

التذكرة THE REMINDER

The Month of
**Muharram
& Aashura**



The Reminder publication



The four sacred months

Of the twelve months of the Islamic calendar, four months are regarded as sacred months. These are Muharram, Rajab, Dhul Qa'dah and Dhul Hijjah. Because of their special significance, the rewards for good deeds are increased during these months. At the same time, one should take care to abstain from sins during these months because their consequences are also significantly worse. This is the opinion of Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbaas Radiallahu anhumaa as well. Similar is the case with Makkah Mukarramah, where the rewards of good deeds are increased and the punishment for sins is more severe.¹

Fasting during the month of Muharram

Another virtue of Muharram is that the fasts during this month are second in excellence to the fasts of Ramadhan. Although every day and every month belongs to Allah Ta'ala, Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam has mentioned that Muharram is Allah's month. By saying this, Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam intended to emphasise the added auspiciousness of this month.

Hadhrat Abu Hurayrah Radiallahu anhu reports that Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam said, "After the fasts of Ramadhan, the best fasts are those observed during Allaah's month of Muharram."²

Hadhrat Ali Radiallahu anhu narrates that he was once sitting with Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam when a person asked, "O Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam besides the month of Ramadhan, in which month would you advise me to fast?" Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam replied, "If you wish to fast in any month after Ramadhan, then fast in the month of Muharram because this is Allaah's month. It has a day in which Allah Ta'ala had accepted the repentance of a nation and in which Allah Ta'ala will accept the repentance of others also."³

The nation whose Taubah (repentance) was accepted on a day in this month was the Bani Israa'eel. It was on the 10th of Muharram (Aashura) that the Bani Israa'eel (the Jews) and Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam were saved from Fir'oun and his army.

10th of Muharram

The 10th of Muharram is a significant day in Islamic history. Rasulallah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam used to fast on this day and commanded the Sahabah Radiallahu anhum to also fast. The fast of this day was initially Waajib (compulsory), but the compulsion was waived when the fasts of Ramadhan were made Fardh. The Muslims then had

¹ Tafseer Ibn Katheer Vol.2 Pg. 554

² Tirmidhi Vol 1 Pg 157

³ Tirmidhi Vol.1 Pg. 157

a choice to either fast on this day or not to fast. However, the virtues of this fast have been expounded in the Ahadeeth. Among these is the virtue that the previous year's sins are forgiven.

Hadhrat Abu Qataadah Radiallahu anhu narrated that Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam said, "I have strong hope that Allah Ta'ala will forgive the previous year's sins for fasting on the day of Aashura."⁴

Note: The sins referred to here are minor sins. Taubah is required to secure forgiveness for major sins.

Initially the Muslims only fasted on the 10th of Muharram but before his demise, Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam mentioned that if he were alive the next year, he would fast on the 9th as well. Sadly, Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam did not live to see the following Muharram. It is therefore necessary for Muslims to fast on the 9th and 10th of Muharram or on the 10th and 11th. However, to fast only on the 10th is Makrooh Tanzihi (i.e. an act disliked by the Shari'ah). For more detailed research on this topic, please refer to Muharram and Aashura virtues and laws by Sheikhul Hadith Hadhrat Moulana Fazlur Rahman Azmi Saheb Damat Barakatuhu.

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbaas Radiallahu anhumma narrates that Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam fasted on the day of Aashura and instructed the Muslims to fast as well. When the Muslims told Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam that the Jews and the Christians revere this day, he replied, "If I am alive next year, In'shaa'Allah I shall fast on the 9th as well." However, Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasalam passed away before the next year.⁵

The history of this fast

The history of this fast stems from the time of Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam. Because it was on the day of Aashura that Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam and the Bani Israa'eel were saved from Fir'oun, Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam fasted on this day to express his gratitude to Allah Ta'ala. The Bani Israa'eel also did the same, and this day was always regarded as a day of fasting among the Bani Israa'eel. Emulating this practice of the Jews, the Quraysh also fasted on this day.

Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam also kept this fast (in Makkah). When Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam arrived in Madina, he asked the Jews why they observed this fast. They informed him that they fasted because it was on this day that Allah Ta'ala saved them from the tyranny of Fir'oun. Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam said to them that the Muslims are closer to Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam than they are. Therefore, Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam fasted on this day and instructed the Muslims to do so as well. Although Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam initially preferred to do things according to the ways of the Ahlul Kitaab (Jews and Christians) to win them over to Islam, Allah Ta'ala later commanded him to oppose their ways. It was then that Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam announced that he would fast on the 9th as well if he lived until the next Muharram.

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas Radiallahu anhumma reports that when Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam came to Madina, he noticed that the Jews fasted on the day of Aashura. When he asked them the reason for this, they

⁴ Tirmidhi Vol.1 Pg.151

⁵ Muslim Vol.1 Pg.359

replied, “This is a great day. It was on this day that Allah Ta’ala saved the Bani Israa’eel from their enemy. On this day Allah Ta’ala granted victory to Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam and the Bani Israa’eel. We fast because of the distinction of this day.” Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam then said to the Jews, “We are closer to Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam than you.” Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam also observed this fast and instructed Muslims to follow suit.⁶

Spending freely on one’s family

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Mas’ood Radiallahu anhu mentions that Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam said: “Allah Ta’ala will grant prosperity throughout the year to the person who spends freely on his family on the day of Aashura.”⁷ For more detailed research on this topic, please refer to Muharram and Aashura virtues and laws by Sheikhul Hadith Hadhrat Moulana Fazlur Rahman Azmi Saheb Damat Barakatuhu.

The virtues of the day of Aashura (10th of Muharram), its importance and the reason for its significance have already come to our knowledge. The reason is that Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam and the Bani Israa’eel were rescued from Fir’oun and his army on this day. As a token of gratitude, Hadhrat Moosa alayhis salam fasted on this day. In emulation, Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wasallam also fasted on this day and instructed the Muslims to do the same. While the compulsion to fast on this day has been waived, the fast has still been retained in the Shari’ah as an optional but highly commendable deed. It is perhaps because of this same incident that people are encouraged to spend freely on their families on this day. Allah Ta’ala knows best.

Source used to prepare this article

Muharram and Aashura virtues and laws by Sheikhul Hadith Hadhrat Moulana Fazlur Rahman Azmi Saheb Damat Barakatuhu.

⁶ Bukhari Vol.1 Pg.268 & 562

⁷ Tabraani, Bayhaqi