

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

A Concise Article on Fasting the Day of ‘Āshūrā

Its Virtue

Abū Qatadah (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) narrated that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was asked about ‘Āshūrā and he responded,

“It expiates for the previous year.”¹

Ibn ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said,

“I never saw the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) seeking to fast a day, giving it preference over another, except this day, the day of ‘Āshūrā, and this month, meaning the month of Ramaḍān.”²

It Is the Day Allāh Saved Mūsá

Ibn ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said,

“The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) came to al-Madīnah and saw the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Āshūrā. He asked, ‘What is this?’ They responded, ‘This is a virtuous day, as this is the day when Allāh saved the Children of Isrā’īl from their enemy. Thus, Mūsá fasted on this day.’ He said, ‘We have more right to Mūsá than you.’ So he fasted on this day and ordered the [people] to fast.”³

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did not begin to fast the day of ‘Āshūrā, imitating the People of the Book as the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) would fast it prior to his arrival in al-Madīnah (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* no. 1125).

There comes in the narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*,

¹ Muslim (no. 1162).

² Bukharī (no. 2006).

³ Bukharī (no. 2004).

“This is a great day in which Allāh saved Mūsá and his people and drowned Fir‘awn and his people.”

Its Ruling

اتفق العلماء على أن صوم يوم عاشوراء اليوم سنة ليس بواجب ،

Al-Imām al-Nawawī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated,

“The scholars unanimously agree that fasting the day of ‘Āshūrā is a Sunnah and not an obligation.” *Sharḥ Muslim* (8/4)

It Is the 10th of Muḥarram

The majority of scholars hold that ‘Āshūrā is on the 10th of Muḥarram. Al-Qurṭbī mentioned that the word ‘Āshūrā is derived from ‘Āshirah (the tenth) and it is on the pattern of فاعولاء which is used to signify intensiveness and esteem.

This position is supported by the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) who said,

“When the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) fasted on ‘Āshūrā and commanded the Muslims to fast as well, they said, ‘O Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), it is a day that is venerated by the Jews and Christians.’ The Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, ‘If I live to see next year – if Allāh wills – we will also fast on the ninth day.’ However, it occurred that the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) passed away before the next year came.”¹²

The Three Ways to Fast ‘Āshūrā

Al-Imām Ibn al-Qayyim (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated in *Zād al-Ma‘ād*³:

¹ Muslim (no. 1134).

² As for the hadith with the wording, “If I was to remain, then I would command you to fast a day before or a day after ‘Āshūrā,” then Shaykh Albānī declared it to be weak in al-Ḍa‘īfah (no. 4297).

³ *Zād al-Ma‘ād*, (p. 72).

“There are three levels of fasting ‘Āshūrā. The most complete is to fast a day before it and a day after it. After this is to fast the 9th and the 10th, and the majority of aḥādīth [are found to support this]. Lastly, to fast the 10th by itself.”

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajr (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) mentioned in al-Fath:

“Fasting ‘Āshūrā is of three levels:

- The lowest is to fast it alone.
- Above this is to fast the 9th along with it.
- Above that is to fast the 9th and the 11th along with it.¹ And Allāh knows best.”²

Fasting ‘Āshūrā If It Coincides with Saturday

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

“Do not fast on Saturday except for what Allāh has made obligatory upon you. If one of you does not find anything but the peel of a grape or the twig of a tree, then let him chew on it.”³

Al-Tirmidhī said:

¹ As for the ḥadīth collected by Ibn Khuzaimah (no. 2095) where it is narrated that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Fast the day of ‘Āshūrā; and oppose the Jews. Fast the day before it or the day after it,” then Shaykh Albānī declared this ḥadīth to be weak due to the narrator Ibn Abū Laylá, who is weak, and also the fact that he was opposed by ‘Atá and others who narrated it from Ibn ‘Abbās in the *Mawqūf* form (which is a narration from a companion).

It is authentically transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās that he said concerning ‘Āshūrā: “Oppose the Jews and fast the ninth and the tenth.” Collected by ‘Abd al-Razzāq (no. 7839) in *al-Muṣannaf* (4/287).

² (4/246).

³ Tirmidhī (no. 744) and others. Shaykh Albānī declared this ḥadīth to be sound. A number of the scholars of ḥadīth held this narration to be odd [*Shādh*] and inconsistent [*Mudṭarib*]; this was the stance of Shaykh Ibn Bāz and others from this time. Even if it is assumed the hadith is sound, then it is understood in light of the other narrations; and the understanding of the Salaf has precedence.

“This ḥadīth is sound (*Ḥasan*). The meaning of the dislike here is for a man to single out Saturday with the Fast, because the Jews revere Saturday.”

From the proofs that support the stance of Imām al-Tirmidhī is the ḥadīth:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“None of you should fast Friday unless [he fasts] a day before it or after it.”¹

Shaykh Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn

“The Third Case: When Saturday coincides with the legislated fasts like the three white days of the month [the 13th, 14th and 15th], the day of ‘*Arafah*, the day of ‘*Āshūrā*, the six days of *Shawāl* for the person who has fasted the month of Ramaḍān, and the nine days of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*, then it is allowed [to fast on this day]. This is because they did not fast it due to it being Saturday, but because it is from the days that it is legislated to fast.”²

Some Innovations Practiced on ‘Āshūrā

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymīyah (رحمته الله) was asked about things that people do on the day of ‘*Āshūrā* like wearing kuḥl, bathing (*ghusl*), wearing henna, shaking hands, cooking special dishes prepared from grains, and displaying delight and the like of these things in the street. Is any of this transmitted in an authentic ḥadīth from the Prophet (ﷺ) or not? Is there any basis for what is practiced by the other sect such as [their manifestation of] grief, wailing and bawling, induced thirst, reciting in a possessed fashion and tearing the pockets [from the garments]?

He (رحمته الله) replied,

“All praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of all creation. There is not an authentic hadith concerning any of these things from the Prophet nor from his Companions; and none of the Imams of the Muslims recommended these

¹ Bukhārī (no. 1985) and Muslim (no. 1144).

² *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwá* (20/57-58).

things, not the four Imams nor other than them. None of the scholars who compiled the classical books [of narrations] narrated anything related to this, not from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) nor from the Companions nor from their students. They did not narrate anything concerning this, not an authentic narration nor a weak narration; not in the authentic collections nor the Sunan nor the Musnads. None of these aḥādīth were known throughout the praiseworthy generations. However, some of the later generations narrated aḥādīth like, ‘Whoever wears kuḥl on their eyes on the day of ‘Āshūrā will not suffer from an eye ailment that year,’ and ‘Whoever bathes (ghusl) on the day of ‘Āshūrā will not get sick that year,’ and the like of this...”¹

Abū ‘Abdullāh Ḥasan al-Ṣomālī
Masjid Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawīyah
Philadelphia, PA, USA
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¹ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwá (25/299).