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صيام في  
عاشوراء  
عشر

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*Fasting on the Day of 'Āshūrā'*

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Compiled by

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# Fasting on the day of Ashura;

## A Zaydi perspective

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله الذي لم يتخذ ولداً، ولم يكن له شريك في الملك، ولم يكن له ولي من الذل،  
والصلاة والسلام على رسوله المصطفى، الذي بلغ الرسالة، وأدى الأمانة، وعبد الله  
حتى أتاه اليقين، وعلى أهل بيته الطيبين الذين أذهب عنهم الرجس وطهرهم تطهيراً،  
وعلى أصحابه الصادقين والتابعين لهم بالإحسان إلى يوم الدين

The day of *Ashura* holds tremendous importance in Islamic history. On this day, in the year 61 A.H, *Imam al-Husayn* was martyred in Karbala along with his companions. According to various authentic narrations the Prophet fasted on this day. Some consider it as an Abrahamic practice whereas others link it to the Exodus of Prophet *Musa*. The purpose of this paper is to briefly describe the *Zaydi* position on this issue.

The Prophet said: "I am leaving amongst you two weighty things: The book of *Allah* and my progeny; If you hold on to them, you will never be misguided" [1] This *hadith*, which has been narrated by Sunnis and Shias alike, describes the Quran and the Imams from the Prophet's progeny as the source of guidance for the *Ummah* after the Prophet. In times and issues of confusion the Prophet's progeny has always preached the truth, calling people towards the *sunnah* of the Prophet. The imams of the *Ahl-ul Bayt* maintain that fasting on this day is a Prophetic practice which was subsequently followed by the Imams who succeeded him.

The Prophet ordered the muslims to observe fast on the day of Ashura, upon his migration to Madina. However, this command was abrogated by the fasts of Ramadan [2], and it was given the status of desirable (*mustahab*). We will now quote the statements of the Prophet and his progeny concerning fasting on the day of Ashura.

## **The statements of the Prophet:**

1) It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Prophet said:

"Fasting on the day of Ashura is equivalent (in reward) to the fasts of a year." [3]

2) It is narrated on the authority of Abu Qatada that the Prophet said:

"Fasting on the day of Ashura is expiation for the sins of the previous year." [4]

## **The statements of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib**

1) It is narrated on the authority of Imam Muhammad Baqir that Imam Ali said:

"Observe fast on the day of Ashura, and on ninth or eleventh as a precaution for it is an expiation for the sins of previous year [5]."

2) It is narrated on the authority of Abu Bashir that Imam Ali asked people to fast on the day of Ashura [6]."

**Statements of Imam Qasim al-Rassi bin Ibrahim bin  
Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin  
Abi Talib**

- 1) "The fasts of great reward include: Rajab, Sha'ban, the White Days, 'Ashura, the day of 'Arafat, Mondays, and Thursdays [7]."
  
- 2) "Fasting on that day is a beautiful act and there is a lot of reward in doing so. There's no harm in refraining from it. [8]."

**Statement of Imam al-Hasan bin Yahya bin al-Husayn  
bin Zayd bin Ali bin al-Husayn bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"The Prophet often fasted on the day of Ashura. [9]."

**Statement of Imam al-Hadi ila al-Haqq Yahya bin al-Husayn bin Qasim bin Ibrahim bin Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"There's no problem fasting on 'Ashura. It is a good thing to do so. It is narrated on the authority of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, encouraged fasting on this day. [10]"

**Statement of Imam Ahmad al-Nasir ibn al-Hadi Yahya  
bin al-Husayn bin Qasim bin Ibrahim bin Ismail bin  
Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"It is recommended to fast on the day of Ashura [11]"

**Statement of Imam al-Muiyadd billah Ahmad bin al-Husayn bin Harun bin al-Husayn bin Muhammad bin Harun bin al-Qasim bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

After mentioning some of the virtues of fasting on the day of Ashura, Imam writes:

"... Some of the Imamiyyah dislike fasting on the day of Ashura as it is the day of grief as Imam al-Husayn was martyred. Grief does not prevent fasting. It is a calamity that happened after the Prophet and it is not permissible to change the ruling of Sharia after him. [12]"

**Statement of Imam Abu Talib Yahya bin al-Husayn bin  
Harun bin al-Husayn bin Muhammad bin Harun bin al-  
Qasim bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi  
Talib**

"It is recommended to fast on 'Ashura, which is the tenth of al-Muharram. [13]."

**Statement of Imam al-Mutawakil Ahmad bin Sulaiman  
bin Muhammad bin al-Mutahhar bin Ali bin Ahmad al-  
Nasir ibn al-Hadi Yahya bin al-Husayn bin Qasim bin  
Ibrahim bin Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan  
bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"It is narrated on the authority of the Messenger of Allah, that he used to fast on 'Ashura... Some of the Imamis discourage fasting because al-Husayn bin Ali was martyred on 'Ashura. That is not reliable because fasting does not prevent grief. Also, breakfast is closer to the pleasure of fasting. He was killed after the time of the Prophet, and it is not permissible to change something after a Shari`ah law has been established. [14]"

**Statement of Imam al-Mahdi Ahmad bin Yahya bin al-Murtada bin Ahmad bin al-Murtada bin al-Mufaddal bin Mansur bin al-Mufaddal al-Kabir bin Abdullah bin al-Hajjaj bin Ali bin Yahya bin al-Qasim bin Yusuf bin Ahmad al-Nasir ibn al-Hadi Yahya bin al-Husayn bin Qasim bin Ibrahim bin Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"Fasting on the day of Ashura is based upon the statement of the Prophet Fasting on the day of Ashura is expiation for the sins of the previous year." [15]

**Statement of Imam al-Mansur billah Abdullah bin  
Hamza bin Sulaiman bin Hamza bin Ali bin Hamza bin  
Abi Hashim al-Hasan bin Abdur Rahman bin Yahya bin  
al-Husayn bin Qasim bin Ibrahim bin Ismail bin Ibrahim  
bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"Fasting on the day of Ashura is praiseworthy [16]."

**Statement of Imam al-Muiyyad billah Yahya bin Hamza  
bin Ali bin Ibrahim bin Yusuf bin Ali bin Ibrahim bin  
Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Idris bin Jafar bin Ali bin  
Muhammad bin Ali bin Musa bin Jafar bin Muhammad  
bin Ali bin al-Husayn bin Ali bin Abi Talib**

"It is narrated that the Prophet said: Fasting on the day of Ashura is expiation for the sins of the previous year." [17]

**Statement of Imam Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Yahya  
bin Ali bin Yahya bin Abdullah Iwadh bin Yahya bin  
Muhammad bin Salah al-Sa'di bin Ahmad bin Salah bin  
Yahya bin Ahmad bin al-Hadi bin Salah bin al-Hasan bin  
Ali bin al-Muiyyad bin Jibril bin al-Muiyyad bin Ahmad  
bin Yahya bin Ahmad bin Yahya bin Yahya bin al-Nasir  
bin al-Hasan bin Abdullah bin Muhammad bin al-Qasim  
bin Ahmad al-Nasir ibn al-Hadi Yahya bin al-Husayn bin  
Qasim bin Ibrahim bin Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan  
bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib**  
**(May Allah preserve him)**

"Fasting on the day of Ashura is one of the recommended fasts.  
[18]"

Fasting on the day of Ashura is a Prophetic practice and a praiseworthy action. It has no relation to any practice of the period of Jahiliyya or to the exodus of Prophet Musa. Grief on the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Imam al-Husayn does not nullify this fast. It is not suitable for a believer to be happy on this day. A believer must remember the thirst of Imam al-Husayn and his companions and the patience which was manifested by them in their struggle against the tyranny of the ruler of that time.

هذا ما عندي والعلم عند الله، وهو أعلم بالصواب

## References:

- 1) Majmu al-Kutub - Imam Qasim al-Rassi
- 2) Jawahir al-Durriyya - Imam Yahya bin Hamza
- 3) ibid
- 4) Amali al-Khamisiyya - Imam al-Murshid billah
- 5) ibid
- 6) Kitab al-Dhikr - Hafiz Muhammad bin Mansur al-Muradi
- 7) Kitab al-Wafid - Imam Qasim al-Rassi
- 8) al-Jami al-Kafi - Imam Abu Abdullah al-Alawi
- 9) ibid
- 10) Kitab al-Ahkaam - Imam al-Hadi ila al-Haqq Yahya
- 11) al-Mujiz fil-Fiqh - Imam al-Nasir Ahmad
- 12) Sharh al-Tajrid - Imam Muiyyad billah al-Haruni
- 13) Kitab al-Tahrir - Imam Abu Talib
- 14) Usul al-Ahkam - Imam Ahmad bin Sulaiman
- 15) Bahr al-Zakkhar - Imam Ahmad bin Yahya
- 16) Majmu al-Mansuri - Imam Abdullah bin Hamza
- 17) Jawahir al-Durriyya - Imam Yahya bin Hamza
- 18) Min Thamar al-Ilm - Imam Muhamad bin Iwadh al-Muiyaddi