

Fasting On Ashura

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Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

“The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to Medina and saw the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Ashura’. He said, ‘What is this?’ They said, ‘This is a righteous day, it is the day when Allah saved the Children of Israel from their enemies, so Musa fasted on this day.’ He said, ‘We have more right to Musa than you,’ so he fasted on that day and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day.”(Reported by *al-Bukhaari*, 1865).

Let me assert at the outset that I do not deny *hadith* as a whole. The Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the Prophet which are recorded in *hadith*, form the basis of our religion in faith and practice.

I accept the viability of *hadith* as a whole. The holy Qur'an and the collection of the Prophet's *sunnah* form the basis of our religion as far as the faith and the code of practice are concerned. While the holy Qur'an is taken as Allah's words, each and every word contained in the Qur'an is authentic.

Hadith is slightly different. The first official writing of hadith did not begin until the time of Umar bin Abdul Azeez who passed away 99 AH. Bukhari passed away in the year 256 AH.

It is therefore very important that we evaluate each and every hadith very carefully. Our scholars have developed a specific science for this. It is called *Jarh Wa Ta'deel*. In this science there are a number of considerations. The primary element of that is that no hadith can go against any verse of the holy Qur'an. Another point is that no *hadith* will be accepted unless it fulfilled

the requirement of being free from defects such as being anachronistic or falling out of the pale of common sense (that is not having any *illat-e-qadah*).

If you look at the hadith of fasting on Ashura, it fails on many of those elements.

1. The only fast mentioned in the Qur'an is that of Ramadan.
2. Even if it is not mentioned in the Qur'an, we could have accepted the report if the commandment of the fasting of Ramadan had mentioned that this fasting is now being imposed in place of the fast of Ashura- very much like when the Qibla changed from Jerusalem to Mecca, it explained.
3. Islamic commandments have come as a direct command from Allah instead of being in competition with the Jewish practices in Medina.
4. Jews fast on Yom Kippur. But Yom Kippur and Ashura are two different things.
5. Talk to a Jewish Rabbi today and ask him about the fast of Ashura -- he wouldn't know what you are talking about.

All these things collectively create an *illat-e-qadah* in this hadith.

The fact that Ibn Abbas's name is associated with this hadith is neither here nor there. The fabricators of hadith were experts in this. They would create a hadith to fulfill one of their own agendas and then associate it with Ayesha Siddiqa or Ibn Abbas. So, once again -- I do not reject *hadith* as a whole. But every report has to be evaluated on its own merits.

Of course, a Muslim is free to fast on any day with good intentions (except on the days of the two eids). You are free to fast on *Ashura*, but you do not have to propagate false and fabricated hadith to justify that.

Citation

Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari. Trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Islamic University, 1984.

ibn Abbas, Abdallah. Sahih Bukhari. March 17, 2025



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