

Fasting of the month of Muharram: Muharram is one of the sacred months of the year. Fasting this month is highly recommended.

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

“The best fasting after the month of Ramadaan is the month of Allaah, the Muharram” [Saheeh Muslim]

Allaah’s Messenger called this month the month of Allaah and as we know that when this type of idaafah is mentioned and it is related to the name of Allaah, then it means that object has greatness, honor and deserves our respect and veneration as is prescribed in the shariah. Like baytullah, naaqatullaah, rosuulullaah....

So, we understand the great importance of this month, however fasting in this month shouldn’t be done as a whole as we know from the sunnah that the Prophet (saw) never fasted a full whole month except the month of Ramadaan. So, what the hadith in saheeh Muslims means is to fast a lot of days in Muharram – but not the whole month and Allaah knows best.

The 10th of Muharam, `Aashuura:

When the issue of Muharram comes, we remember a blessed day on that month and that is the day of `Aashuura, the 10th of Muharram.

From the sunnah we know the following regarding ‘Ashuura:

- Ashura was the first obligatory fasting. But when Ramadan was made obligatory, `Aashura became optional.
- Ashura is one of the day of the days of Allaah.
- The Quraish used to fast this day in Mekkah.
- The Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) used to fast this day even in Mecca.
- Musa ‘Alayhis-salaam was saved on this day, he and followers used to fast this day in thanksgiving to Allaah.
- Jews took this day as fasting and ‘Eid.
- When the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) came to Al-Medinah, he ordered the companions to fast this day but not to take this day as an ‘eid like the Jews did.
- The Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) wished to fast the 9th of Muharram to make it different from the Jews, however before the coming year he (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) passed away.
- The Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) wished to fast the 9th of Muharram fearing he might miss the ‘Aashuura.
- Fasting the day of `Ashuura will expiate the sins of the past year.

`Aishah (radiAllaahu ‘ahna) narrated:

The people used to fast on `Aashuura (the tenth day of the month of Muharram) before the fasting of Ramadan was made obligatory. And on that day the Ka'ba used to be covered with a cover. When Allah made the fasting of the month of Ramadan compulsory, Allah's Apostle said, "Whoever wishes to fast (on the day of `Aashuura) may do so; and whoever wishes to leave it can do so." [Saheeh Al-Bukhari]

`Abdullaah Ibn ‘Abbas reported:

The Prophet came to Medina and saw the Jews fasting on the day of `Aashuura. He asked them about that. They replied, "This is a good day, the day on which Allah rescued Bani Israel from their enemy. So, Moses fasted this day." The Prophet said, "We have more claim over Moses than you." So, the Prophet fasted on that day and ordered (the Muslims) to fast (on that day). [Bukhari]

So, the Jews used to proclaim this day as “Yawmun Saleh” [i.e. noble day] “Yawmun ‘Adheem” [i.e. a greayt day] and other narrations, Musa ‘alayhis-salam was made victorious and Fer’aun was drowned, so Musa ‘alayhis-salam and his followers used to fast on this day.

Imam Muslim records the statement of Abu Musa Al-Ashari (RadiAllaahu ‘anhu):

Abu Musa reported that the people of Khaibar (most of them were Jews) observed fast on the day of `Aashuura and they treated it as 'Id and gave their women ornaments and beautiful dress to wear. The Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: You (only) observe fast on this day.” [Saheeh Muslim]

So, the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) commanded his followers to follow this day to follow the sunnah of Musa (‘alayhis-salaam) and this of course has been approved by Allaah (subhanahu wa ta’alaa) as we know the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) never spoke from his desires, what he said was a revelation from Allaah.

So, the legislation of the fasting of `Aashuura was obligatory in the beginning and this is the first obligatory fasting in Al-Madinah.

Salama b. al-Akwa' (Allaah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) sent a person of the tribe of Aslam on the day of `Aashuura and commanded him to declare to the people to observe fast in case they had not observed it, and to complete fast till evening if they had taken food. [Muslim]

Rubayyi' daughter of Mu'awwidh bin 'Afra' said that the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) sent (a person) on the morning of `Aashuura to the villages of Ansar around Medina (with this message): He who got up in the morning fasting (without eating anything) he should complete his fast, and he who had had his breakfast in the morning, he should complete the rest of the day (without food). The Companions said; We henceforth observed fast on it (on the day of 'ashura) and, God willing, made our children observe that. We went to the mosque and made toys out of wool for them and when anyone felt hungry and wept for food we gave them these toys till it was the time to break the fast. [Muslim]

Then the obligation of Ramadaan was revealed: yaa Ayyuhalladheena amaanu kutiba ‘alaykumus-siyaamu.... There are several narrations by Aisha, Mu’awiyah, Ibn ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbas and others collected by Bukhari and Muslim that after the revelation of the obligation of Ramadaan, the obligation of the fasting of `Aashuura was left and it became optional.

Humaid Ibn ‘Abdur Rahman Ibn ‘Auf reported that he heard Muawiya bin Abi Sufyan on the day of 'ashura' during the year he performed the Hajj, saying on the pulpit, "O the people of Medina! Where are your Religious Scholars? I heard Allah's Apostle saying, 'This is the day of `Aashuura. Allah has not enjoined its fasting on you but I am fasting it. You have the choice either to fast or not to fast (on this day).' [Bukhari]

Ibn Umar said: “We used fast in Al-`Aashuura, but when Ramadaan was revealed and it was obligatory, the Prophet (saw) said this is a day from the days of Allaah, if anyone wishes then let him fast and if anyone wishes then let him break his fast. [saheeh Abi Dawud: 2443] also, in another narration, he (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

“ so whosoever loves from amongst you, then let him fast and whosoever dislikes then let him leave.” [saheeh Ibn maajah: 1423]

Although the obligation of the fasting of `Aashuura was left, but the Prophet (saw) continued to fast this day. The following ahadith are proofs of this matter:

1. Ibn ‘Abbas reported: I never saw the Prophet seeking to fast on a day more (preferable to him) than this day, the day of 'Aashura, or this month, i.e. the month of Ramadan. [Bukhari].
2. He (saw) described the benefit of the fasting of this day. Hadith of Abu Sayeed Al-khudriy: The one who fasts on the day of Arafah, his sins of the previous and following years are forgiven and the one who fasts `Aashuura, his sins of the previous years are forgiven. [saheeh at-targheeb 1021: Saheeh Li Ghayrihi]. Also the long hadith of Abu Qatadah (RadiAllaahu ‘anhu) that the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)

said: ‘fasting in the `Aashuura, I hope Allaah will forgive the sin of the previous year. [recorded by Muslim and others]

3. He (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) encouraged others to fast in so many narrations: if anyone wishes then let him fast and if anyone wishes then let him break his fast. [saheeh Abi Dawud: 2443] etc..
4. Ibn 'Abbas reported that when the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) fasted on the day of 'Aashuura and commanded that it should be observed as a fast, they (his Companions) said to him: Messenger of Allaah, it is a day which the Jews and Christians hold in high esteem. Thereupon the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: When the next year comes, Allaah willing, we would observe fast on the 9th But the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) died before the advent of the next year. [Saheeh Muslim]
5. ‘Abdullaah Ibn ‘abbas reported that the Prophet (Sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: If I live by the will of Allaah, I will fast the 9th fearing that I would miss `Aashuura (silsilah: 350) - So, the Prophet (saw) wished to fast the 9th of Dhul Hijjah in the next year too fearing it might miss him shows the great importance and stress that he had to fast on that day.

Regardless, it is no longer an obligation but who of us wouldn't wish for his sins to be forgiven – all the minor sins of the previous years, without counting, remembering – it would be erased if we submit ourselves to the sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam).

And the sunnah is to fast the 10th including the 9th too.

Bid'ah and extremisms during the month of Muharram:

When the matter of `Aashuura comes, we should also remember that there are two groups of people who definitely exceeded limits regarding this day. And they are the Rawaafid from the Shiahs, who had extreme veneration for Ahl al-Bayt and the Nawaasib – those who hated ‘Ali (RadiAllaahu ‘anhu and the ahl al bayt). It should be noted that it is on the 10th of Muharram, that Husayn Ibn ‘Ali (Radi..) was martyred in the battle in the desert of Karbala. And this was due to the deception of the shiahs in Kufa who first showed allegiance to Husayn and then later on ran away from him. And he fell victim to the situation. After 4 years of his martyrdom, a group called the Tawwabun came out from Kufa apparently repenting from what they did and they went in search of the killers of Husayn (radiAllaahu ‘anhu) and when they reached the field of Karbala, they lamented, tore their dresses, cried etc... This is the origin of the shias taking that day as a day of mourning – for which in our religion there is no basis.

To taunt them, the Nawasib took this day as a day of celebration by making their children, women wearing nice dresses, wearing kuhl, cooking special food etc...

Then the history of matam (i.e. mourning) was introduced to this day by the shiahs, they took all the first 10 days of Ashura as the days of mourning, cutting their heads, bleeding, taking knives, scissors, scratching and hitting their backs – all sorts of nasty things were introduced. To this day, in some countries, Muharram is celebrated by bringing out a procession, by making a fake funeral procession with a box covered with black cloth, a big structure decorated with domes, a decorated horse referring to “duldul” – supposedly the horse of Husayn (radi..) and other things of matam were introduced to the extent many Muslims think `Aashuura is about this and they have no connection to the wealth of Prophetic narrations and discussion that are there which call to the revival of the heart and soul.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ

The call of Allaah and His Messenger brings life and the call to other than this that contradicts this path brings death.

Some weak Narrations regarding Muharram:

Many people specify this day as the day of celebration, buy new clothes, put kuhl in the eye, pray certain number of prayers etc... All of these are innovations and there are no authentic narrations to support such actions. Below

are some weak narrations that support such innovations and we ask Allaah to purify the ummah from such practices.

1. `Aashuura was the 'Eid of the Prophets before you, so fast this day. [Da'eef, Da'eef Al-Jamee' 3670, see Da'eefah 3851]
2. Fast the day of `Aashuura, and be different from the Jews, a day before or a day after. [Da'eef, Da'eef Al-Jamee', 3506]
3. The sea was split on the day of `Ashuura for the children of Israel [fabricated narration, see Silsilah Ad-Da'eefah 1499]
4. Fast the day of `Aashuura, the day Prophets before you used to fast, so fast (on this day). [Da'eef, See da'eef Al-Jamee' 3507]
5. The one who puts kuhl on his eyes on the day of `Aashuura, will never be sick with sore-eyes. [fabricated, see Da'eef Al-Jamee' 5467]