224025 - What’s So Special about the Month of Safar?

the question

Is there anything special about the month Safar, as there is in the case of Muharram? I hope that you can shed light on this matter in some detail. I have heard that some people regard this month as unlucky – why is that?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The month of Safar is one of the twelve months of the Hijri calendar ; it is the month that comes after Muharram . Some of them say that it was so called because Makkah was emptied of its inhabitants [the verb used in Arabic to describe this comes from the same root as the name of the month Safar], when they travelled during this month.

It was also suggested that they called it Safar because they used to fight other tribes during this month, and they would leave whoever they met with zero (*sifr*) goods (i.e., they would plunder his goods, leaving him with nothing).*) Lisaan al-‘Arab* by Ibn Manzoor (vol. 4, p. 462-463)

We will discuss this month under the following points:

What was narrated concerning it from the Arabs of the Jahiliyyah.

What was narrated in Islamic teaching that is contrary to what the people of the Jaahiliyyah believed.

Innovations and false beliefs concerning this month that are found among some followers of Islam.

What happened during this month of battles and important events in the life of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

What has been narrated of false hadiths about Safar.

What was narrated concerning the month of Safar from the Arabs of the Jahiliyyah

The Arabs had two grave objectionable practices with regard to the month of Safar:

1. They used to tamper with it, bringing it forward and putting it back from its place in the calendar
2. They regarded it as unlucky

With regard to tampering with the month of Safar, it is well-known that Allah, may He be exalted, created the year and the number of its months as twelve months, four of which Allah, may He be exalted, made sacred, during which it was prohibited to fight, out of respect for the sanctity of the month. These months are: Dhu'l-Qa'dah, Dhu'l-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab .

The confirmation of that in the book of Allah is the verse in which He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months (in a year), so was it ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are Sacred. That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein" [at-Tawbah 9:36].

The *mushrikeen* were aware of that, but they used to postpone them or bring them forward, according to their whims and desires. As part of that, they used to put the month of Safar in the place of Muharram!

They believed that 'umrah during the months of Hajj was one of the worst of evils. There follow some scholarly comments on that:

- It was narrated that Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: They used to think that 'umrah during the months of Hajj was one of the worst evils on earth. They would make Muharram Safar and say: They would say: when the backs of the camels have healed and the

tracks of the pilgrims have become erased and Safar is over, ‘Umrah becomes permissible for those who want to do ‘Umrah. (Narrated by al-Bukhari (1489) and Muslim (1240))

- Ibn al-‘Arabi said:

“Manner of postponing sacred months:

There are three views concerning the manner in which the sacred months were postponed:

1- It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that Junadah ibn ‘Awf ibn Umayyah al-Kinani used to attend the Hajj season every year and call out: Verily Abu Thumama is never rejected or refuted. Verily Safar last year was not sacred; we make it sacred one year and not sacred the next year. And they were with Hawazin, Ghatafan and Banu Sulaym (regarding this matter).

According to another version, he used to say: We will bring Muharram forward and delay Safar. Then the next year he would say: We will regard Safar as sacred and delay Muharram. That is what delaying the sacred month means.

2- Adding to the sacred months. Qatadah said: Some of the misguided people decided to add Safar to the sacred months, so their spokesman would stand up during the Hajj season and say: Your gods have decided that Muharram is to be regarded as sacred this year. So they would regard it as sacred that year. Then the following year he would stand up and say: Your gods have decided to regard Safar as sacred. So they would regard it as sacred that year, and would say: There are two Safars.

Ibn Wahb and Ibn Qasim narrated something similar from Malik, who said: The people of the Jahiliyyah used to regard them as two Safars. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no Safar.” That is how Ashhab narrated it from him.

3- Changing the time of Hajj. Mujaahid said, with a different isnaad: “The postponement (of a Sacred Month) is indeed an addition to disbelief” [at-Tawbah 9:37]. He said: They used to do Hajj in Dhu’l-Hijjah for two years, then they would do Hajj in Muharram for two years, then they would do Hajj in Safar for two years. They would do Hajj in each month for two years, until the Hajj of Abu

Bakr, which was in Dhu’l-Qa‘dah, then the Hajj of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was in Dhu’l-Hijjah. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said in his Farewell Sermon, according to the saheeh hadith: “Time has returned to its original order as it was on the day when Allah created the heavens and the earth.” Narrated by Ibn 'Abbas and others.

He said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “O people, listen to my words, for I do not know whether I will meet you again after this day of mine in this place. O people, verily your blood and your wealth are sacred, until the Day you meet your Lord, as sacred as this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this land of yours. Verily you will meet your Lord, and He will ask you about your deeds. I have conveyed the message. Whoever has a trust, let him render it back to the one who entrusted it to him. All riba is abolished, but you may keep your capital, so that you will not wrong others and you will not be wronged. Allah has decreed that there should be no riba, and the riba of ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib is all abolished. Verily every blood feud of the Jaahiliyyah is abolished, and the first of your blood feuds that I abolish is the blood feud of Ibn Rabee‘ah ibn al-Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib. He was breastfed among Banu Layth and killed by Hudhayl. This is the first step in abolishing the blood feuds of the Jahiliyyah.

“To proceed: O people, verily the Shaytan has despaired of ever being worshipped in your land, but if he is obeyed in other matters, that you think of as insignificant of your misdeeds, he will be content. So beware, O people, lest he undermine your religious commitment. ‘The postponing (of a Sacred Month) is indeed an addition to disbelief: thereby the disbelievers are led astray, for they make it lawful one year and forbid it another year in order to adjust the number of months forbidden by Allah’ [at-Tawbah 9:37]. Time has returned to its original order as it was on the day when Allah created the heavens and the earth. Verily the number of months with Allah is twelve months, of which four are sacred: three consecutive months, and Rajab of Mudar, which comes between Jumada and Sha‘ban.” Then he quoted the rest of the hadith. (*Ahkam al-Quran* (2/503-504))

With regard to regarding the month of Safar as unlucky , that was well known among the people of

the Jahiliyyah and continued among some followers of Islam.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “No ‘adwa [transmission of infectious disease without the permission of Allah], no tiyarah [superstitious belief in bird omens], no haamah [refers to a Jahili Arab tradition described variously as: a worm that infests the grave of a murder victim until he is avenged; an owl; or the bones of a dead person turned into a bird that could fly], and no Safar [the month of Safar was regarded as unlucky in the Jahiliyyah]. But flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari (5387) and Muslim (2220)

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Several explanations were given for the word “Safar” [in this hadith]:

1. that it was the well-known month of Safar, which the Arabs regarded as unlucky;

2. that it was an internal disease affecting camels, that may be transmitted from one camel to another, and it was mentioned after ‘adwa [contagion or transmission of infectious disease] by way of mentioning a specific type of contagion after mentioning something general;

3. that it referred to the month of Safar, but what was meant was postponing the sacred months, by which the disbelievers were led astray. Hence they would delay regarding the month of Muharram as sacred, and defer it until Safar, regarding it as not sacred one year, and regarding it as sacred the following year.

What is most likely to be the case is that what is meant here is the month of Safar, as they used to regard it as unlucky during the Jahiliyyah.

But time and months have no impact on people or on the decrees of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Therefore time in Safar is like time in any other month, when good or bad may be decreed.

Some people, if they finish some work on, say, the twenty fifth of Safar, will give the date by

saying “It was completed on the twenty fifth of the good month of Safar.” This comes under the heading of fighting bid‘ah with bid‘ah. Safar is neither a good month nor a bad month. Therefore some of the early generation would denounce a person who said, upon hearing the call of the owl [which was regarded as inauspicious during the Jahiliyyah], “It is good, in sha Allah,” by stating that it should not be described as either good or bad; rather it calls like any other bird.

The fact that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stated that these four things have no impact indicates that it is obligatory to put one’s trust in Allah alone and to be steadfast, and not to feel weak when faced with these things.

If the Muslim pays attention to such superstitious matters, it must be one of two scenarios:

1. Either he responds to these superstitions by going ahead with his plans or refraining (according to superstition), in which case he has connected his deeds to something that has no reality or substance,

2. or he does not respond, by going ahead with his plans and not paying any attention (to the superstitious matter), but there remains in his mind some kind of worry and distress. Even though this is not as bad as the first case, he should not pay any attention at all to these matters, and he should put his truth solely in Allah, may He be glorified and exalted.

Denying that these four matters do not have any impact does not mean denying that they exist – because they do in fact exist; rather it is denying that they have any influence, because the only one with influence is Allah. Whatever is a real cause is a valid and sound cause, and whatever is an imaginary cause is a false cause, and we deny that it has any influence in and of itself.” (*Majmoo‘ Fatawa ash-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen*, 2/113-115)

What was narrated in Islamic teaching that is contrary to what the people of the Jaahiliyyah believed

This was referred to in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah in as-Saheehayn, where it says that the belief of the people of the Jaahiliyyah concerning Safar was blameworthy, because it is one of the months

of Allah and has no will of its own: rather it is subject to the will of Allah.

Innovations and false beliefs concerning this month that are found among some followers of Islam

1. The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

Some of the scholars in our country claim that in the religion of Islam there is a naafil (supererogatory) prayer to be offered on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar, at the time of Duha prayer; it is four rak'ahs with one tasleem, and in each rak'ah one should recite the Opening of the Book (i.e., Surah al-Faatihah), Surah al-Kawthar seventeen times, Surah al-Ikhlas fifty times, and al-Mu'awwidhatayn [the last two surahs of the Quran] one time each, and that is to be done in each rak'ah, then the tasleem is to be said [at the end]. After saying the tasleem, one should start to recite "And Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of men know not" [Yoosuf 12:21] three hundred and sixty times, and Jawhar al-Kamal three times, and conclude by saying "Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power! (He is free) from what they attribute unto Him! And peace be on the Messengers! And all the praise and thanks be to Allah, Lord of the 'Alameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists)" [as-Saffat 37:180-182].

Then one should give some bread in charity to the poor. This verse is chosen to ward off calamities that may occur on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar.

They say that every year, three hundred and twenty thousand calamities befall people, and all of that happens on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar. So that day is the most difficult of all the days of the year, but whoever offers this prayer in the manner described, Allah will protect him by His kindness from all calamities that come down on that day. Is this the case?

The scholars of the Committee replied:

With regard to this supererogatory prayer mentioned in the question, we do not know of any basis for it in the Quran or Sunnah. In our view it is not proven that any one of the early generations of this ummah or the righteous among its later generations did this supererogatory prayer. Rather it

is a reprehensible innovation (bid‘ah).

It is proven from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: “Whoever does a deed that is not part of this matter of ours, it will be rejected.” And he said: “Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it, it will be rejected.”

Whoever attributes this prayer and the other things mentioned with it to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or to any of the Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) has uttered a grave lie, and he will have from Allah what he deserves of the punishment of those who tell lies. (Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daimah, 2/354)

2. Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abd as-Salam ash-Shuqayri said:

The ignorant have the custom of writing the verses of salaam, such as “Salamun (peace) be upon Nooh (Noah) (from Us) among the Alameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists)” [as-Saffat 37:79] and so on, on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar, then they put them in vessels and drink (water that has been poured on them), and seek barakah (blessing) thereby, and exchange them as gifts, because they believe that this will remove evil. This is a corrupt belief and is blameworthy superstition and an abhorrent innovation; everyone who sees it must denounce the one who does it. (*As-Sunan wa’l-Mubtada‘at*, pp. 111, 112)

What happened during this month of battles and important events in the life of the Prophet

There were many such events, of which we will mention a few:

1. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Then he himself led the campaign of al-Abwa’, which is also known as Waddan. This was the first campaign that he led himself. It took place in Safar, twelve months after his migration (to Madinah). His banner, which was white, was carried by Hamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib. He left Sa‘d ibn 'Ubadah in charge of Madinah during his absence, and he set out with the Muhajireen only to

intercept a caravan belonging to Quraysh, and did not engage in any fighting.

During this campaign, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) made a peace deal with Makhshi ibn ‘Amr ad-Damri, who was the leader of Banu Damrah at that time, agreeing that he would not attack Banu Damrah, and they would not attack him, and that they would not join others against him or help any enemy against him, and a document to that effect was written between him and them. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was absent for fifteen days.” (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/164-165)

2. He [Ibn al-Qayyim] also said:

“In Safar 3 AH, some people came to him from (the tribes of) ‘Adal and al-Qarah and said that some of them had already accepted Islam, and they asked him to send with them someone to teach them the religion and teach them Qur’an. So he sent six people with them – according to the report of Ibn Ishaaq; al-Bukhari said that they were ten. He appointed as their leader Marthad ibn Abi Marthad al-Ghinawi, and among them was Khubayb ibn ‘Adiyy. They went with them, but when they were in ar-Rajee‘ – which was a watering place belonging to Hudhayl in a district of al-Hijaz – they betrayed them and sought the help of Hudhayl against them, who came and surrounded them, and killed most of them, but they took Khubayb ibn ‘Adiyy and Zayd ibn ad-Dathinah captive. They brought them to Makkah and sold them there; they had killed some of the leaders of Makkah on the day of Badr.” (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/244)

3. And he [Ibn al-Qayyim] said:

“During this same month, namely Safar 4 AH, there occurred the battle of Bi’r Ma‘oonah. To sum up:

Abu Bara’ ‘Aamir ibn Maalik, who was known as Mala‘ib al-Asinnah [the Player with the Spears] came to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in Madinah. He called him to Islam but he did not become Muslim, yet he was not far from it. He said: O Messenger of Allah, if you were to send some of your companions to the people of Najd to invite them to your religion, I hope that they would respond to them. He said to him: “I fear that the people of Najd

may kill them.'' Abu Bara said: I will be their protector. So he sent forty men with him, according to the report of Ibn Ishaaq. In as-Saheeh it says that they were seventy; the report in as-Saheeh is the correct report. He appointed as their leader al-Mundhir ibn ‘Amr, one of Banu Saa‘idah, who was known as “The Quick to Seek Death”. They were among the best of the Muslims, the most virtuous of them, their leaders, those who had knowledge of the Qur’an. They travelled until they halted in Bi’r Ma‘oonah, which is between the land of Banu ‘Aamir and the harrah of Banu Sulaym. They halted there, then they sent Haram ibn Milhan, the brother of Umm Sulaym, with the letter of the Messenger of Allah to the enemy of Allah 'Amir ibn at-Tufayl. He did not even look at it, and he ordered a man to stab him with a spear in his back. When Haram ibn Milhan was stabbed and saw the blood, he said: I have attained a victory, by the Lord of the Ka‘bah! Then the enemy of Allah tried to mobilise Banu ‘Amir to fight the others, but they did not respond to him because of the protection of Abu Bara. Then he mobilised Banu Sulaym and [the tribes of] ‘Usayyah, Ri‘l and Dhakwan responded. They came and surrounded the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, and they fought until they were all killed, except Ka‘b ibn Zayd ibn an-Najjar. He was wounded and was picked up from among the slain, and lived until he was killed on the Day of al-Khandaq. ‘Amr ibn Umayyah ad-Damri and al-Mundhir ibn ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amir were with the camels of the Muslims out at pasture, and they saw the birds flying over the location of the battle. Al-Mundhir ibn ‘Uqbah came and fought the polytheists until he was killed with his companions, and ‘Amr ibn Umayyah ad-Damri was taken captive, but when he told them that he was from Mudar, ‘Amir cur off his forelock and released him on behalf of his mother, who had taken an oath to release a slave. ‘Amr ibn Umayyah headed back [to Madinah] and when he came to al-Qarqarah at the beginning of Qanat [a place name], he stopped in the shade of a tree, and two men from Banu Kilab came and stopped with him. When they fell asleep, ‘Amr killed them, thinking that he had taken revenge on them for the killing of his Companions, but they had a covenant with the Messenger of Allah of which he was not aware. When he came and told the Messenger of Allah about what he had done, he said: “You have killed two men whose diyah (blood money) I must pay.” (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/246-248)

4. Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“His going out to Khaybar occurred at the end of Muharram and not at the beginning, and its conquest could only have taken place in Safar.” (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/339-340)

5. And he [Ibn al-Qayyim] said:

“Chapter on the expedition of Qatbah ibn 'Amir ibn Hadeedah to Khath‘am

This happened in Safar 9 AH. Ibn Sa‘d said: They said: The Messenger of Allah sent Qatbah ibn 'Amir with twenty men to a tribe of Khath‘am in the region of Tabalah, and ordered him to launch a raid. They set out on ten camels, taking it in turns to ride them. They caught a man and questioned him, and he refused to talk, but then he cried out to the tribe, to warn them, so they struck his neck. Then they waited until the tribe had gone to sleep, then they launched the raid on them and the fighting grew fierce, until there were many wounded on both sides, and Qutbah ibn 'Amir killed whoever he killed, and they brought the camels, women and sheep to Madinah. According to the story, the tribe gathered together and pursued them, but Allah, may He be exalted, sent a great flood against them that came between them and the Muslims. The Muslim drove off the camels, sheep and captives as they were looking on, but they could not cross [the flood waters] to reach them, until they disappeared from sight.” (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/514)

6. And he [Ibn al-Qayyim] said:

“The delegation of ‘Udhrah came to the Messenger of Allah in Safar 9 AH, with twelve men, among whom was Jamrah ibn an-Nu‘maan. The Messenger of Allah said: Who are the people? Their spokesman said: We are not strangers to you; we are Banu ‘Udhrah, the brother of Qusayy through his mother. We are the people who supported Qusayy and removed Khuza'ah and Banu Bakr from the valley of Makkah, and we have ties of kinship. The Messenger of Allah said: “Welcome to you; I know you very well.” They became Muslim, and the Messenger of Allah gave them the glad tidings of the conquest of Greater Syria and the flight of Heraclius to a fortified place in his own land. The Messenger of Allah forbade them to ask questions of soothsayers and offer sacrifices (that they used to offer during the Jahiliyyah), and he told them that they did not have to offer anything but the udhiyah. They stayed for several days in the house of Ramlah, then

they left.” (*Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3/657)

What has been narrated of false hadiths about Safar

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“Section on hadiths that mention dates in the future

Where the hadith mentions certain dates, such as saying “In such and such a year, such and such will happen; or, in such and such a month, such and such will happen.”

Or as when the arch liar said: “If the moon is eclipsed in Muharram, prices will rise, there will be fighting and people in authority will be distracted, and if it is eclipsed in Safar, such and such will happen.”

And the liar went on to say something about all the months.

All such hadiths are false and fabricated. (Al-Manaar al-Muneef, p. 64)

And Allah knows best