

Month of Muharram and fasting

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

“The best fasting after Ramadhaan is the month of Allaah, ‘Muharram’, and the best prayer after the obligatory prayer is prayer at night.”¹

Muharram is the first month of the Islaamic, Hijrah calendar. It is one of the four sanctified months about which Allaah says,

“The number of months in the sight of Allaah are twelve (in a year). So ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; Of them four are sacred: That is the right religion. So wrong not yourselves therein.”²

The four months, according to authentic Hadeeth, are the months of Dul-Qa`dah, Dhu-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab. The sanctity of these four months was observed in the Sharee`ah of all the Prophets.

Muslim scholars have stated that the actions performed in these months have an effect on what a person does in the remaining months of the year.

The Month of Muharram

The Prophet, *(May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)*, is reported to have said,

“The best of fasts besides the month of Ramadhaan is the fast during Allaah’s month of Muharram and the best of prayer besides the obligatory prayers is the Tahajjud prayer.”

The 10th Day of Muharram known as the day of `Ashuraa’, is a very significant day in the Islaamic calendar. The Prophet, *(May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)*, has exhorted the Ummah to fast on this day. He is reported to have said,

“Fasting the day of `Ashuraa’, I hope that Allaah will accept it as expiation for the previous year.”³

The Fast of `Ashuraa’

It is reported in the Saheeh of Imaam Bukhaaree and other authentic collections of Hadeeth that the Prophet *(May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)* and his Companions used to fast on the 10th day of Muharram while they were in Makkah (before the Hijrah).

¹ Saheeh Muslim 1163.

² Soorah at-Tawbah: [9:36]

³ Saheeh Muslim

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Ibn `Abbaas said, 'I did not see the Prophet anxiously awaiting the fast of any day, which he gave preference to over other days, but this day (of `Ashuraa') and the month of Ramadhaan.'

It was a day on which people of Makkah used to change the covering (Kiswah) of the Ka`bah. Quraysh also used to fast on this day.⁴

After the Hijrah when the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) came to Madeenah, he found that the Jews of Madeenah also used to observe this day with fasting. The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) asked them the reason of their fasting on this day. They said, "This is a blessed day. On this day Allaah saved the Children of Israel from their enemy (in Egypt) and so Prophet Moosa fasted on this day giving thanks to Allaah." The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) said,

"We are closer to Moosa than you are."⁵

He fasted on that day and commanded Muslims to fast on this day.

In another report it is mentioned that Jews of Madeenah used to hold feast on this day. The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) told his Companions to fast instead.⁶

`Ashuraa' fasting was obligatory (Fard) in the beginning. In the second year of Hijrah (624 CE) when Allaah's command came that Muslims should fast the whole month of Ramadhaan, the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) then sent someone to announce to people that fasting of `Ashuraa' had become voluntary (Nafl). This indicates that whosoever wishes to fast, may fast and whosoever does not want to fast, there will be no blame on him/her.

Imaam At-Tirmidhee mentions that Ibn `Abbaas (*May Allaah be pleased with them both*) used to say that we should fast on two days: the 9th and 10th of Muharram to distinguish ourselves from the Jewish community.⁷

Ibn `Abbaas also quotes the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as saying,

"If I live next year, I shall also fast on the 9th day."⁸

There is a great reward in fasting the `Ashuraa'. There are many Hadeeths that mention its blessings and virtues. It is good to fast on this day, although it is not obligatory.

⁴ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree

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⁷ Reported by At-Tirmidhee

⁸ Reported by Ahmad