

Merits of the First Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah*

(The best ten days of the year)

Introduction:

Praise be to Allah Who has created Time and has made some times better than others, some months and days and nights better than others, in a sense that rewards are multiplied many times than the case in other periods of time. This reflects Allah's overflowing mercy towards His servants, and it encourages them to do more righteous deeds and makes them more eager to worship Him, so that the Muslim renews his efforts to gain a greater share of reward, prepare himself for death and supply himself in readiness for the Day of Judgment.

This season of worship brings many benefits, such as the opportunity to correct one's faults and make up for any shortcomings or anything that one might have missed. Every one of these special occasions involves some kind of worship through which the servants may draw closer to Allah, and some kind of blessing through which Allah bestows His favor and mercy upon whomsoever He wills. Happiness and success are for the one who makes the most of these special months, days and hours and draws nearer to his Lord during these times through acts of worship and righteousness. The Muslim must understand the value of his life, increase his worship of Allah and persist in doing good deeds until the moment of death. Almighty Allah says: **[And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty.]** (Al-Hijr 15:99) The Scholars say: 'The certainty' means death.

Among the special seasons of worship are the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, which Allah has preferred over all the other days of the year. Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) 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."** (Reported by al-Bukhari)

This text 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 than the *nights* of the first 10 days of Dhul-Hijjah, because they include *Laylat al-Qadr*, which is better than a thousand months. Thus the various reports may be reconciled. (See *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 5/412)]

Vertues of the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah*:

You should know that the virtue of these ten days is based on many things:

1. Allah swears an oath by them, and swearing an oath by something is indicative of its importance and great benefit. Almighty Allah says: **[By the dawn; by the ten nights.]** (Al-Fajr 89:1-2) Ibn `Abbas, 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. Ibn Kathir said: "This is the correct opinion." (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 8/413)

2. The Prophet (PBUH) testified that these are the best days of this world, as was already quoted above from authentic Hadiths (in the introduction.) Abdullah ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"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 *Tahlil* (saying: 'there is no god but Allah'), *Takbir* and *Tahmid*."** (Reported by Ahmad)

3. These ten days include the Day of Arafah**, on which Allah perfected His Religion. Fasting on this day will expiate for the sins of two years.

4. These days also include the Day of Sacrifice***, the greatest day of the entire year and the greatest day of Hajj, which combines acts of worship in a way unlike any other day.

Suggested actions: What should a Muslim do during the 1st ten days of Dhul-Hijjah?

1- Fasting: It is Sunnah to fast on the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah (day of Arafah**), because the Prophet (PBUH) urged us to do good deeds during this time, and fasting is one of the best of deeds. The Prophet (PBUH) used to fast on the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah. Hunaydah Ibn Khalid quoted some of the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) as saying: "The Prophet (PBUH) used to fast on the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah, on the day of `Ashurah, on three days of each month, and on the first two Mondays and Thursdays of each month." (Reported by An-Nisa'i, 4/205) A Muslim is also urged to fast as many of the remaining days, other than the day of Arafah..

2- Takbir: It is Sunnah to say *takbir*, *tahmid*, *tahlil*, and *tasbih* during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, and to say it loudly in the mosque, the home, the street and every place where it is permitted to remember Allah and mention His name out loud, as an act of worship and as a proclamation of the greatness of Allah, may He be exalted. When in public, men should recite these phrases out loud, and women should recite them quietly. Allah says: **(That they might witness things that are of benefit to them (i.e., reward of Hajj in the Hereafter, and also some worldly gain from trade, etc.), and mention the name of Allah on appointed days, over the beast of cattle that He has provided for them (for sacrifice)...)** (Al-Hajj 22:28) The majority of scholars agree that the "appointed days" are the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, because of the words of Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father): "The 'appointed days' are the first ten days (of Dhul-Hijjah)."

Takbir at this time is an aspect of the Sunnah that has been forgotten, especially during the early part of this period, so much so that one hardly ever hears *takbir*, except from a few people. This *takbir* should be pronounced loudly, in order to revive the Sunnah and as a reminder to the negligent. There is sound evidence that Ibn `Umar and Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with them both) used to go out in the marketplace during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, reciting *takbir*, and the people would recite it after him.

3- Performing Hajj and `Umrah: One of the best deeds that one can do during these ten days is to perform Hajj to the Sacred House of Allah. The one whom Allah helps to offer Hajj to His House and to perform all the rituals properly is included in the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): **"An accepted Hajj brings no less a reward than Paradise."**

4- Doing more good deeds in general: This is because good deeds are beloved by Allah and earn one a great reward. Whoever is not able to offer Hajj should occupy himself at this blessed time with acts of worship, offering Prayers, reading the Qur'an, remembering Allah, making supplications, giving in charity, showing dutifulness to parents, maintaining the ties of kinship, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and other good deeds and acts of worship.

5- Sacrifice: One of the good deeds that will bring a person closer to Allah during these ten days is offering a sacrifice. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the prophet (PBUH) said (in the meaning of) that the sacrifice is the best of the actions that a Muslim does on the day of Eid (more about the sacrifice is listed below.)

6- Sincere repentance: One of the most important things to do during these ten days is to repent

sincerely to Allah and to give up all kinds of disobedience and sin.

Offering Udhyiah (Zabihah/Sacrifice) On Eid Ul-Adha

What is an Udhyiah?

Udhyiah refers to the animal (camel, cattle or sheep) offered as a sacrifice, and it as an act of worship dedicated solely to gain the Pleasure of Allah *Subhanahu Wa ta'ala*.

What is the importance of Udhyiah?

Udhyiah is one of the great rituals of Islam, in which we remember the Oneness of our Creator Allah, His Blessings upon us and the obedience of our father Ibrahim to his Lord, and in this act of Udhyiah there is much goodness and blessing. So the Muslim must pay attention to its great importance. In the Qur'an Allah says: **“Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice (to Him only)”** (Al-Kawthar: 2). The Udhyiah is also an act of Sunnah or tradition of the prophet Muhammad (may Allah be pleased with him) who according to Anas ibn Malik: **“sacrificed two white rams speckled with black. He slaughtered them with his own hand, said ‘Allahu Akbar,’...”** (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*).

What is the Islamic ruling regarding the Udhyiah?

1. “Offering Udhyiah during Eid Al-Adha is regarded as *Wajib* (mandatory) according to Imam Abu Hanifah and as *Sunnah Mu'akkadah* (stressed/emphasized Sunnah) according to other jurists.
2. The ruling mentioned above is applicable to those people who have the *Nissab* (payable amount) of Zakah. So if someone is unable financially, then he/she is not mandated to perform the Udhiya.

Conditions of the Udhyiah (to be accepted by Allah S.W.)

1. The time for offering a sacrifice begins **AFTER Eid Al-Adha prayer**. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said that whosoever offered a sacrifice before Eid prayer, he or she just slaughtered an animal for meat, but whosoever made sacrifice after Eid Al-Adha prayer, he or she has offered a sacrifice (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 902). The time of sacrifice remains in effect until sunset on the 13th day of Dhul Hijjah (Specific dates for this year, please see below****.)

a. Therefore it is very important for those brothers/sisters who are arranging for their udhyiah to be performed by a slaughterhouse, to ask the people in charge of when the slaughtering takes place, and they should not accept any slaughtering to be done before the Eid prayer.

2. One sacrifice is sufficient for one household (family).

3. The types of animals that can be slaughtered are (goats, sheep, cows and camels). One goat, lamb or sheep is on behalf of one household, but seven people can share in offering one cow or one camel

4. The animal should have reached the required age, which is six months for a lamb, one year for a goat, two years for a cow and five years for a camel.
5. The animal should be free of any faults, because the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said: “There are four that will not do for sacrifice: a one-eyed animal whose defect is obvious, a sick animal whose sickness is obvious, a lame animal whose limp is obvious and an emaciated animal that has no marrow in its bones.” (Sahih Al-Jami`, no. 886). There are milder defects that do not disqualify an animal, but it is makruh (disliked) to sacrifice such animals, such as an animal with a horn or ear missing, or an animal with slits in its ears, etc. Udhiyah is an act of worship to Allah, and Allah is Good and accepts only that which is good. Whoever honors the rites of Allah, this has to do with the piety of the heart.
6. It is forbidden to sell the sacrifice. If an animal has been selected for sacrifice, it is not permissible to sell it or give it away, except in exchange for one that is better.
7. The meat of the Udhiyah should be divided in three equal portions: one for oneself and the family, one for friends or relatives (friends do not have to be poor to be given meat), and one for the poor and needy. The division does not have to be very accurate, but the more that is given to charity, the greater the reward will be, insha’ Allah. Even if someone is unable to distribute the meat to the needy, he/she should still slaughter for that the reward of slaughtering is too great to be missed.
8. The Udhiyah can be performed in another country on behalf of those who have the intention to sacrifice. You can arrange this through a charitable organization if you’d like. For example: (ICNA Relief), <http://www.reliefonline.org/>

Miscellaneous items

1. It is mustahabb or preferable for one who has made a sacrifice not to eat anything on that day before he eats from it, if this is possible, because of the Hadith, “Let every man eat from his sacrifice.”
2. It is better for a person to slaughter the sacrifice himself, but if he does not, it is mustahabb (preferable) for him to be present when it is slaughtered.
3. The scholars agreed that it is not permissible to sell anything from its meat, fat or skin.
4. The butcher should not be given anything of it by way of reward or payment, but can be given some of the meat as a gift.
5. It is also permissible to give some of the meat to a non-Muslim if he is poor or a relative or a neighbor, or in order to open his heart to Islam.