

## Aashooraa

### **FASTING IN MUHARRAM (THE FIRST MONTH OF ISLAMIC YEAR)**

Fasting in the month of Muharram is highly desired, especially on the tenth day, **Aashooraa**. The Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) has been reported as saying when asked which prayer is better after obligatory prayer: "Prayer in the middle of the night." He was asked again which fast is better after Ramadan. He said: "In the month that is called **Al-Muharram**." (Ahmed, Muslim, and Abu Dawood)

This Hadith clearly indicates the importance of voluntary fasting in Muharram, among all the months. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) however, emphasizes the fast of the tenth day, Aashooraa.

The word "Aashooraa" is derived from **Ashara**, which means ten. The observation of this day goes back to Prophet Moosa Bin Emran (p.b.u.h.). In a Hadith related by Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) "when the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) came to Madinah, he found the Jews fasting the day of Aashooraa. He inquired why they did so. They replied that it was a good day, the day which Allah delivered Prophet Moosa (p.b.u.h.) and the children of Israel from their enemy. As gratitude Moosa (p.b.u.h.) fasted that day. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) responded: 'I have more right to Moosa than you.' He fasted the day and commanded the believers to fast." (Bukhari and Muslim)

This Hadith indicates that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was in complete agreement with Prophet Moosa (p.b.u.h.) as well as the other prophets. The point here is that the Messenger of Allah would always do an act of worship if it was prophecy reported from any of the prophets. Earlier, we see how he told us that the best voluntary fast is the fast of Dawood. This is why the following Hadith is of great interest to us. Ibn Abbas related when Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) observed the day of Aashooraa and commanded his followers to observe it, they asked him: "O Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) this is the day the Jews, and Christians respect and honour... The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) promised them that 'Next year Allah willing, we shall fast the ninth, tasuu'aa, along with the tenth.' By the next Muharram, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) had already passed away. Because the believers, desire to emulate Prophet Moosa in fasting on Aashooraa do so with the desire not to participate in the festivity of the People of the Book, who have reduced the day to a mere formality. The

Prophet (p.b.u.h.) decided to remove this ambiguity with the fast of the ninth day.”

Our Ulama (Muslim scholars), analyzing all reports from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) regarding Muharram, stated the fast of Muharram can be viewed in three ways:

1. Fasting three days of Muharram, the ninth, tenth and eleventh.
2. Fasting on the ninth and tenth days because of two previous Hadiths.
3. Fasting on the tenth day alone.

Of much interest to us Muslims these days should be the fasting of the 9th and the 10th of Muharram. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said about the voluntary fasting on the Day of Aashooraa: "It expiates the sins of the preceding year." (Muslim)

"The day of Aashooraa was the day when Moosa and his men got freedom from the hands of the Pharaoh and it was in the sacred memory of this great event that the Muslims observed voluntary fasting. The idea underlying this is to stress the affinity amongst the messengers of Allah and to show that religious devotion is a constant flow from one generation to another. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) came not to abrogate all the earlier religious practices but to codify and preserve them for all times to come in ideal forms."