Muharram

It is the first month of the Islamic calendar.

Its Meaning

It is called muharram because fighting is prohibited in it, being one of the sacred months. It is also called ***ash-shahr al-asamm*** (literally the month of silence) due to its extreme sacredness.

Rulings regarding the sacred months

Allah commands the believers to honour and revere his symbols, to take care not to commit sins and to strive hard to obey Him, for committing sins in these months is far greater than committing them in other months. Allah say, " Verily, the number of months with God is twelve months in God's Book, on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; of these are four that are sacred; that is the right religion; so do not wrong yourselves in them." *(Soorat At-Tawbah, 9:36)*

Initiating fighting was prohibited in the sacred months in the early history of Islam, then this practice was abrogated and so the sacred months became just like other months in terms of fighting. As the Qur'an says, "…so do not wrong yourselves in them; and fight the polytheists collectively as they fight you collectively." *(Soorat At-Tawbah, 9:36)*

A Muslim must, however, safeguard his acts of worship and observe Islamic teachings to the best of his ability as Allah has commanded him to do.

Its Virtues

1

It is the best month after *Ramadaan*, and it is attributed to Allah to give it more honour and respect. The Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said, "The best month [after *Ramadaan*] is the month of Allah which you call Muharram." *(An-Nasaa'ee, As-Sunan Al-Kubraa: 4202)*

2

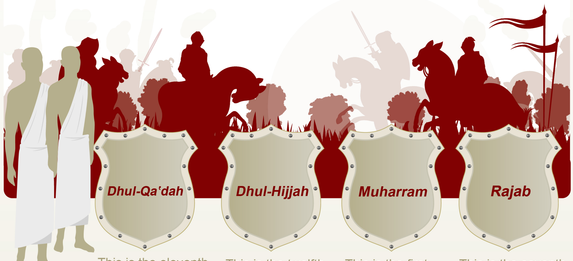
Fasting in this month is next only to *Ramadaan* in terms of virtue. The Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said, "The best fast after *Ramadaan* is Allah's month Al-Muharram." *(Muslim: 1163)*

3

It is one of the sacred months and even the most sacred and revered of them.

The Sacred Months

Are **four months** which Allah has commanded the believers to honour and revere and has made **fighting prohibited during them** for the safety of pilgrims and visitors of the Sacred House so that they can perform pilgrimage and visit the House in total peace and tranquillity.



Dhul-Qa'dah: This is the eleventh month of the year in which pilgrims make preparations and start their journey to Makkah.

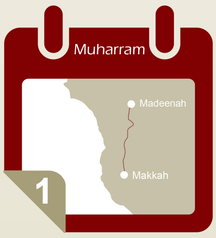
Dhul-Hijjah: This is the twelfth month of the year during which the pilgrimage rites take place.

Muharram: This is the first month of the year during which pilgrims return home.

Rajab: This is the seventh month, which falls in the middle of the year, thus enabling those who desire to visit the Sacred House in other than the pilgrimage season to do so in peace and tranquillity.

Why is it the first month of the Islamic calendar?

When the Prophet's Companions agreed in the year 16 AH during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab to start the Islamic calendar with the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madeenah, they chose to start the year with the month of *Muharram* for a number of reasons including the following:



1 It is the very month the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) intended to migrate to Madeenah after his meeting with the *Ansaar* (Helpers) at Al-'Aqabah, a place near Makkah, after the pilgrimage season.

2 It is one of the sacred months that follows the pilgrimage season. After the Muslims had completed their religious duties of fasting and pilgrimage, it was only suitable to start the new year with a sacred month just as they ended it with the month of *Muharram*.

The Day of Aashuraa'

Why Fast on the Day of 'Aashuraa'?

When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing be upon him) arrived in Madeenah and found the Jews observing fast on the day of *'Aashuraa'*, he asked them, "Why are you fasting this day?" They said.

"This is a great day. Allah saved Moosaa (Moses) and his followers and drowned Pharaoh and his people. Moosaa fasted it [giving thanks to Allah], and so we also fast it." The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing be upon him) then said, "We have more of a right to Moosaa than you." So the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing be upon him) fasted on it and ordered the Muslims to do the same." *(Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree, 3943; Saheeh Muslim: 1130)* We also fast on it following in the footsteps of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) to give thanks to Allah for granting victory to His Prophet Moosaa (peace be upon him).

'Aashuraa' is derived from the Arabic word 'asharah, which means ten, as it is the tenth day of the month of *Muharram*.

Virtues of Fasting on the Day of 'Aashuraa'

It expiates the sins committed in the previous year.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing be upon him) said in this respect, "I hope that Allah will accept it as expiation for [the sins committed in] the previous year." *(Saheeh Muslim: 1162)* It has been said that it is the best day to fast after observing the obligatory fast.

'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) said, I never saw the Prophet seeking to fast on a day more [preferable to him] than this day, the day of *Aashuraa'*, or this month, i.e. the month of *Ramadaan*." *(Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree: 2006; Saheeh Muslim: 1162)*

Fasting on the Day of 'Aashuraa' and on the Day of 'Arafah: A Comparison

It expiates the sins committed in the previous year; that is, 354 days — **9 'Arafah** — and a year after it; that is, 354 days

Total number of days: 708 days

It expiates the sins committed in the previous year; that is, 354 days — **10 'Aashuraa'**

Total number of days: 354 days

Grades of Preference of Fasting It

12 11 **10** 9 8 — **Fasting on the tenth day of *Muharram* alone**

This is due to the general meaning in the *hadeeth* on the virtues of fasting on the Day of *'Aashuraa'*

12 11 **10 9** 8 — **Fasting on the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh of *Muharram***

'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said, "fast a day before it and a day after it." (Al-Bayhaqee in *As-Sunan Al-Kubraa*: 8406)

12 11 **10** 9 8 — **Fasting on the tenth and the eleventh of *Muharram***

The Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said, "Be different from the Jews. Fast a day before it or a day after it." *(Musnad Ahmad: 2154; Musand Ibn Khuzaymah: 2095)*

12 11 **10 9** 8 — **Fasting on the ninth and tenth of *Muharram***

This is the best grade, and this exactly what the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) intended to do. As he said, "If I live till next year, I will definitely observe fast on the ninth day [of *Muharram*] as well." *(Saheeh Muslim: 1134)*

'Aashuraa' and the Martyrdom of Al-Husayn (May Allah be pleased with him)

On 10 Muharram (*'Aashuraa'*) 61 AH (680 CE), a heartbreaking tragedy took place. This day witnessed the killing of Al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, the Master of the Youth of Paradise, the Prophet's grandson, the son of Faatimah Az-Zahraa', and one of the foremost Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) and their leading scholars, along with a large number of his sons and noble household .

This was a great tragedy that struck the Muslims, who were also struck by far worse tragedies with the assassination of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab and 'Ali ibn Abee Taalib and before that with the death of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him). None of their relatives or the Prophet's Companions held an annual day of mourning for them, let alone wailing and beating oneself, which are amongst the major sins.

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For further information:

see Ibn Rajab, ***Lataa'if Al-Ma'aarif***

Al-Qurtubee, ***Ahkaam Al-Qur'aan***

Ibn katheer, ***Tafseer Al-Qur'aan Al-'Adheem, Soorat At-Tawbah***, 9:36-37.