

MUHARRAM

The First Month in the Islamic Calendar

Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar, is from amongst the four sacred months. Allāh Ta‘ālā mentions in the Glorious Qur‘ān, “Lo! The number of the months with Allāh Ta‘ālā is twelve months by Allāh’s Ordinance in the day that He created the heavens and the earth. Four of them are sacred: that is the right religion...” (9:36)

Abu Bakrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily time has completed its cycle and returned to its original stage as it was on the day Allāh Ta‘ālā created the heavens and the earth. The year consists of twelve months, out of which four months are sacred. Three of them occur consecutively; Dhul-Qa’dah, Dhul-Hijjah and Muharram, (and the fourth is) Rajab of Mudar (named after the tribe of Mudar as they used to respect this month) which occurs between Jamādi-al-Ākhir and Sha’bān.” (Al-Bukhārī)

Virtues of Fasting in Muharram

Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said, “...One who keeps a fast in the month of Muharram will receive the reward of thirty fasts for each fast.” (At-Tabrānī)

In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said, “The best of fasts besides the fasts of Ramadhān is the fasting of Allāh’s month of Muharram...” (Muslim)

The Day of ‘Āshurā

The 10th day of Muharram is known as ‘Āshurā. It is a very blessed and important day in the Islamic calendar. Some ‘Ulamā are of the opinion that before the fasts of Ramadhān, the fast of the day of ‘Āshurā was compulsory.

‘Ā’ishah ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ ordered the observance of the fast of ‘Āshurā. However, when the fasting of Ramadhān became compulsory, then whosoever wished, kept this fast and whosoever desired did not observe this fast. (Al-Bukhārī)

In another hadīth, ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ came to Madinah and found the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Āshurā. Hence the Prophet ﷺ inquired of them, “What is the significance of this day on which you fast?” They replied, “This is a great day. On this day Allāh Ta‘ālā saved Musā ؑ and his people and drowned Fir’awn and his nation. Thus, Musā ؑ fasted on this day as a token of thanking Allāh Ta‘ālā, therefore we too fast on this day.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “We are more worthy of Musā ؑ and nearer to him than you.” Thereafter, the Prophet ﷺ fasted on this day and ordered his companions ؓ that a fast be kept on this day. (Muslim)

Recommended Deeds

1) To fast on the day of ‘Āshurā; Abu Qatādah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ was asked regarding the fast of the day of ‘Āshurā. The Prophet ﷺ replied, “It is a compensation for the (minor) sins of the past year.” (Muslim)

2) To fast on the 9th or 11th of Muharram. This is to safeguard this good deed of fasting from resemblance with the non-muslims, who fast only on the 10th of Muharram. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Observe the fast of ‘Āshurā and oppose the Jews. Fast a day before it or a day

after.” (Al-Bayhaqī)

‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ said, “When the Prophet ﷺ observed the fast of the day of ‘Āshurā and ordered his companions ؓ to fast, they said, “O Rasullullāh ﷺ! It is a day revered by the Jews and Christians.” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “The coming year, if Allāh Ta‘ālā wills, we will fast on the ninth also.” (Muslim)

Note: It is Makrooh Tanzeehi to fast only on the 10th of Muharram as stated by ‘Allāmah Ibn ‘Ābideen Shāmi rahimahullāh.

An Important Lesson

Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī hafizahullāh mentions that the Prophet ﷺ disliked resemblance with the non-muslims in acts of worship such as fasting. From this, we understand that as Muslims, we should follow the lifestyle of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions ؓ in every aspect of life, instead of adopting the ways of others. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever emulates a group is from them.” (Abu Dāwud)

This hadīth includes the resemblance of non-muslims in appearance (dress), character and specific signs of religion. However, it also implies that if one emulates the people of righteousness and piety, one will be gathered with them in the Hereafter.

3) To spend on one’s family and dependants on the day of ‘Āshurā more than one spends on a normal basis. Abu Hurayrah ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said, “One who generously spends on his family on the day of ‘Āshurā, Allāh Ta‘ālā will increase (his provision) for the whole year.” (Al-Bayhaqī, At-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb)

Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyaynah rahimahullāh said, “I have practiced this (spending on the family) for fifty or sixty years, and have found nothing but good in it.”

Misconceptions Regarding ‘Āshurā

1) Many people attribute the virtue of ‘Āshurā to the martyrdom of Husayn ؑ, whereas the significance and virtue of ‘Āshurā is from the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Husayn ؑ was martyred many years after the demise of the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, to attribute the virtue of ‘Āshurā to the martyrdom of Husayn ؑ is baseless. Furthermore, to regard ‘Āshurā as a day of mourning his martyrdom is also incorrect and contrary to the teachings of Islām.

2) Some people take it as Sunnah to indulge in adornment, wear new clothes, spend lavishly and cook a particular type of meal which is not generally prepared on the day of ‘Āshurā. This practice is incorrect as no authentic narration can be found regarding these actions.

3) The following misconceptions with regards to ‘Āshurā are baseless and one must not believe in them:

- Ādam ؑ was created on this day.
- Ibrāheem ؑ was born on this day.
- Qiyāmah will take place on this day.
- Whoever has a bath on the day of ‘Āshurā will never get ill.
- The month of Muharram is an unlucky month. Hence, Nikāh ceremonies should be avoided in this month.

May Allāh Ta‘ālā grant us the correct understanding of Deen and save us from every act which displeases Him. (Āmeen)