

The Month of Muharram

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THE MONTH OF MUHARRAM

Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, is one of the four sacred months mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ān,

Lo! The number of the months with Allāh 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. So wrong not yourselves in them... (9:36)

The specification of these four sacred months is stated in a hadīth narrated by Abū Bakrah radhiyallāhu 'anhu that Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said,

Verily time has completed its cycle and returned to its original stage as it was on the day Allāh created the heavens and the earth. The year consists of twelve months, four of which are sacred. Three of them occur consecutively; Dhul Qa'dah, Dhul Hijjah and Muharram, (the fourth being) Rajab of Mudar (named after the tribe of Mudar as they used to respect this month) which occurs between Jamādī-ākhīr and Sha'bān. (Al-Bukhārī)

From out of the four sacred months, Muharram has been blessed with certain specific virtues. The noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said,

The best of fasts besides the month of Ramadhān is the fasting of Allāh's Month of Muharram and the best of salāh besides the fardh (compulsory) salāh is the tahajjud salāh. (Muslim)

In another hadīth, Ibn 'Abbās radhiyallāhu 'anhu reports that the Messenger of Allāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said,

He who fasts on the day of 'Arafāt (9th Dhul Hijjah), his fast will be a compensation for the sins of two years, and one who keeps a fast in the month of Muharram will receive the reward of thirty fasts for each fast. (At-Tabarānī, At-Targhīb wat-Tarhīb)

THE DAY OF 'ĀSHŪRĀ (10th MUHARRAM)

The tenth day of the month of Muharram is known as 'Āshūrā. It is one of the most important and blessed days in the Islamic calendar. Some 'ulamā (scholars) are of the opinion that before the fasts of Ramadhān, the fast of the day of 'Āshūrā was compulsory upon the Ummah. This is stated in a

hadīth reported by 'Ā'ishah radhiyallāhu 'anhā that the noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam ordered the observance of the fast of 'Āshūrā. However, when the fast of Ramadhān became compulsory, then whosoever wished, kept this fast and whosoever desired did not observe this fast. (Al-Bukhārī)

But the Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam, nevertheless, continued to fast this day and encouraged his companions to do the same. Ibn 'Abbās radhiyallāhu 'anhu says,

I did not see Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam anxiously await the fast of any day, which he gave preference to over other days, but this day, the day of 'Āshūrā. (Al-Bukhārī)

Humayd Ibn 'Abdur Rahmān radhiyallāhu 'anhu narrates that he heard Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān radhiyallāhu 'anhumā on the day of 'Āshūrā, during the year he performed Hajj, saying on the pulpit,

O the people of Madīnah! Where are your 'ulamā? I heard Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam saying, 'This is the day of 'Āshūrā. Allāh has not enjoined its fasting on you, but I am fasting it. Whosoever wishes, keep (this) fast and whosoever desires do not observe (this fast).' (Al-Bukhārī)

In another hadīth, Ibn 'Abbās radhiyallāhu 'anhu narrates that the noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam came to Madīnah and found the Jews fasting on the day of 'Āshūrā. Hence the noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam 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 saved Mūsā 'alayhis salām and his people and drowned Fir'awn and his nation. Thus, Mūsā 'alayhis salām fasted on this day as a token of thanksgiving, therefore we too fast on this day." The Messenger of Allāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said, "We are more worthy of Mūsā and nearer to him than you." Thereafter, the noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam fasted on this day and ordered (his companions radhiyallāhu 'anhum) that a fast be kept on this day. (Muslim)

RECOMMENDED DEEDS ON THE DAY OF 'ĀSHŪRĀ

1) The noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam has exhorted and encouraged his Ummah to fast on this day. Abū Qatādah radhiyallāhu 'anhu narrates that the noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam was asked regarding the fast of the day of 'Āshūrā. The noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam replied,

"It is a compensation for the (minor) sins of the past year." (Muslim)

NOTE: It must be borne in mind that wherever a promise of forgiveness of sins is made upon the fulfilment of some action, it is only the minor sins that are forgiven. The major sins are not forgiven without true tawbah (repentance).

2) One should also observe the fast of the 9th or 11th Muharram. Ibn 'Abbās radhiyallāhu 'anhu said, "When Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam observed the fast of the day of 'Āshūrā and ordered (his companions radhiyallāhu 'anhum) to fast, they said,

'O Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam! It is a day revered by the Jews and Christians.' Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said, 'The coming year, if Allāh wills, we will fast on the ninth (also).' (Muslim)

The noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam thereafter encouraged his companions radhiyallāhu 'anhum to also fast on the 9th or 11th Muharram. He sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said,

Should I live until the coming year, I will definitely fast on the ninth (also). (Muslim)

In another narration the noble Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said,

... Fast a day before it or a day after. (Al-Bayhaqī)

'Allāmah Ibn 'Ābidīn Ash-Shāmī rahimahullāh has mentioned that to fast only on the day of 'Āshūrā is al-makrūh at-tanzīhī.

3) One should be generous to one's family and dependants and spend more on them than is normally spent. Abū Hurayrah radhiyallāhu 'anhu reports that Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam said,

"One who generously spends on his family on the day of 'Āshūrā, Allāh will increase (his provision) for the whole year." (Al-Bayhaqī, At-Targhīb wat-Tarhīb)

This hadīth is not very authentic according to the science of hadīth. However, scholars of hadīth like Al-Bayhaqī and Ibn Hibbān rahimahumallāh have accepted it as reliable. These are the only actions supported by ahādīth.

ACTS TO REFRAIN FROM

1) It is absolutely clear that the significance of the day of 'Āshūrā is from the time of the noble Prophet

sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam. However, many people regard this day as the day of mourning the martyrdom of Husayn radhiyallāhu 'anhu. The martyrdom of Husayn radhiyallāhu 'anhu was indeed a great tragedy, but Islam is not a religion of perpetual mourning. Abū Sa'īd radhiyallāhu 'anhu relates that Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam has cursed mourners and those who listen to them. (Abū Dāwūd)

The pages of Islamic History are filled with the blood of the martyrs. Should we begin to mourn the martyrdom of the Sahābah radhiyallāhu 'anhum alone, every other day would be a day of mourning. Thus, to attribute the significance of 'Āshūrā to the martyrdom of Husayn radhiyallāhu 'anhu is baseless. Therefore, the host of baseless customs with regard to his martyrdom — mourning, lamenting and displaying grief — must be discarded. If mourning were permissible, then the day of the demise of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam would have been more worthy for mourning and lamenting.

2) The following misconceptions with regard to 'Āshūrā are baseless:

- This is the day in which Ādam 'alayhis salām was created.
- This is the day in which Ibrāhīm 'alayhis salām was born.
- This is the day on which Qiyāmah will take place.
- Whoever has a bath on the day of 'Āshūrā will never get ill.

3) Some regard the tenth of Muharram as a day of 'Īd. They indulge in adornment, applying surmah (collyrium), wearing new clothes, spending lavishly and cooking a particular type of meal which is not generally prepared. All these actions are regarded as sunnah according to their belief, whereas no authentic narration sanctioning and permitting such actions can be found.

4) Another misconception is that the month of Muharram is an unlucky month; hence marriage ceremonies should be avoided in this month. This concept is again contrary to the teachings of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam.

Let us observe this great day according to the way of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam and the Sahābah radhiyallāhu 'anhum and refrain from all innovations which deprive us of the blessings from Allāh ta'ālā. May Allāh ta'ālā guide us all upon the Straight Path and save us from every act which brings His Displeasure. Āmīn.