actions such as prayer, fasting, charity, and forgiveness — knowing that every deed in these months echoes louder in the sight of Allah.

Muḥarram, being the first of these months, it is an opportunity for recalibration and purification. The believer enters it not merely with the intention of self-improvement, but with reverence for the command of Allah and awareness of sacred boundaries. In this month, we ask ourselves: am I treating what Allah has sanctified as sacred in my heart and actions?

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<sup>3</sup> Surah at-Tawbah 9:36

<sup>4</sup> When commenting on Surah at-Tawbah (9:36) You will find the exact wording or its meaning reported by: Ibn Kathīr in his Tafsīr under 9:36, At-Ṭabarī in Jāmi‘ al-Bayān, also under 9:36, Imām al-Baghawī in Ma‘ālim at-Tanzīl (Tafsīr al-Baghawī).

## A Correct Beginning:

As the year begins with the sacred month of Muḥarram, many people are swept up in the cultural tide of “new year’s resolutions” — adopting slogans of self-determination, goal-setting, and worldly optimism. However, the Salaf did not approach time this way.

The beginning of the Islamic year is not about a ‘new years resolution’ — it is about submitting to the One who owns time, outcomes, and every beat of ones heart. “And you do not will unless Allah wills — Lord of the worlds.”<sup>5</sup>

What distinguishes the believer at the start of Muḥarram is his return to the truth of, and specifically knowing— that only Allah brings benefit or harm, guides or misguides, grants provision or restricts it. One’s success for the year ahead is not dictated by willpower or planning alone, but by the decree and mercy of Allah.

So we begin not with slogans, but with:

- **Tawḥīd:** affirming that Allah alone is our Master, our Provider, and the Controller of our affairs, hence to worship Him Alone in truth.
- **Tawakkul:** relying and trusting Him in all matters, inward and outward
- **Isti‘ānah and Du‘ā’:** seeking His help, His forgiveness, and His guidance.
- **Adherence to the Sunnah** — because guidance is not invented by the permission of Allah, it is inherited from the Prophet ﷺ and those who followed him in truth.

Let the start of this year be a renewal of servitude — not celebration, not innovation, not emotion. Let it be a path that leads to the Pleasure of your Lord. And whoever walks that path sincerely — Allah will never waste his effort.

**“And whoever places his trust in Allah — He is sufficient for him.”**  
(Sūrah at-Ṭalāq 65:3)

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<sup>5</sup> Sūrah at-Takwīr 81:29

## The Best Voluntary Fasting After Ramaḍān

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The best fast after the month of Ramaḍān is the fast of Allah’s month al-Muḥarram.”<sup>6</sup>

This ḥadīth establishes that fasting in Muḥarram is more virtuous than fasting in any other month outside of Ramaḍān. The Prophet ﷺ explicitly emphasized its status, referring to it as a month attributed to Allah, thereby encouraging believers to engage in fasting out of sincere devotion and pursuit of reward.

Imām an-Nawawī رحمه الله said: “The ḥadīth clearly indicates that Muḥarram is the best of the months for voluntary fasting.”<sup>7</sup>

The recommendation here is for general voluntary fasting throughout the month, not necessarily every single day. It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ did not fast any full month except Ramaḍān, so the scholars encourage balance — such as fasting alternate days or as much of the month as one is able.

Importantly, the merit of fasting in this month is not linked to any cultural customs, mythologies, or unauthenticated narratives. It is a plain and pure Sunnah — grounded in ṣaḥīḥ texts and upheld by the Salaf.

This emphasis on fasting also connects to the coming days of ‘Āshūrā — which we will explore in a dedicated article titled: “The Significance of the 10th of Muḥarram (‘Āshūrā)’”

For now, it is sufficient to understand that fasting in Muḥarram is a golden opportunity to begin the year with deeds that draw one closer to Allah, cleanse past shortcomings, and train the soul upon sabr and taqwā.

## How the Salaf Welcomed Muḥarram

The early generations of Islam — the companions, the tābi‘īn, and the great imāms — did not approach Muḥarram as just another month. They

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<sup>6</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1163

<sup>7</sup> Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 8/55

recognized it as a period of sacredness and accountability, and their hearts responded with reverence and action.

It is authentically reported that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما used to fast abundantly in Muḥarram. His dedication to voluntary acts of worship in sacred months is well known among the scholars of ḥadīth and biography.

Ibn Sīrīn رحمه الله would advise people to begin the new year with righteousness and obedience, cautioning against argumentation and heedlessness. He said: “It is the beginning of the year, so begin it with righteousness and leave off disputes.”

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal رحمه الله, although cautious about specifying acts of worship without clear textual basis, was known to fast frequently in Muḥarram — following the general recommendation of the Prophet ﷺ.

Their example shows us that while there is no particular festival or celebration legislated for Muḥarram, there is a clear encouragement toward increased ‘ibādah, especially fasting, repentance, and reflection. They used it as a moment of recalibration — not celebration — and did so quietly, without innovation, upon the guidance of the Sunnah.

This is the essence of the Salafī approach: to align one’s heart and actions with the understanding and practice of the best generations — without adding, subtracting, or modifying based on custom or personal desire. And in Muḥarram, this means honouring its sanctity by honouring the Sharī‘ah itself.

### **Common Bid‘ah to Avoid**

One of the distinguishing marks of the people of Sunnah is their wariness of innovations. Muharram unfortunately become a target of many invented practices that have no basis in the Book or authentic Sunnah. Among the most widespread bid‘ah’s are:

- Celebrating the Islamic New Year with greetings, cards, events, or fireworks. There is no evidence from the Prophet ﷺ or the Salaf that the beginning of Muḥarram should be marked in any festive manner.

- Assigning special foods or customs on the day of ‘Āshūrā’, such as cooking specific dishes or treating it like a festival.
- Commemorations involving mourning or self-harm, particularly practices propagated by Shī‘ī sects in remembrance of al-Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه. These acts involve lamentation, striking the body, or theatrical mourning — all of which oppose the Sunnah.
- Inventing false virtues or rituals for specific nights in Muḥarram without any authentic evidence from the Qur’ān or Sunnah.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said: “Not one of the Imāms ever recommended any of these customs — not Imām Mālik, nor Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, nor Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī, nor Imām Aḥmad. None of the trustworthy scholars ever endorsed them. Rather, they are innovations which crept in after the best generations.”<sup>8</sup>

The Salaf did not mark the day of ‘Āshūrā’ with celebration or grief — they honoured it by fasting, in obedience to the Prophet’s ﷺ guidance. Everything beyond that is to be rejected, no matter how emotional, widespread, or culturally ingrained it may be.

True sincerity is shown by following the Messenger ﷺ with precision, not by following one’s desires or inherited customs. As the Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever introduces into this matter of ours that which is not from it — it is rejected.”<sup>9</sup>

## **Recommended Deeds in Muḥarram**

Rather than falling into innovations, the Salaf were diligent in engaging in acts of ‘ibādah firmly rooted in authentic texts. The month of Muḥarram is a time to renew commitment to the Sunnah and establish a strong foundation for the year ahead.

From the most important deeds recommended in this sacred month are:

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<sup>8</sup> al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā, 1/196

<sup>9</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī & Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

- Voluntary Fasting: Based on the Prophet’s ﷺ statement: “The best fast after Ramaḍān is the fast of Allah’s month al-Muḥarram.”<sup>10</sup> This includes fasting any number of days throughout the month, especially the day of ‘Āshūrā’ and preferably with the 9th or 11th.
- Sincere Tawbah and Reflection: The sacredness of the month should lead the believer to take account of himself, seek forgiveness, and renew his resolve to obey Allah. The start of the year is a time to leave behind sin, not merely through intention but with concrete action.
- Increased Dhikr and Qur’ān Recitation: The righteous before us would seize these months to increase their remembrance of Allah, recite the Qur’ān frequently, and strive to perfect their worship — privately and consistently.
- Charity and Generosity: Sacred times are opportunities for sadaqah. The Salaf understood that giving in the path of Allah during sacred months brings multiplied reward.
- Correcting Intentions: Let your motivation this month be not seasonal or emotional but grounded in love for Allah and adherence to the Sunnah. Every good deed should be purified from *riyā’* and aligned with correct belief and methodology.

Deeds are not seasonal resolutions based on self-help trends — they are worship rooted in ‘Ubūdiyyah, acknowledging that Allah alone owns time, benefit, harm and success. The believer does not enter Muḥarram with except with firm tawḥīd, clarity of purpose, and the footsteps of the Salaf in mind.

## Conclusion

The month of Muḥarram — the Month of Allah — is not simply a marker on the Islamic calendar. It is a divinely honored period, a beginning chosen by the Creator Himself, and a sacred time that calls the believer back to reflection, repentance, and sincere worship.

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<sup>10</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1163

Let this month be a means for:

- Restoring and improving sincerity in your worship of Allah alone.
- Refraining from sin and innovations.
- Renewing your allegiance to the path of the Salaf.
- And reaffirming your trust and reliance upon Allah, the Lord of all time.

“Indeed, those who have said, ‘Our Lord is Allah’ and then remained steadfast — the angels will descend upon them, [saying], ‘Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.’”<sup>11</sup>

May Allah make Muḥarram a time of purification, direction, and sincerity for us all.



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<sup>11</sup> Sūrah Fuṣṣilat 41:30