

MUHARRAM & ASHOORA

New Islamic Year

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Muharram has the great honor of being the first month of the Islamic calendar. It is one of the four months which Allah has made sacred and holy from the time he created the heavens and the earth.

The Holy Quran points to this and says: “Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months, so was it ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are Sacred. That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein”. (Surah At Tawbah: Verse 36)

While explaining the four months that are very sacred and holy to Allah, the Prophet (s.a.w) said: “The year is twelve months of which four are sacred, the three consecutive months of Dhul Qaada, Dhul Hijja and Muharram and Rajab which comes between Juma’dal Ukhra and Sha’ban”. (Bukhari, Hadith No.3197, Pg.869, Vol.1, Altaf and Sons).

Muharram is called by this name because it is sacred. (The word Muharram means sacred). To indicate the sanctity of this month, Allah says in the Holy Quran: “So wrong not yourselves therein” which means that the believers are warned about committing sins in this month since sins committed in this month are worse than in other months.

The Prophet (s.a.w) also mentioned that the best month for observing fast after Ramadhan is that of Muharram. In this regard, he said: “The most virtuous fast after the month of Ramadhan is (fasting in) the month of Allah, Al Muharram”. (Muslim, Hadith No.2755, Darussalam)

In this tradition, the Prophet (s.a.w) indicated to the greatness and virtue of the blessed month of Muharram by saying that it is the most virtuous month to observe fasting after the month of Ramadhan.

In the month of Muharram, there is the very blessed day that is known as ‘Ashoora’. This day is the 10th of Muharram, and about it, the Prophet (s.a.w) himself said ‘It is a great day’.

It is on this day Allah granted refuge to Moosa (A.S) and his people, and destroyed Pharaoh and his people. As a form of gratitude, Moosa (A.S) observed the fast of Ashoora. (Muslim, Hadith No.2656, Darussalam).

It is also to express gratitude to Allah (s.w.t), the Prophet (s.a.w) fasted. In a tradition recorded by Ahmad, the Prophet (s.a.w) said that the day of Ashoora was the day on which the ark of Noah (A.S) settled on Mt. Judi after the great flood had come to an end. Upon this Noah (A.S) fasted on this day in thanking Allah (s.w.t). (Ahmad, Hadith No.8725, Pg.282, Vol.3, Darul Fikr)

Due to the blessedness of the day of Ashoora (10th of Muharram), the Prophet (s.a.w) observed the fast of this day and encouraged his followers to do so. In this regard, he is reported to have said: “The fast of the day of Ashoora, I have hope in Allah that (through it) he will forgive one year’s past sins of a person” (Tirmidhi, Hadith No.752, Pg.354, Vol.1, Altaf and Sons).

This hadith highlights the virtue of observing the fast of Ashoora. Hence, the believers should seize the opportunity and observe this fast. It should however be noted, that based on the advice of the Prophet (s.a.w) one should join another day with the 10th of Muharram (Ashoora) while observing the fast. In this regard, the Prophet (s.a.w) said: “observe the fast of Ashoora and oppose the Jews. Fast a day before it or a day after it.” (Ahmad, Hadith No.2154, Vol.1, Pg.518, Darul Fikr)

The Jews had a custom of fasting only on the 10th of Muharram and the Prophet (s.a.w) did not like to follow them in their ways. Hence, he ordered his followers to oppose them in their practice and observe 2 days of fasting instead of one. The two days can either be the 9th, 10th of Muharram or the 10th, 11th of Muharram.

Some scholars have stated that it is Mustahab (commendable/encouraged) to fast the 9th with the 10th. This is on account of the intention which the Prophet (s.a.w) himself expressed for fasting on the 9th. About this, Abdullah Bin Abbas (R.A) said: “When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) fasted on Ashoora and commanded the Muslims to fast, they said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, it is the day that is venerated by the Jews and the Christians’. Upon this, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said: ‘If I happen to see the next year Insha Allah, we will fast on the ninth too! The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) passed away before the next year came”. (Muslim, Hadith No.2666, Pg.463, Darussalam).

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