

The Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah

Days of Virtue and Righteous Deeds

Praise be to Allah ﷻ Who has created Time and has made some times better than others, some months and days and nights better than others, when rewards are multiplied many times, as a mercy towards His slaves.

This encourages His slaves to do more righteous deeds and makes them more eager to worship Him. In this manner, the Muslim is continuously renewing his efforts to gain a greater share of reward, and allows him to prepare himself for a meeting with Allah ﷻ in His pleasure.

Among the special seasons of worship are the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah.

Dhul-Hijjah (the Month of Hajj) is the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar year. It is during this month that the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, known as Hajj, takes place. The actual pilgrimage rites take place on the 8th to 12th days of the month.

By the Grace of Allah ﷻ we have started the month of Dhul-Hijjah (the month of Hajj or Pilgrimage), in which Allah ﷻ has ordained, for both the pilgrims and the non-pilgrims, very blessed days.

According to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the first ten days of this month are a special time for devotion. During these days, preparations are underway for those who are undertaking the pilgrimage, and most of the actual pilgrimage rites occur.

In particular, the 9th day of the month marks the Day of ‘Arafah, and the 10th day of the month marks the ‘Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice).

Even for those who are not traveling for the pilgrimage, this is a special time to remember Allah ﷻ and spend extra time in devotion and good deeds.

Imām Ibn Qayyim رحمته الله (d.751H) said:

"Indeed its days are the most excellent of all the days with Allah."

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said, that Allah's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days." The people asked, "Not even jihad for the sake of Allah?" He said, "Not even jihad for the sake of Allah, except in the case of a man who went out to fight, giving himself and his wealth up for the cause, and came back with nothing."

[aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥul-Bukhārī (2/382)]

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه also reported that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"There is no deed more precious in the sight of Allah, nor greater in reward, than a good deed done during the ten days of sacrifice." He was asked, "Not even jihad for the sake of Allah?" He said, "Not even jihad for the sake of Allah, except in the case of a man who went out to fight giving himself and his wealth up for the cause, and came back with nothing."

[Related by Ad-Dārimī]

The first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah are the best and most virtuous days of the year. They are the days in which Allah ﷻ most loves the doing of good deeds.

About this the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The best days in the world are the ten days."

[Ṣahīh; Related by al-Bazzār (1/234)]

These are the ten days that Allah ﷻ has taken an oath by in the al-Qur'an al-Kareem:



"By the Dawn and by the Ten Nights."

[Sūrat al-Fājr 89:1-2]

Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn az-Zubayr, Mujahid and others of the earlier and later generations are of the opinion that this refers to the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah. Imam Ibn Kathir رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ said:

"This is the correct opinion."

[Tafsīr Ibn Kathir (8/413)]

The virtues of these ten days are based on:

1. Allah ﷻ swears an oath by them, and swearing an oath by something is indicative of its importance and great benefit.
2. The Prophet ﷺ testified that these are the best days of this world, as we have already quoted above from authentic ḥadīth; and encouraged people to do righteous deeds on these days.

With regard to the types of worship to be performed during these ten days: one must understand that these days are a great blessing from Allah ﷻ to His slave, which is appreciated properly by the actively righteous.

It is the duty of a Muslim to appreciate this blessing and make the most of the opportunity, by devoting these ten days to striving hard in worship. Among His blessings to His slaves, Allah ﷻ has given us many ways in which to do good and worship Him, so that the Muslim may be constantly active and consistent in his worship of his Lord.

Among the good deeds which the Muslim should strive to do during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah are:

Fasting the days of Dhul-Hijjah

Especially the Day of ‘Arafah

It is Sunna to fast the first nine days of Dhul-Hijjah, especially the day of ‘Arafah, for those who are not performing Hajj. This is confirmed by the following ḥadīths:

The ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah is the day of ‘Arafah, since it is on this day that the pilgrims gather at the mountain plain of ‘Arafah, praying and supplicating to their Lord. It is mustahab (highly recommended) for those who are not pilgrims to fast on this day, the Prophet ﷺ was asked about fasting on the day of ‘Arafah, so he said:

"It expiates the sins of the past year and the coming year."

[Related by Imām Muslim (1162) from Abū Qatada رضي الله عنه]

Likewise, the Prophet ﷺ said:

"There is no day on which Allah frees people from the Fire more so than on the day of 'Arafah. He comes close to those (people standing on 'Arafah), and then He reveals before His Angels saying: What are these people seeking."

[Related by Imām Muslim (1348) from 'Ā'isha ؓ]

Abū Qatada ؓ is reported to have said that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"Fasting on the day of 'Arafah is an expiation for two years, the year preceding it and the year following it. Fasting the day of 'Ashurah is an expiation for the year preceding it."

[Related by Imāms Muslim, Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Māja]

Abū Qatada ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"Observing fasting on the Day of 'Arafah; Allah expiates the sins that were committed during the preceding year, and the sins that will be committed in the oncoming year."

[Related by Imām Muslim]

Hafsah ؓ reported:

"There are five things that the Messenger ﷺ never abandoned: fasting the day of 'Ashurah, fasting the (first) 9 (days of Dhul-Hijjah), fasting 3 days of every month and praying two 'rak'at before the dawn prayer."

[Related by Imāms Aḥmad and an-Nasā'ī]

One of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ said:

"Allah's Messenger ﷺ used to fast the (first) nine days of Dhul-Hijjah, the day of `Ashurah, and three days of each month."

[Related by Imām Abū Dāwūd]

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه stated:

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade fasting on the day of `Arafah for one who is actually at `Arafah."

[Related by Imāms Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Māja]

At-Tirmidhī comments:

"The scholars prefer that the day of `Arafah be fasted unless one is actually at `Arafah."

Observing fasting on all or some of these days is highly rewarding, particularly on the Day of `Arafah. There is no doubt that fasting is the best of observances; for it is one of the observances which Allah ﷻ associates to Himself, according to the holy tradition (ḥadīth Qudsī):

"Fasting is for Me, and I shall compensate for it. My slave relinquishes his desires, food, and drink for My sake."

Abū 'Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Any slave of Allah who observes fast of a day in the cause of Allah, Allah would separate between him and the Fire a distance of seventy years on account of observing that day."

[Agreed upon]

The Day of Sacrifice

Slaughtering on the day of an-Nahr and 'Eid al-Adha or the following three days

These ten days include the days of sacrifice and of Hajj.

The tenth day of Dhul-Hijjah is known as the day of *an-Nahr* (slaughtering), since it marks the ending of the major rites of Hajj (Pilgrimage). This One of the good deeds that will bring a person closer to Allah ﷻ during these ten days is offering a sacrifice.

This commemorates the bounty and mercy of Allah ﷻ that He gave His beloved Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام a ram to sacrifice in place of his firstborn son Ismā'īl عليه السلام.

Out of the ten best days of the year, it is the day of *an-Nahr* the day of the slaughter, which is the most excellent day of the year with Allah ﷻ. This is a most excellent act of Ibadaah most loved by Allah ﷻ.

'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنهما narrated that at Mina, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Do you know what is the day today?" The people replied, "Allah and His Messenger know it better." He said, "It is the forbidden (sacred) day. And do you know what town is this?" They replied, "Allah and His Messenger know it better." He said, "This is the forbidden (sacred) town (Mecca). And do you know which month is this?" The people replied, "Allah and His Apostle know it better." He said, "This is the forbidden (sacred) month." The Messenger added, "No doubt, Allah made your blood, your properties, and your honour sacred to one another like the sanctity of this day of yours in this month of yours in this town of yours."

[Related by Imām Bukhārī]

Narrated ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما :

"On the Day of an-Nahr (10th of Dhul-Hijjah), the Messenger stood in between the Jamrat during his Hajj which he performed (as in the previous Ḥadīth) and said, "This is the greatest Day (i.e. 10th of Dhul-Hijjah)." The Messenger started saying repeatedly, "O Allah Be Witness (I have conveyed Your Message)." He then bade the people farewell. The people said, "(This is Hajjatul-Wada)."

[Related by Imām Bukhārī (2/798)]

The Fiqh of Slaughtering

‘Eid al-Adha is a day in which the Muslims slaughter a camel, cow, sheep or goat, in commemoration of the sacrifice of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. And this sacrifice is highly recommended for all those who have the means to do so - according to the most correct opinion of the Scholars.

The basis of this is the Prophet’s ﷺ saying:

"One who has the ability to sacrifice, but chooses not to do so, should not approach our place of (‘Eid) Prayer."

[Hasan; Related by Imām Ibn Māja (3123) from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه]

If anyone wants to offer a sacrifice, and the month of Dhul-Hijjah has begun, either because the new moon has been sighted or because thirty days of Dhul-Qa’dah have passed, then it is haram for him to remove anything of his hair or nails until he has slaughtered the sacrifice, this is based on the following ḥadīth:

Umm Salama رضي الله عنها, according to which the Prophet ﷺ said:

"When you see the new moon of Dhul-Hijjah – according to another version, When the ten days (of Dhul-Hijjah) begin – and any one of you wants to offer a sacrifice, let him refrain (from cutting) his hair and nails."

[Related by Imāms Aḥmad and Muslim]

The Sunna therefore indicates that the one who wants to offer a sacrifice must stop cutting his hair and nails from the beginning of the ten days until after he has offered his sacrifice.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"When you see the new moon of Dhul-Hijjah, if any one of you wants to offer a sacrifice, then he should stop cutting his hair and nails until he has offered his sacrifice." According to another report he said: "He should not remove anything from his hair or skin."

[Related by Imām Muslim with four isnād (13/146)]

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

"When the ten days start, and one of you intends to sacrifice, then let him not cut his hair or his nails."

[Related by Imām Muslim (1977) from Umm Salama ؓ]

If a person makes intention to offer the sacrifice during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, then he should refrain from that from the moment he forms that intention, and there is no sin on him for anything he may have done before forming the intention.

The reason for this prohibition is that when the person who wants to offer the sacrifice joins the pilgrims in some of the rituals of Hajj – namely drawing closer to Allah ﷻ by slaughtering the sacrifice – he also joins him in some of the features of iḥrām, namely refraining from cutting his hair and nails.

This is with regards to those who intend to sacrifice - normally the head of the household - then they are prohibited from cutting their hair or nails, starting from the first day of Dhul-Hijjah up until after the sacrifice.

Based on this, it is permissible for the family of the person who is going to offer the sacrifice to remove things from their hair, nails during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah.

If the person who wants to offer the sacrifice does remove anything from his hair, nails then he has to repent to Allah ﷻ and not do it again, but he does not have to offer any expiation, and that does not prevent him from offering the sacrifice as some of the common people think.

If he does any of those things out of forgetfulness or ignorance, or some hair falls unintentionally, then there is no sin on him. If he needs to remove it then he may do so, and there is no blame on him, such as if a nail breaks and it annoys him, so he cuts it, or if a hair gets in his eye and he removes it, or he needs to cut his hair in order to treat a wound and the like.

However, if a person does any of these things deliberately, he must seek Allah's ﷻ forgiveness but is not required to offer (an extra) sacrifice in expiation; his sacrifice will be acceptable.

Whoever needs to remove some hair, nails, etc. because it is harming him, such as having a broken nail or a wound in a site where there is hair, should do so, and there is nothing wrong with that.

There is nothing wrong with men or women washing their heads during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, because the Prophet ﷺ only forbade cutting the hair, not washing it.

The person is not forbidden to wear perfume, have marital relations, wear sewn garments, etc.

The wisdom behind this prohibition of the one who wants to offer a sacrifice from cutting his hair etc. is so that he may resemble those in *iḥrām* in some aspects of the rituals performed, and so that he may draw closer to Allah ﷻ by offering the sacrifice.

So he leaves his hair and nails alone until the time when he has offered his sacrifice, in the hope that Allah ﷻ will save him in his entirety from the Fire.

If a person has cut his hair or nails during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah because he was not planning to offer a sacrifice, then he decides later, during the ten days, to offer a sacrifice, then he must refrain from cutting his hair and nails from the moment he makes this decision.

This prohibition applies only to the one who is offering the sacrifice, not to his wife and children, unless any of them is offering a sacrifice in his or her own right.

The Prophet ﷺ used to sacrifice "on behalf of the family of Muḥammad", but there are no reports that say he forbade them to cut their hair or nails at that time.

Glorifying Allah with the Takbīr

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"There are no days that are greater with Allah, and in which good deeds are more beloved to Him, than these ten days. So increase in making tasbīh (Subhān Allah), tahmīd, tahleel and takbīr, during them."

[Ṣaḥīḥ; Related by at-Ṭabarānī in al-Kabeer (3/110/1), authenticated by al-Mundharī in at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb (2/24)]

‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ:

"There are no days greater in the sight of Allah and in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Him than these ten days, so during this time recite a great deal of Tahleel (La ilaaha ill-Allah), Takbīr and Tahmeed."

[Related by Imām Aḥmad (7/224); Aḥmad Shākīr stated that it is ṣaḥīḥ]

The Prophet ﷺ (peace and blessings be upon him) commanded us to recite during this time a lot of *tasbīh* (glorification of Allah), as well as *tahmīd* (praising Allah) and *takbīr* (saying Allah is Greatest).

"So the *tabkīrs* were prescribed in order to indicate that the act of slaughtering is directed to Allah alone, and by mentioning only His - the Mighty and Majestic's - Name."

[Quoted from Fath al-Bārī (21586)]

The majority of the Salaf (Pious Predecessors), and the Scholars from the Companions and Imāms used to begin making the *tabkīr* from Fajr (dawn) on the day of ‘Arafah, up until the last day of at-Tashreeq (the thirteenth of Dhul-Hijjah), after every Prayer."

However, what seems more correct is not to restrict the *tabkīrs* to being just after every Ṣalāt as Hāfiẓ Ibn Hajar رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ pointed out in Fath al-Bārī (21587).

Ibn Abī Shayba رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ relates:

"That ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ used to make the tabkīr beginning after the Fajr Prayer on the day of ‘Arafah, up until after the ‘Asr Prayer on the last day of at-Tashreeq."

[Related by Ibn Abī Shayba in al-Muṣannaf (2/1/2)]

The Actual words of Takbīr

As regards the actual wording of the *tabkīrs*, then nothing authentic has been related from the Prophet ﷺ. However, certain wordings have been authentically related from a group of Companions:

Ibn Mas‘ūd رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ would say:

"Allah is great, Allah is great. None has the right to be worshipped except Him. And Allah is great, Allah is great. And to Him belongs all praise. (Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La ilaaha ill-Allah, wAllahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar wa lillaahil-hamd)"

[Related by Ibn Abī Shayba with an authentic chain of narration]

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said:

"Allah is great, Allah is great, Allah is great, and to Allah belongs all praise. Allah is greater and Sublime. Allah is greater to what He has guided us to. (Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, wa lillaahil-hamd)"

[Related by al-Bayhaqī (3/315) with an authentic chain of narration]

"It is recommended to increase in making takbīr (saying Allahu Akbar), tahleel (saying La ilaaha ill-Allah) and tamhīd (saying Alhamdulillah) during these days ..."

[Zādul-Ma'ād (1/56)]

And all praise is for Allah ﷻ, Lord of the worlds. And may Allah extol and send the choicest blessings of peace upon our Leader, Muḥammad ﷺ, and upon his Family, his Companions, and all those who follow.

The Day of ‘Eid

The day of *an-Nahr* is also known as ‘Eid al-Adha (the Festivity of Sacrifice) and is one of the two major festivals that Allah has granted to this Umma.

Anas رضي الله عنه said:

"The Prophet came to Madīnah and the people of Madīnah had - since the times of jaahiliyyah (Pre-Islamic Ignorance) - two days which they marked out for play and amusement. So the Prophet said: "I came to you, and you had two days of play and amusement in the times of jaahiliyyah. But Allah has replaced them with something better for you: The day of al-Adha (sacrificing) and the day of al-Fitr (ending the Fast)."

[Ṣahīḥ; Related by Imām Aḥmad (3/1030); authenticated by Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar in Bulooghul-Maraam (398)]

Ṣalatul ‘Eid is Wājib upon every Muslim Male to attend. It is also recommended for women and children to attend ṣalatul ‘Eid. However, women should be properly dressed and children should observe the correct manners in attending the Maṣjid.

The Muslim must make sure to observe ‘Eid prayer in its designated place, and attend the khutbah of the ‘Eid. He should also know the purpose of the ‘Eid, and that it’s a day of giving thanks and a chance for accomplishing good deeds.

Takbīr is one of the most prominent Islamic rites. It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:
"Ornament your feasts with takbīr."

[Related by At-Ṭabarānī in As-Saghir and Al-Awsat]

Muslims should observe *takbīr* on the day of ‘Eid. On their way to perform ‘Eid Prayer and as they wait for it, Muslims should make *takbīr* loudly, saying:

"Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La ilaaha ill-Allah; Allahu Akbar, wa lillaahil-hamd"

This is the version adhered to by ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه as well as Imām Aḥmad رضي الله عنه

There is also another version of *takbīr* reported from Salmān رضي الله عنه; it goes,

"Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbaru Kabira."

Accompanying *takbīr* by sending blessings on the Prophet ﷺ is commendable and meritorious at all times.

Sincere repentance

One of the most important things to do during these ten days is to repent sincerely to Allah ﷻ and to give up all kinds of disobedience and sin. Repentance means coming back to Allah ﷻ and foregoing all the deeds, open and secret, that He dislikes, out of regret for what has passed, giving it up immediately and being determined never to return to it.

Doing more good deeds in general

Good deeds are beloved by Allah ﷻ and will bring a great reward from Him. Whoever is not able to go to Hajj should occupy himself at this blessed time by worshipping Allah ﷻ praying (ṣalaat), reading Qur'an, remembering Allah ﷻ, making supplication (du'ā), giving charity, honouring his parents, upholding the ties of kinship, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and other good deeds and acts of worship.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ۖ
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ۖ

*"So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it,
And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it."*

[Sūrat al-Zalzalah 99:7-8]

Conclusion

These texts and others indicate that these ten days are better than all the other days of the year, with no exceptions, not even the last ten days of Ramadan. But the last ten nights of Ramadan are better, because they include Laylatul-Qadr, which is better than a thousand months.

The Muslim must understand the value of his life, increase his worship of Allah ﷻ and persist in doing good deeds until the moment of death. Allah ﷻ says:

وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ۝

"And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty."

[Sūrat al-Hijr 15: 99]

Scholars say: "The certainty" means death.

After knowing all the above observances, every Muslim, male or female, must utilise these days in obedience to Allah ﷻ, remembering Him, expressing gratefulness to him, fulfilling all the obligatory observances, avoiding the reprehensible things and taking full advantage of these days to acquire His mercy and His Greatest Pleasure.

It is Allah ﷻ alone who grants success and guides to the right path.

May He exalt the name of Muḥammad ﷺ, and his household, and Companions and may He send His choicest blessings upon them and all those who follow them.