

Fasting in Muharram

Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu-Anhu) reports: "that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu-Alayhi-Wasallam) said: "The one that keeps a fast in the month of Muharram will receive the reward of thirty fasts for each fast (in this sacred month)." (Tabraani)

Although the fasts of the month of Muharram are not obligatory, the one who fasts in these days out of his own will and choice is entitled to a great reward by Almighty Allah. The Hadith cited above signifies that the fasts of the month of Muharram are the most rewardable among the Nafl fasts i.e. the fasts one observes out of his own choice without being obligatory on him.

The Hadith does not mean that the reward promised for fasts of Muharram can only be attained by fasting for the whole month. On the contrary, each fast during this month has merit. Therefore, one should take advantage of this opportunity.

The Day of Aashuraa (10th of Muharram)

Although the month of Muharram is a sacred month as a whole, the 10th of Muharram is the most sacred among all its days. The day is named 'Ashuraa'. It is one of the important and blessed days in the Islamic calendar.

According to Ibn Abbas Radhiyallahu Anhu, when Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wassallam migrated to Madinah, he found that the Jews of Madinah used to fast on the 10th day of Muharram. They said that it was the day on which the Prophet Musa Alayhis Salaam and his followers crossed the Sea miraculously, and the Pharaoh was drowned. On hearing this, Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wassallam said, "We are more closely related to Musa than you." So the Prophet Sallallahu Alayhi Wassallam directed the Muslims to fast on the day of Ashura. (Abu Dawood)

According to another Hadith, it is more advisable that the fast of Ashura should be either preceded or succeeded by an additional fast. It means that one should fast two days: the 9th and 10th of Muharram or the 10th and 11th. The reason of this additional fast as mentioned by Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wassallam is that the Jews used to fast on the day of Ashuraa alone, and Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wassallam wanted to distinguish the Islamic-way of fasting from that of the Jews. Therefore, he advised the Muslims to add another fast to the day of Ashura.

Some Ulama (scholars) are of the opinion that before the fasts of Ramadhan were made compulsory, the fast of the day of Aashuraa was compulsory upon the Ummah.

This is stated in a Hadeeth reported by Hazrat Aisha (Radhiyallahu-Anha):

"That Rasulullah Sallallahu-Alayhi-Wasallam) ordered the observance of the fast of Aashuraa. However, when the fast of Ramadhan became compulsory, then whosoever wished, kept this fast and whosoever desired did not observe this fast." (Bukhari)

But, nevertheless the Prophet (Sallallahu-Alayhi-Wasallam) continued to fast this day and encouraged his Companions to do the same.

For this Year 1434/2012 the tenth of Muharram is on Saturday 24 November 2012. In keeping with the Hadeeth, one may fast two fasts either Friday (23/11/2012) and Saturday(24th) or Saturday and Sunday(25th)