**Muharram The First Month of the Islamic Calendar**

This is the first month of the Islamic Calendar and one of the four Sacred Months (*al-Ashhur al-Hurum*).  It is recommended to fast during this month as there is a *Hadith* which says:  “The best fast, after *Ramadan*, is in the month of *Muharram*”[[1]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn1" \o ").  This may be an indirect reference to *‘Ashura* and not to *Muharram* in general because, according to SayyidahAishah, the Prophet (SAW) fasted most in *Sha‘ban* after *Ramadan*[[2]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftn2).

**Fasting on *Yawm Al-‘Ashurah***

The 10th day of *Muharram*, known as *Yawm Al-‘Ashura*, is the most significant day of this month.  The Prophet (SAW) said: “Fasting on the Day of *‘Ashura* is an expiation of sins for the previous year”[[3]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn3" \o ").  Many events are attributed to this date such as that the Prophet Adam was born and his repentance was accepted on this day, the Prophet Abraham was saved from the Fire, the Prophet Ishmael was delivered from the Sacrifice, the Prophet Joseph was reunited with his father, the Prophet Job was cured of his illness and the Prophet Solomon was ordained as king on this day[[4]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftn4), but these assertions are not backed by accurate historical evidences[[5]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftn5).

Ibn Abbas relates that when Prophet Muhammad (SAW) came to Madinah, he found the Jews fasting on the Day of *‘Ashura*.  When asked for the reason of their fasting, they replied that it was the day when Allah *Ta‘ala* saved the Prophet Moses and the Children of Israel from their enemies.  Moses fasted to thank Allah and they fasted in emulation of him.  So the Prophet (SAW) said “We have more of a right to Moses than you” and so he ordered the Muslims to fast on that day [[6]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftn6).  This fast was later abrogated with the fast of *Ramadan* substituted in its place but it was kept as an optional recommended fast[[7]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn7" \o ").  However, in order not to follow the Jews, the Prophet encouraged Muslims by saying: “Observe the fast of *‘Ashura* and differ from the Jews by fasting a day before it or after it”[[8]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn8" \o ").

**Significance of the *Hijrah* for Muslims**

Muharram heralds the beginning of the Islamic Calendar.  The *Hijrah* of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his Companions (*Sahabah)* from Makkah to Madinah was much more than a simple migration.  It was a turning point in the history of Islam.  It was a revolution and complete transformation of society.  The *Muhajirun* (emigrants) of Makkah gave up their family, property and homeland for the sake of religion and the *Ansar* (helpers) of Madinah welcomed them with great hospitality.  Thus a unique brotherhood (*mu’akhah*) was created between them, hitherto unknown in human history[[9]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn9" \o ").  Even though the Prophet and his Companions loved Makkah, they had to emigrate from it so that they would be able to worship Allah *Ta‘ala* in a state of peace and implement His religion in full (24:55).  It is reported in some books of *Hadith* and *Sirah* that the Prophet (SAW) loved Makkah so much that before leaving for Madinah he faced towards Makkah and said:  “By Allah!  You are certainly the best of Allah’s earth and the most beloved of Allah’s earth in the sight of Allah.  If I did not have to leave you, then I would never have left you”[[10]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn10" \o ").

*Hijrah* was also the tradition of the earlier Prophets[[11]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn11" \o ").  For example, the Prophet Abraham told his people:  “I will emigrate for the sake of my Lord.  Verily He is the Almighty the All-Wise” (29:26).  Similarly, those Prophets whose people were punished in this world were told by Allah to leave their homes and emigrate with the believers (e.g. the Prophet Lot).  In the Qur’an, *Hijrah* is the precursor to *Jihad*[[12]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn12" \o ") which shows that before Muslims fight, they have to be separated from their enemies as a distinct community.

By highlighting the *Hijrah*, Muslims will re-affirm their need to be in a state where they can practice their religion and make the necessary sacrifices to achieve that aim, including emigration.  *Hijrah* also has a deep spiritual significance where Muslims commit themselves to leave the state of disbelief (*kufr*) and sin to enter that of Islam and piety.  That is why the Prophet (SAW) said:  “The best emigrant (*Muhajir*) is the one who leaves what Allah has forbidden”[[13]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23" \l "_ftn13" \o ").  The *Hijrah* can also be an ideal occasion for Muslims to resolve to ‘migrate’ from their past state of irreligiousness or passiveness to the future where they will commit themselves to be better Muslims and play an active part in the transformation of society according to Islamic ideals.

By Hafiz Abdullah Muhammad

Extract taken from the authors’ first book entitled *“The Best of Times: Virtues and Significance of important Days, Nights, Months and Festivals in Islam”* available free on request from the publisher: IPCI, 434 Coventry Road, Small Heath, Birmingham B10 0UG.

[[1]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref1) Muslim, Abu Dawud & Nasai

[[2]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref2) Bukhari & Muslim

[[3]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref3) Muslim, Abu Dawud, Nasai & Ibn Majah

[[4]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref4) “Peace be upon the Messengers (sent by Allah)” [Qur’an 37:181].

[[5]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref5) Abdulhaqq Dehlawi:  Ma Thabata bis Sunnah p.254

[[6]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref6) Bukhari & Muslim

[[7]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref7) Ibn Al-Qayyim, in his *Zad Al-Ma‘ad*, explains that the underlying wisdom behind the fast of *‘Ashura* is to stress the affinity between the Prophets who all came from Allah.  This is also one instance where the *Shari‘ah* given to Muhammad (SAW) preserved an earlier practice, though abrogating its obligation.

[[8]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref8) Bayhaqi:  Sunan Al-Kubra 4/287 & Ibn Hajar:  Talkhis Al-Habir 2/214 - *‘sahih’*.  Hence it is disliked (*makruh*) to fast only on 10th *Muharram* without adding a day before or after it [Al-Haskafi:  Durrul Mukhtar 2/114].

[[9]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref9) Ibn Taymiyyah:  Minhaj Al-Sunnah 4/967 & Ibn Al-Qayyim:  Zad Al-Ma‘ad 2/79

[[10]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref10) Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ahmad, Hakim & Ibn Hibban- classified as ‘*sahih*’ by Al-Albani:  Sahih Al-Jami‘ 2/1192 #7089.  It is of interest to note that at one point in the journey of *Hijrah*, the Prophet (SAW) was consoled by Allah *Ta‘ala* saying:  “Verily He who ordained the Qur’an for you, will bring you back (to Makkah) once more” (28:85) [Al-Suyuti:  Lubab Al-Nuqul p.223 & Al-Shawkani: Fath Al-Qadir 4/267].  This prophecy was fulfilled eight years later at the Conquest of Makkah in 8 AH/ 630 CE [Al-Sabuni:  Safwat Al-Tafasir 2/305].

[[11]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref11) Sulayman Mansurpuri:  Rahmatul lil ‘Alamin 1/69

[[12]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref12) See the following verses of the Qur’an:  2:218, 8:72-5, 9:20, 16:110 and 22:58

[[13]](http://ummah.com/sunnah/printsufeature.php?sufid=23#_ftnref13) Bukhari, Abu Dawud & Tabarani

Reference urls are below :http://www.ummah.com/sunnah/viewsufeature.php?sufid=18&suTopicID=4  
http://  
http://

**The Month of Muharram**

Muharram is the month with which the Muslims begin their lunar Hijrah Calendar.It is one of the four sanctified months about which the Holy Quran says

"The number of the months according to Allah is twelve months (mentioned) in the Book of Allah on the day in which He created heavens and the earth. Among these (twelve months) there are four sanctified".

These four months, according to the authentic traditions are the months of Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab. All the commentators of the Holy Quran are unanimous on this point, because the Holy Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) in his sermon on the occasion of his last Hajj, has declared:

One year consists of twelve months, of which four are sanctified months, three of them are in sequence; Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah, Muharram, and the fourth is Rajab.

The specific mention of these four months does not mean that any other month has no sanctity, because the month of Ramadhan is admittedly the most sanctified month in the year. But these four months were specifically termed as sanctified months for the simple reason that their sanctity was accepted even by the pagans of Makkah.

In fact, every month, out of the twelve, is originally equal to the other, and there is no inherent sanctity which may be attributed to one of them in comparison to the other months. When Allah Almighty chooses a particular time for His special blessings, the same acquires sanctity out of His grace.

Thus, the sanctity of these four months was recognized right from the days of Sayyidina Ibrahim (Alayhis salaam). Since the Pagans of Makkah attributed themselves to Sayyidina Ibrahim (Alayhis salaam) they observed the sanctity of these four months and despite their frequent tribal battles, they held it unlawful to fight in these months.

In the Shariah of our Noble Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) the sanctity of these months was upheld and the Holy Quran referred to them as the "sanctified months".

The month of Muharram has certain other characteristics peculiar to it that are specified below.

**Fasting during the month**

The Noble Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) has said:

"The best fasts after the fasts of Ramadhan are those of the month of Muharram."

Although the fasts of the month of Muharram are not obligatory, yet, the one who fasts in these days out of his own will and choice is entitled to a great reward by Allah Almighty. The Hadith cited above signifies that the fasts of the month of Muharram are most rewardable ones 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 award promised for fasts of Muharram can be achieved only by fasting for the whole month. On the contrary, each fast during this month has merit. Therefore, one should avail of this opportunity as much as he can.

**The day of 'Ashurah'**

Although the month of Muharram is a sanctified month as a whole, yet, the 10th day of Muharram is the most sacred among all its days. The day is named 'Ashurah'.

According to the Companion Ibn 'Abbas (Radhiallaahu Anhu). The Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam), when migrated to Madinah, 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 (Moses) (Alayhis salaam) and his followers crossed the Red Sea miraculously and the Pharaoh was drowned in its waters. On hearing this from the Jews, the Holy Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) said, "We are more closely rotated [ilm-net editor-related] to Musa (Alayhis salaam) than you" and directed the Muslims to fast on the day of 'Ashura'. (Abu Dawood)

It is also reported in a number of authentic traditions that in the beginning, fasting on the day of 'Ashura' was obligatory for the Muslims. It was later that the fasts of Ramadhan were made obligatory and the fast on the day of 'Ashura' was made optional. Sayyidtna 'Aisha (Radhiallaahu Anha) has said:

"When the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) came to Madinah, he fasted on the day of 'Ashura' and directed the people to fast it. But when the fasts of Ramadhan were made obligatory, the obligation of fasting was confined to Ramadhan and the obligatory nature of the fast of 'Ashura' was abandoned. Whoever so desires should fast on it and any other who so likes can avoid fasting on it."  
(Sunan Abu Dawud)

However, the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) used to fast on the day of 'Ashura' even after the fasting in Ramadhan was made obligatory. Abdullah ibn Musa (Radhiallaahu Anhu) reports that the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) preferred the fast of 'Ashura' on the fasts of other days and preferred the fasts of Ramadhaan on the fast of 'Ashura'. (Bukhari and Muslim)

In short, it is established through a number of authentic Hadiths that fasting on the day of 'Ashura' is Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) and makes one entitled to a great reward.

According to another Hadith, it is more advisable that the fast of 'Ashura' should either be prefixed or suffixed by another fast. It means that one should fast two days: the 9th and 10th of Muharram or the 10th and 11th of it. The reason of this additional fast as mentioned by the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) is that the Jews used to fast on the day of 'Ashura alone, and the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) wanted to distinguish the Muslim way of fasting from that of Jews. Therefore, he advised the Muslims to add another fast to that of 'Ashura'.

Some traditions signify another feature of the day of 'Ashura. According to these traditions one should be more generous to his family by providing more food to them on this day as compared to other days. These traditions are not very authentic according to the science of Hadith. Yet, some Scholars like Baihaqi and Ibn Hibban have accepted them as reliable.

**Misunderstandings about Muharram**

What is mentioned above is all that is supported through authentic sources about Ashura. However, there are some legends and misconceptions with regard to 'Ashura' that have managed to find their way into the minds of the ignorant, but have no support of authentic Islamic sources, some very common of them are these:

* This is the day in which Adam (Alayhis salaam) was created.
* This is the day in which Ibrahim was born.
* This is the day in which Allah accepted the repentance of Sayyidina Adam (Alayhis salaam)
* This is the day on which the Qiyaamah (doomsday) will take place.
* Whoever takes bath in the day of 'Ashura' will never get ill.

All these and other similar whims and fancies are totally baseless and the traditions referred to in this respect are not worthy of any credit.

Some people take it as Sunnah to prepare a particular type of meal in the day of 'Ashura'. This practice, too, has no basis in the authentic Islamic sources.

Some other people attribute the sanctity of 'Ashura' to the martyrdom of Sayyidina Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu) during his battle with the Syrian army. No doubt, the martyrdom of Sayyidina Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu) is one of the most tragic episodes of our history. Yet, the sanctity of 'Ashura' cannot be ascribed to this event for the simple reason that the sanctity of 'Ashura' was established during the days of the Holy Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) much earlier than the birth of Sayyidna Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu).

On the contrary, it is one of the merits of Sayyidna Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu) that his martyrdom took place on the day of 'Ashura'.

Another misconception about the month of Muharram is that it is an evil or unlucky month, for Sayyidna Husain was killed in it. It is for this misconception that people avoid holding marriage ceremonies in the month of Muharram.

This is again a baseless concept that is contrary to the express teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. Such superstitions have been totally negated by the Holy Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam). If the death of an eminent person in a particular day renders that day unlucky for all times to come, one can hardly find a day, free from this bad luck, out of 360 days of the whole year, because each and every day has a history of the demise of some eminent person. The Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) have made us free from such superstitious beliefs, and they should deserve no attention.

Another wrong practice related to this month is to hold the lamentation and mourning ceremonies in the memory of martyrdom of Sayyidna Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu). As mentioned earlier, the event of Karbala is one of the most tragic events of our history, but the Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) has forbidden us from holding the mourning ceremonies on the death of any person.

The people of jahiliyyah (ignorance) used to mourn over their deceased through loud lamentations, by tearing their clothes and by beating their cheeks and chests. The Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) stopped the Muslims from doing all this and directed them to observe patience by saying "Innaa lillaahi wa innaa ilayhi raaji'oon". A number of authentic Ahaadith are available on the subject. To quote only one of them:

"He is not from our group who slaps his checks, tears his clothes and cries in the manner of the people of jahiliyyah".  
(Sahih Bukhari)

All the authentic jurists are unanimous on the point that the mourning of this type is absolutely impermissible. Even Sayyidna Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu) at shortly before his demise, had advised his beloved sister Sayyidah Zainab (Radhiallaahu Anha) at not to mourn over his death in this manner. He said,

"My dear sister, I swear upon you that you, in case I die, shall not tear your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor curse anyone for me or pray for your death". (Al-Kamil, ibn Kathir vol. 4 pg. 24)

It is evident from this advice of Sayyidna Husain, (Radhiallaahu Anhu) that this type of mourning is condemned even by the blessed person for the memory of whom these mourning ceremonies are held. Every Muslim should avoid this practice and abide by the teachings of the Holy Prophet (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) and his beloved grand child Sayyidna Husain (Radhiallaahu Anhu).

*Mufti Taqi Uthmaani   
http://www.jamiat.org.za   
Council of Muslim Theologians*  
  
Reference urls are below :

http://www.ummah.com/sunnah/viewsufeature1.php?sufid=23&suTopicID=8  
http://  
http://

**The Virtues of month of Muharram and Fasting on 'Aashooraa'**

Allah's sacred month of Muharram is a blessed and important month. It is the first month of the Hijri calendar and is one of the four sacred months concerning which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, the number of months with Allaah is twelve months (in a year), so it was ordained by Allaah 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." *[al-Tawbah 9:36]*

Abu Bakrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The year is twelve months of which four are sacred, the three consecutive months of Dhu'l-Qa'dah, Dhu'l-Hijjah and Muharram, and Rajab Mudar which comes between Jumaada and Sha'baan." *(Reported by al-Bukhaari, 2958)*.

Muharram is so called because it is a sacred (muharram) month and to confirm its sanctity.

Allaah's words (interpretation of the meaning): "so wrong not yourselves therein." mean do not wrong yourselves in these sacred months, because sin in these months is worse than in other months.

It was reported that Ibn 'Abbaas said that this phrase (so wrong not yourselves therein.) referred to all the months, then these four were singled out and made sacred, so that sin in these months is more serious and good deeds bring a greater reward.

Qutaadah said concerning this phrase (so wrong not yourselves therein.) that wrongdoing during the sacred months is more serious and more sinful that wrongdoing at any other time. Wrongdoing at any time is a serious matter, but Allaah gives more weight to whichever of His commands He will. Allaah has chosen certain ones of His creation. He has chosen from among the angels Messengers and from among mankind Messengers. He chose from among speech the remembrance of Him (dhikr). He chose from among the earth the mosques, from among the months Ramadaan and the sacred months, from among the days Friday and from among the nights Laylat al-Qadr, so venerate that which Allaah has told us to venerate. People of understanding and wisdom venerate the things that Allaah has told us to venerate. *(Summarized from the Tafseer of Ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on him. Tafseer of Surat al-Tawbah, aayah 36)*.

**The Virtue of observing more naafil fasts during Muharram**

Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'The best of fasting after Ramadaan is fasting Allaah's month of Muharram.'" *(reported by Muslim, 1982)*.

The phrase "Allaah's month", connecting the name of the month to the name of Allaah in a genitive grammatical structure, signifies the importance of the month. Al-Qaari said: "The apparent meaning is all of the month of Muharram." But it was proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) never fasted any whole month apart from Ramadan, so this hadeeth is probably meant to encourage increasing one's fasting during Muharram, without meaning that one should fast for the entire month.

It was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to fast more in Sha'baan. It is likely that the virtue of Muharram was not revealed to him until the end of his life, before he was able to fast during this month. *(Sharh al-Nawawi 'ala Saheeh Muslim)*.

**Allaah chooses whatever times and places He wills**

Al-'Izz ibn 'Abd al-Salaam (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "Times and places may be given preferred status in two ways, either temporal or religious/spiritual. With regard to the latter, this is because Allaah bestows His generosity on His slaves at those times or in those places, by giving a greater reward for deeds done, such as giving a greater reward for fasting in Ramadaan than for fasting at all other times, and also on the day of 'Aashooraa', the virtue of which is due to Allaah's generosity and kindness towards His slaves on that day." *(Qawaa'id al-Ahkaam, 1/38)*.

**'Aashooraa' in History**

Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah and saw the Jews fasting on the day of 'Aashooraa'. He said, 'What is this?' They said, 'This is a righteous day, it is the day when Allaah saved the Children of Israel from their enemies, so Moosa fasted on this day.' He said, 'We have more right to Moosa than you,' so he fasted on that day and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day." *(Reported by al-Bukhaari, 1865)*.

"This is a righteous day" - in a report narrated by Muslim, [the Jews said:] "This is a great day, on which Allaah saved Moosa and his people, and drowned Pharaoh and his people."

"Moosa fasted on this day" - a report narrated by Muslim adds: "..in thanksgiving to Allaah, so we fast on this day."

According to a report narrated by al-Bukhaari: ".. so we fast on this day to venerate it."

A version narrated by Imaam Ahmad adds: "This is the day on which the Ark settled on Mount Joodi, so Nooh fasted this day in thanksgiving."

"and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day" - according to another report also narrated by al-Bukhaari: "He said to his Companions: 'You have more right to Moosa than they do, so fast on that day.'"

The practice of fasting on 'Aashooraa' was known even in the days of Jaahiliyyah, before the Prophet's mission. It was reported that 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her said: "The people of Jaahiliyyah used to fast on that day."

Al-Qurtubi said: "Perhaps Quraysh used to fast on that day on the basis of some past law, such as that of Ibraaheem, upon whom be peace."

It was also reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to fast on 'Aashooraa' in Makkah, before he migrated to Madeenah. When he migrated to Madeenah, he found the Jews celebrating this day, so he asked them why, and they replied as described in the hadeeth quoted above. He commanded the Muslims to be different from the Jews, who took it as a festival, as was reported in the hadeeth of Abu Moosa (may Allaah be pleased with him), who said: "The Jews used to take the day of 'Aashooraa' as a festival [according to a report narrated by Muslim: the day of 'Aashooraa' was venerated by the Jews, who took it as a festival. According to another report also narrated by Muslim: the people of Khaybar (the Jews) used to take it as a festival and their women would wear their jewellery and symbols on that day]. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'So you [Muslims] should fast on that day.'" *(Reported by al-Bukhaari)*. Apparently the motive for commanding the Muslims to fast on this day was the desire to be different from the Jews, so that the Muslims would fast when the Jews did not, because people do not fast on a day of celebration. *(Summarized from the words of al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar - may Allaah have mercy on him - in Fath al-Baari Sharh ALA Saheeh al-Bukhaari)*.

Fasting on 'Aashooraa' was a gradual step in the process of introducing fasting as a prescribed obligation in Islam. Fasting appeared in three forms. When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah, he told the Muslims to fast on three days of every month and on the day of 'Aashooraa', then Allaah made fasting obligatory when He said (interpretation of the meaning): ". observing the fasting is prescribed for you." *[al-Baqarah 2:183] (Ahkaam al-Qur'aan by al-Jassas, part 1)*.

The obligation was transferred from the fast of 'Aashooraa' to the fast of Ramadaan, and this one of the proofs in the field of Usool al-Fiqh that it is possible to abrogate a lighter duty in favour of a heavier duty.

Before the obligation of fasting 'Aashooraa' was abrogated, fasting on this day was obligatory, as can be seen from the clear command to observe this fast. Then it was further confirmed later on, then reaffirmed by making it a general command addressed to everybody, and once again by instructing mothers not to breastfeed their infants during this fast. It was reported from Ibn Mas'ood that when fasting Ramadaan was made obligatory, the obligation to fast 'Aashooraa' was lifted, i.e., it was no longer obligatory to fast on this day, but it is still desirable (mustahabb).

**The virtues of fasting 'Aashooraa'**

Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said: "I never saw the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) so keen to fast any day and give it priority over any other than this day, the day of 'Aashooraa', and this month, meaning Ramadaan." *(Reported by al-Bukhaari, 1867)*.

The meaning of his being keen was that he intended to fast on that day in the hope of earning the reward for doing so.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "For fasting the day of 'Aashooraa', I hope that Allaah will accept it as expiation for the year that went before." *(Reported by Muslim, 1976)*. This is from the bounty of Allaah towards us: for fasting one day He gives us expiation for the sins of a whole year. And Allaah is the Owner of Great Bounty.

**Which day is 'Aashooraa'?**

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: " 'Aashooraa' and Taasoo'aa' are two elongated names [the vowels are elongated] as is stated in books on the Arabic language. Our companions said: 'Aashooraa' is the tenth day of Muharram and Taasoo'aa' is the ninth day. This is our opinion, and that of the majority of scholars. This is the apparent meaning of the ahaadeeth and is what we understand from the general wording. It is also what is usually understood by scholars of the language." *(al-Majmoo')*

'Aashooraa' is an Islamic name that was not known at the time of Jaahiliyyah. *(Kashshaaf al-Qinaa', part 2, Sawm Muharram)*.

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

" 'Aashooraa' is the tenth day of Muharram. This is the opinion of Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyib and al-Hasan. It was what was reported by Ibn 'Abbaas, who said: 'The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) commanded us to fast 'Aashooraa', the tenth day of Muharram.' *(Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said, a saheeh hasan hadeeth)*. It was reported that Ibn 'Abbaas said: 'The ninth,' and reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to fast the ninth. *(Reported by Muslim)*. 'Ataa' reported that he said, 'Fast the ninth and the tenth, and do not be like the Jews.' If this is understood, we can say on this basis that it is mustahabb (encouraged) to fast on the ninth and the tenth, for that reason. This is what Ahmad said, and it is the opinion of Ishaaq."

**It is mustahabb (encouraged) to fast Taasoo'aa' with 'Aashooraa'**

'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said: "When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fasted on 'Aashooraa' and commanded the Muslims to fast as well, they said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, it is a day that is venerated by the Jews and Christians.' The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, 'If I live to see the next year, inshaAllaah, we will fast on the ninth day too.' But it so happened that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) passed away before the next year came." *(Reported by Muslim, 1916)*.

Al-Shaafa'i and his companions, Ahmad, Ishaaq and others said: "It is mustahabb to fast on both the ninth and tenth days, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fasted on the tenth, and intended to fast on the ninth."

On this basis it may be said that there are varying degrees of fasting 'Aashooraa', the least of which is to fast only on the tenth and the best of which is to fast the ninth as well. The more one fasts in Muharram, the better it is.

**The reason why it is mustahabb to fast on Taasoo'aa'**

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "The scholars - our companions and others - mentioned several reasons why it is mustahabb to fast on Taasoo'aa':

1. The intention behind it is to be different from the Jews, who only venerate the tenth day. This opinion was reported from Ibn 'Abbaas.
2. The intention is to add another day's fast to 'Aashooraa'. This is akin to the prohibition on fasting a Friday by itself, as was mentioned by al-Khattaabi and others.
3. To be on the safe side and make sure that one fasts on the tenth, in case there is some error in sighting the crescent moon at the beginning of Muharram and the ninth is in fact the tenth."

The strongest of these reasons is being different from the People of the Book. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade imitating the People of the Book in many ahaadeeth, for example, his words concerning 'Aashooraa': 'If I live until the next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth day.'" *(al-Fataawa al-Kubra, part 6, Sadd al-Dharaa'i' al-Mufdiyah ila'l-Mahaarim )*

Ibn Hajar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said in his commentary on the hadeeth "If I live until the next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth day": "What he meant by fasting on the ninth day was probably not that he would limit himself to that day, but would add it to the tenth, either to be on the safe side or to be different from the Jews and Christians, which is more likely. This is also what we can understand from some of the reports narrated by Muslim." *(Fath, 4/245)*.

**Ruling on fasting only on the day of 'Aashooraa'**

Shaykh al-Islam said: "Fasting on the day of 'Aashoraa' is an expiation for a year, and it is not makrooh to fast only that day." *(al-Fataawa al-Kubra, part 5)*. In Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, it says: "There is nothing wrong with fasting only on 'Aashooraa'." *(part 3, Baab Sawm al-Tatawwu')*.

**Fasting on 'Aashooraa' even if it is a Saturday or a Friday**

Al-Tahhaawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) allowed us to fast on 'Aashooraa' and urged us to do so. He did not say that if it falls on a Saturday we should not fast. This is evidence that all days of the week are included in this. In our view - and Allaah knows best - it could be the case that even if this is true (that it is not allowed to fast on Saturdays), it is so that we do not venerate this day and refrain from food, drink and intercourse, as the Jews do. As for the one who fasts on a Saturday without intending to venerate it, and does not do so because the Jews regard it as blessed, then this is not makrooh." *(Mushkil al-Aathaar, part 2, Baab Sawm Yawm al-Sabt)*.

The author of al-Minhaaj said: " 'It is disliked (makrooh) to fast on a Friday alone.' But it is no longer makrooh if you add another day to it, as mentioned in the saheeh report to that effect. A person may fast on a Friday if it coincides with his habitual fast, or he is fasting in fulfilment of a vow, or he is making up an obligatory fast that he has missed, as was stated in a saheeh report."

Al-Shaarih said in Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj:

" 'If it coincides with his habitual fast' - i.e., such as if he fasts alternate days, and a day that he fasts happens to be a Friday. ' if he is fasting in fulfilment of a vow, etc." - this also applies to fasting on days prescribed in sharee'ah, such as 'Aashooraa' or 'Arafaah. *(Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj, part 3, Baab Sawm al-Tatawwu')*

Al-Bahooti (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "It is makrooh to deliberately single out a Saturday for fasting, because of the hadeeth of 'Abd-Allaah ibn Bishr, who reported from his sister: 'Do not fast on Saturdays except in the case of obligatory fasts' *(reported by Ahmad with a jayyid isnaad and by al-Haakim, who said: according to the conditions of al-Bukhaari)*, and because it is a day that is venerated by the Jews, so singling it out for fasting means being like them, except when a Friday or Saturday coincides with a day when Muslims habitually fast, such as when it coincides with the day of 'Arafaah or the day of 'Aashooraa', and a person has the habit of fasting on these days, in which case it is not makrooh, because a person's habit carries some weight." *(Kashshaaf al-Qinaa', part 2, Baab Sawm al-Tatawwu')*.

**What should be done if there is confusion about the beginning of the month?**

Ahmad said: "If there is confusion about the beginning of the month, one should fast for three days, to be sure of fasting on the ninth and tenth days." *(al-Mughni by Ibn Qudaamah, part 3 - al-Siyaam - Siyaam 'Aashooraa')*.

If a person does not know when Muharram began, and he wants to be sure of fasting on the tenth, he should assume that Dhoo'l-Hijjah was thirty days - as is the usual rule - and should fast on the ninth and tenth. Whoever wants to be sure of fasting the ninth as well should fast the eight, ninth and tenth (then if Dhoo'l-Hijjah was twenty-nine days, he can be sure of having fasted Taasoo'aa' and 'Aashooraa').

But given that fasting on 'Aashooraa' is mustahabb rather than waajib, people are not commanded to look for the crescent of the new moon of Muharram as they are to do in the case of Ramadaan and Shawwaal.

**Fasting 'Aashooraa' - for what does it offer expiation?**

Imaam al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

"It expiates for all minor sins, i.e., it brings forgiveness of all sins except major sins."

Then he said (may Allaah have mercy on him):

"Fasting the day of 'Arafaah expiates for two years, and the day of 'Aashooraa' expiates for one year. If when a person says 'Aameen' it coincides with the 'Aameen' of the angels, he will be forgiven all his previous sins. Each one of the things that we have mentioned will bring expiation. If there are minor sins for which expiation is needed, expiation for them will be accepted; if there are no minor sins or major sins, good deeds will be added to his account and he will be raised in status. If he had committed major sins but no minor sins, we hope that his major sins will be reduced." *(al-Majmoo' Sharh al-Muhadhdhab, part 6, Sawm Yawm 'Arafaah)*.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "Tahaarah, salaah, and fasting in Ramadaan, on the day of 'Arafaah and on 'Aashooraa' expiate for minor sins only." *(al-Fataawa al-Kubra, part 5)*.

**Not relying too much on the reward for fasting**

Some people who are deceived rely too much on things like fasting on 'Aashooraa' or the day of 'Arafaah, to the extent that some of them say, "Fasting on 'Aashooraa' will expiate for the sins of the whole year, and fasting on the day of 'Arafaah will bring extra rewards." Ibn al-Qayyim said: 'This misguided person does not know that fasting in Ramadaan and praying five times a day are much more important than fasting on the day of 'Arafaah and 'Aashooraa', and that they expiate for the sins between one Ramadaan and the next, or between one Friday and the next, so long as one avoids major sins. But they cannot expiate for minor sins unless one also avoids major sins; when the two things are put together, they have the strength to expiate for minor sins. Among those deceived people may be one who thinks that his good deeds are more than his sins, because he does not pay attention to his bad deeds or check on his sins, but if he does a good deed he remembers it and relies on it. This is like the one who seeks Allaah's forgiveness with his tongue (i.e., by words only), and glorifies Allaah by saying "Subhaan Allaah" one hundred times a day, then he backbites about the Muslims and slanders their honour, and speaks all day long about things that are not pleasing to Allaah. This person is always thinking about the virtues of his tasbeehaat (saying "Subhaan Allaah") and tahleelaat (saying "Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah") but he pays no attention to what has been reported concerning those who backbite, tell lies and slander others, or commit other sins of the tongue. They are completely deceived." *(al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, part 31, Ghuroor)*.

**Fasting 'Aashooraa' when one still has days to make up from Ramadaan**

The fuqahaa' differed concerning the ruling on observing voluntary fasts before a person has made up days that he or she did not fast in Ramadaan. The Hanafis said that it is permissible to observe voluntary fasts before making up days from Ramadaan, and it is not makrooh to do so, because the missed days do not have to be made up straight away. The Maalikis and Shaafa'is said that it is permissible but is makrooh, because it means that one is delaying something obligatory. Al-Dusooqi said: "It is makrooh to observe a voluntary fast when one still has to make up an obligatory fast, such as a fast in fulfilment of a vow, or a missed obligatory fast, or a fast done as an act of expiation (kafaarah), whether the voluntary fast which is being given priority over an obligatory fast is something confirmed in sharee'ah or not, such as 'Aashooraa' and the ninth of Dhoo'l-Hijjah, according to the most correct opinion." The Hanbalis said that it is haraam to observe a voluntary fast before making up any fasts missed in Ramadaan, and that a voluntary fast in such cases does not count, even if there is plenty of time to make up the obligatory fast. So a person must give priority to the obligatory fasts until he has made them up.. *(al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, part 28, Sawm al-tatawwu')*.

Muslims must hasten to make up any missed fasts after Ramadaan, so that they will be able to fast 'Arafaah and 'Aashooraa' without any problem. If a person fasts 'Arafaah and 'Aashooraa' with the intention from the night before of making up for a missed fast, this will be good enough to make up what he has missed, for the bounty of Allaah is great.

**Actions against the Sunnah (Bid'ahs) common on 'Aashooraa'**

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked about the things that people do on 'Aashooraa', such as wearing kohl, taking a bath (ghusl), wearing henna, shaking hands with one another, cooking grains (huboob), showing happiness and so on. Was any of this reported from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in a saheeh hadeeth, or not? If nothing to that effect was reported in a saheeh hadeeth, is doing these things bid'ah, or not? Is there any basis for what the other group do, such as grieving and mourning, going without anything to drink, eulogizing and wailing, reciting in a crazy manner, and rending their garments?

His reply was:

'Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Nothing to that effect has been reported in any saheeh hadeeth from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or from his Companions. None of the imaams of the Muslims encouraged or recommended such things, neither the four imaams, nor any others. No reliable scholars have narrated anything like this, neither from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), nor from the Sahaabah, nor from the Taabi'een; neither in any saheeh report or in a da'eef (weak) report; neither in the books of Saheeh, nor in al-Sunan, nor in the Musnads. No hadeeth of this nature was known during the best centuries, but some of the later narrators reported ahaadeeth like the one which says, "Whoever puts kohl in his eyes on the day of 'Aashooraa' will not suffer from eye disease in that year, and whoever takes a bath (does ghusl) on the day of 'Aashooraa' will not get sick in that year," and so on. They also reported a fabricated hadeeth that is falsely attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), which says, "Whoever is generous to his family on the day of 'Aashooraa', Allaah will be generous to him for the rest of the year." Reporting all of this from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is tantamount to lying.'

Then he [Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him)] discussed in brief the tribulations that had occurred in the early days of this ummah and the killing of al-Husayn (may Allaah be pleased with him), and what the various sects had done because of this. Then he said:

'An ignorant, wrongful group - who were either heretics and hypocrites, or misguided and misled - made a show of allegiance to him and the members of his household, so they took the day of 'Aashooraa' as a day of mourning and wailing, in which they openly displayed the rituals of jaahiliyyah such as slapping their cheeks and rending their garments, grieving in the manner of the jaahiliyyah. The Shaytaan made this attractive to those who are misled, so they took the day of 'Aashooraa' as an occasion of mourning, when they grieve and wail, recite poems of grief and tell stories filled with lies. Whatever truth there may be in these stories serves no purpose other than the renewal of their grief and sectarian feeling, and the stirring up of hatred and hostility among the Muslims, which they do by cursing those who came before them. The evil and harm that they do to the Muslims cannot be enumerated by any man, no matter how eloquent he is. Some others - either Naasibis who oppose and have enmity towards al-Husayn and his family or ignorant people who try to fight evil with evil, corruption with corruption, lies with lies and bid'ah with bid'ah - opposed them by fabricating reports in favour of making the day of 'Aashooraa' a day of celebration, by wearing kohl and henna, spending money on one's children, cooking special dishes and other things that are done on Eids and special occasions. These people took the day of 'Aashooraa' as a festival like Eid, whereas the others took it as a day of mourning. Both are wrong, and both go against the Sunnah, even though the other group (those who take it as a day of mourning) are worse in intention and more ignorant and more plainly wrong. Neither the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) nor his successors (the khulafa' al-raashidoon) did any of these things on the day of 'Aashooraa', they neither made it a day of mourning nor a day of celebration.

As for the other things, such as cooking special dishes with or without grains, or wearing new clothes, or spending money on one's family, or buying the year's supplies on that day, or doing special acts of worship such as special prayers or deliberately slaughtering an animal on that day, or saving some of the meat of the sacrifice to cook with grains, or wearing kohl and henna, or taking a bath (ghusl), or shaking hands with one another, or visiting one another, or visiting the mosques and mashhads (shrines) and so on. All of this is reprehensible bid'ah and is wrong. None of it has anything to do with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or the way of the Khulafa' al-Raashidoon. It was not approved of by any of the imaams of the Muslims, not Maalik, not al-Thawri, not al-Layth ibn Sa'd, not Abu Haneefah, not al-Oozaa'i, not al-Shaafa'i, not Ahmad ibn Hanbal, not Ishaaq ibn Raahwayh, not any of the imaams and scholars of the Muslims.'*(al-Fataawa al-Kubra by Ibn Taymiyah)*

Ibn al-Haaj (may Allaah have mercy on him) mentioned that one of the bid'ahs on 'Aashooraa' was deliberately paying zakaat on this day, late or early, or slaughtering a chicken just for this occasion, or - in the case of women - using henna. *(al-Madkhal, part 1, Yawm 'Aashooraa')*

We ask Allaah to make us followers of the Sunnah of His Noble Prophet, to make us live in Islam and die in a state of faith. May He help us to do that which He loves and which pleases Him. We ask Him to help us to remember Him and be thankful to Him, to worship Him properly and to accept our good deeds. May He make us of those who are pious and fear Him. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad and all his family and companions.   
  
Reference urls are below :

http://ummah.com/sunnah/viewsufeature1.php?sufid=18&suTopicID=4  
http://www.ummah.com/sunnah/viewsufeature1.php?sufid=23&suTopicID=8  
http://

**The History of 'Aashooraa'**

Muslims must fear Allah and take lessons from what Allah has told us in the Noble Qur’an regarding the Prophets and Messengers of Allah and the previous nations.

Allah said (which means):

**“Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Qur’an) is not a forged statement, but a confirmation of Allah’s existing books (the Torah, the Gospel, and other Scriptures of Allah), a detailed explanation of everything, and a guide and a mercy for the people who believe.”** (Yusuf 12:111)

And among the stories that Allah has narrated to us in His Book is what happened in Allah’s month, the sacred month of Muharram, and that is the story of Prophet Moosa (Moses) and Pharaoh, the tyrant of Egypt. In the Qur’an, Allah tells us this story which means:

**“We recite to you some of the news of Moosa and Pharaoh in truth, for a people who believe (i.e. those who believe in this Qur’an and in the Oneness of Allah). Verily, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people sects, weakening (oppressing) a group (Children of Israel) among them, killing their sons and letting their females live. Verily, he was of those who work corruption. And We wished to do a favour for those who were weak (and oppressed) in the land, and to make them rulers and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land, and We let Pharaoh and Haamaan (a minister of Pharaoh) and their hosts receive from them that which they feared.”** (Al-Qasas 28:3-6)

Pharaoh dominated the nation of Israel and enslaved them, killing their newborn sons but letting their females live. The reason he committed this criminal act was the fear of the truth coming out from one of those newborn males. The nation of Israel used to know, according to what came to them from Prophet Ibraheem (Abraham), that someone from his lineage would destroy the king of Egypt. These glad tidings were famous among them; and the news of it was made known to Pharaoh. Pharaoh ordered his soldiers to kill all newborn boys of the nation of Israel; in order to secure himself from destruction.

However, all of the precautions that he made were not enough to protect him from what Allah wanted, which was for this newborn boy to be raised in the house of Pharaoh. The will of Allah cannot be stopped by any precautions and His ability conquers anything. So Allah chose for the Prophet Moosa to be born safely, to be saved from being killed, and also to be raised in Pharaoh’s own home under the protection of Allah until he was an adult.

Later, Moosa accidentally killed a person from Pharaoh’s people by mistake. Moosa was afraid that he would be captured and be killed for this, so he fled to the land of Madyan and abided there for some time. He married there and then returned to Egypt. On the way back, Allah talked to him (by revelation) and told him he was a Prophet and the Messenger to Pharaoh. Allah told him many signs by which he will be known as the prophet of Allah and they would show that he was a true prophet.

Moosa went to Pharaoh and showed him the signs of Allah but Pharaoh was arrogant and stubborn. Allah says (which means):

**“Has there come to you the story of Moosa? When his Lord called him in the Valley of Tuwaa. ‘Go to Pharaoh, verily he has transgressed all bounds (in crimes, sins, polytheism and disbelief). And say to him, ‘Would you purify yourself (from the sin of disbelief and by becoming a believer)? And that I guide you to your Lord, so you should fear Him?’ Then (Moosa) showed him the great signs (miracles). But (Pharaoh) belied and disobeyed; then he turned his back, striving hard against (Allah). Then he gathered his people and cried aloud, saying, ‘I am your lord, most high.’”** (An-Naazi’aat 79:15-24)

Pharaoh claimed that the signs Moosa brought were only magic and that he had magic that would overtake the magic of Moosa. So Pharaoh gathered magicians from his kingdom and they presented their magic, and Moosa presented what he had from the signs, which Allah had given him.

Allah said (which means):

**“Thus truth was confirmed, and all that they did was made of no effect. So they were defeated there and then, and were returned disgraced. And the sorcerers fell down prostrate. They said, ‘We believe in the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Moosa and Haaroon (Aaron).’”** (Al-A’araf 7:118-122)

At that time Pharaoh decided to try a different plan - fear, force and retaliation. Allah told Moosa to get every believer out of Egypt and direct them to where Allah would tell him. Pharaoh gathered his army and forces, which were around one million soldiers, according to some references, and he chased Moosa and his people, hoping to destroy them completely. Moosa ended up at the sea with Pharaoh and his army behind him. The believers were afraid because the sea was in front of them and the enemy was behind them.

Allah says (which means):

**“And when the two hosts saw each other, the people of Moosa, said, ‘We are sure to be overtaken. (Moosa) said, ‘Nay, verily! With me is my Lord and He will guide me!’”** (Ash-Shu’araa 26:61-62)

Whoever is close to Allah, Allah will never let him down or leave him on his own. Allah ordered Moosa to strike the sea with his staff. Moosa did so and the sea opened up for them to cross. Allah says (which means):

**“And indeed We inspired Moosa (saying): ‘Travel by night with My slaves and strike a dry path for them in the sea, fearing neither to be overtaken (by Pharaoh) nor being afraid (of drowning).”** (Taa-Haa 20:77)

Moosa walked across the path that opened in the sea and the last of his people left the sea and every soldier of Pharaoh’s army was inside the path. At this time Allah ordered the sea to collapse upon them, drowning Pharaoh and his army.

That was the victory of the truth over falsehood. The promise of Allah was true – He made the people of Moosa victorious over Pharaoh and his army. From this story we see how the truth is victorious, regardless of the size or seeming power of falsehood. Falsehood has its own limited time, but the truth is always victorious.

This story should enrich the hearts of the believers and make them steadfast in the face of their enemies, regardless of size or seeming power of their enemies. The believer should also benefit from this story by understanding that the people of falsehood claim that they are on the right path and are calling people to the truth. In fact, the opposite is true - they rely on lies and deception.

This great event – the victory Allah gave Moosa and the believers over Pharaoh and his army - occurred on the 10th of the sacred month of Muharram and the day is called Yaumul 'Aashooraa' (the day of 'Aashooraa'). It is a day that has a great merit. Prophet Moosa fasted on that day, and ordered the people to fast that day.

Ibn ‘Abbass reported that when the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) arrived in Madinah, he found the Jews fasting on the day of Ashura. The Messenger of Allah asked them, **“What is the significance of this day that you fast on?”** They said,

**“It is the day of great significance when Allah delivered Moosa and his people and drowned Pharaoh and his people. Moosa observed fast out of gratitude, and we also observe it.” Upon this, the Messenger of Allah said, “We have more right and we have a closer connection to Moosa than you have.”**

**So Allah’s Messenger fasted (on the day of Ashura) and gave orders that it should be observed.**

We also benefit from the story of Moosa by learning that the Sunnah of the Prophets is to thank and praise Allah in times of peace and when they gain victory over their enemies. Moosa fasted on the 10th, the day on which Allah made his followers victorious over Pharaoh; and this is another sign that the truth will always defeat falsehood.

\*\*\*\*\*

**The month of Muharram**

There is manifest wisdom in the alternation of the days and nights and in the succession of months and years. It is incumbent upon us that we utilize the days and nights by performing righteous deeds within them and differ from those who fill their time with evil deeds until death overtakes them.

Allaah has given us two indicators in the day and night; in the day there is the sun while at night there is the moon. Upon the emergence of each new day, life is renewed and every worshipper summons up his energy to practice more acts of devotion. It is because of this that Allaah has likened sleeping at night to death, while likening waking up during the day to resurrection. He, The Most Exalted, Says (what means): **“It is He who takes your souls by night [i.e. when you sleep] and knows what you have committed by day. Then He revives you therein [i.e. by day] that a specified term [i.e. One’s decreed life span] may be fulfilled. Then to Him will be your return; then He will inform you about what you used to do”** [Quran 6: 60]

It is a manifestation of the mercy of Allaah towards His worshippers that He has made the sun and the moon follow exactly computed courses. By observing the sun, people can know the different seasons and by looking at the moon, people will be able to deduce the beginning and end of each month. Allaah has divided the year into twelve months as He Says (what means): **“Indeed, the number of months with Allaah is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allaah [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred. That is the correct religion [i.e. way], so do not wrong yourselves during them...”** [Quran 9: 36]

Of the four sacred months, three are consecutive: Thul-Qa’dah, DThu’l-Hijjah and Muharram. The fourth is Rajab which lies between the months of Jumaada Al-Aakhirah and Sha’baan.

An example of the easiness of Allaah's religion is that the calculation of the beginning and end of each Islamic month is based on the sighting of the moon. Therefore, every person will be easily informed of each new month, regardless of whether they are literate or not. The advent of a new month is known by the appearance of the crescent in the west after sunset; once the crescent is manifest, one month has come to an end and another has begun. Therefore, we also come to know that the day starts at the sunset and not at midnight, because the first day of the month is marked by the sunset of the last day of the previous month.

The Islamic calendar was first introduced during the era of `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, during the sixteenth or seventeenth year after the Hijrah, or migration of the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam. ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, sought the people’s advice on when the Hijri calendar should start. Some held that it should have started from the birth of the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, whilst others thought that it should have begun from the very first day that the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam began his mission. Another group believed that the calendar should have started from the emigration and the last group held that the calendar should have begun from the death of the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam.

‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, agreed with those who wished to start the Islamic Calendar with the Hijrah of the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam due to the fact that this marked the point in history when Allaah differentiated between truth and falsehood by giving the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam real power and authority which was manifested in the form of the first Islamic State.

The companions may Allaah be pleased with them were also consulted on which month should mark the beginning of the year; ‘Umar and ‘Uthmaan, may Allah be pleased with them both, chose Muharram due to it being a sacred month and because it follows the month of Thul-Hijjah, which is when the Muslims perform Hajj, or the Pilgrimage, which was the last pillar of Islam that Allaah enjoined upon the Muslims. Muharram also follows the month in which the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam pledged allegiance to the Ansaar (his Madeenan supporters) to emigrate to Madeenah and this pledge of allegiance was one of the introductory acts of emigration. Due to all these reasons, Muharram was deemed the most suitable month with which to begin the Islamic Calendar.

We must be thankful to Allaah for such an easy method of calculation. The Muslim Nation must have a distinct and independent identity which is derived solely from the essence of Islam. It is incumbent on the Muslim nation that it be distinguished from other nations as far as morals, manners and entire way of life are concerned. This nation cannot be a subservient one that is always tending towards the blind imitation of others; this kind of blind imitation will not entail any goodness or prevent any evil. On the contrary, it will cause the Muslim nation to become weak and depend on others and this will cause it to forget its past glories. This nation will never be reformed except by following the very same methodology that reformed it in the past. We have learned that the day starts at sunset, the month starts once the crescent is sighted and the year starts from the day of the emigration of the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam. This is the method followed by the Muslims of the past; their jurists recorded dates according to this method in their books when handling issues, such as the time of settling debts and other similar matters.

Allaah Says (what means): “And a sign for them is the night, We remove from it the [light of] day, so they are [left] in darkness. And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. And the moon - We have determined for it phases, until it returns [appearing] like the old date stalk. It is not allowable [i.e. possible] for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.”  [Quran 36: 37-40]

**The virtues of Muharram and fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ - I**

Allaah’s sacred month of Muharram is a blessed and important month. It is the first month of the Hijri calendar (Islamic calendar which started with the Prophet’s migration from Makkah to Madeenah) and is one of the four sacred months concerning which Allaah Says (what means): **"Verily, the number of months with Allaah is twelve months (in a year) so was it ordained by Allaah on the day when he created the Heaven and the Earth; of them four are Sacred - that is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein….”** [Quran 9:36]

Abu Bakrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: “The year is twelve months of which four are sacred, the three consecutive months ofThul-Qa’dah,Thul-Hijjah and Muharram, and Rajab which comes between Jumaada and Sha’baan.” [Al-Bukhaari]

Muharram is so called because it is a sacred (Muharram) month and to confirm its sanctity.

Allaah’s Words (which mean) “so wrong not yourselves therein….”, mean: do not wrong yourselves in these sacred months, because sin in these months is worse than in other months.

Ibn ‘Abbaas may Allaah be pleased with him said that this phrase **“so wrong not yourselves therein….”**  referred to all the months, then these four were singled out and made sacred, so that sin in these months is more serious and good deeds bring a greater reward.

Qutaadah may Allaah be pleased with him said concerning the same phrase that wrongdoing during the sacred months is more serious and more sinful than wrongdoing at any other time. Wrongdoing at any time is a serious matter, but Allaah gives more weight to whichever of His commands He wills. Allaah has chosen certain ones of His creation. He has chosen from among the angels Messengers and from among mankind Messengers. He chose from within speech the remembrance of Him. He chose from upon the earth the mosques, from among the months Ramadhaan and the sacred months, from among the days Friday and from among the nights Laylat Al-Qadr, so venerate that which Allaah has told us to venerate. People of understanding and wisdom venerate the things that Allaah has told us to venerate. [Tafseer of Ibn Katheer]

**The Virtue of observing more voluntary fasts during Muharram**

Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, said: ‘The best of fasting after Ramadhaan is fasting Allaah’s month of Muharram.’” [Muslim]

The phrase “Allaah’s month”, connecting the name of the month to the name of Allaah in a genitive grammatical structure signifies the importance of the month. Al-Qaari may Allaah have mercy on him said: “The apparent meaning is all of the month of Muharram.” But it was proven that the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, never fasted any whole month apart from Ramadhaan, so this Hadeeth (Prophetic narration) is probably meant to encourage increasing one’s fasting during Muharram, without meaning that one should fast the entire month.

It was reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, used to fast more in Sha’baan. It is likely that the virtue of Muharram was not revealed to him until the end of his life, before he sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam was able to fast during this month.

**Allaah chooses whatever times and places He wills**

Al-‘Izz Ibn ‘Abd As-Salaam, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Times and places may be given preferred status in two ways, either temporal or religious/spiritual. With regard to the latter, this is because Allaah bestows His generosity on His slaves at those times or in those places by giving a greater reward for deeds done, such as giving a greater reward for fasting in Ramadhaan than for fasting at all other times, and also on the day of ‘Aashooraa’, the virtue of which is due to Allaah’s generosity and kindness towards His slaves on that day…”

**‘Aashooraa’ in history**

Ibn ‘Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “The Prophet , sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, came to Madeenah and found the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Aashooraa’. He sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: ‘What is this?’ They (Jews) said: ‘This is a righteous day, it is the day when Allaah saved the Children of Israel from their enemies, so Moosa (Moses may Allaah exalt his mention) fasted on this day.’ He sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: ‘We have more right to Moosa than you,’ so he fasted on that day and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day.” [Al-Bukhaari]

The practice of fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ was known even in the days of Jaahiliyyah (pre-Islamic period), before the Prophet’s sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam mission. It was reported that ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said: “The people of Jaahiliyyah used to fast on that day…”

Al-Qurtubi may Allaah have mercy on him said: “Perhaps Quraysh used to fast on that day on the basis of some past law, such as that of Ibraaheem (Abraham may Allaah exalt his mention).”

It was also reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, used to fast on ‘Aashooraa’ in Makkah, before he migrated to Madeenah. When he sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam migrated to Madeenah, he found the Jews celebrating this day, so he asked them why, and they replied as described in the Hadeeth quoted above. He sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam commanded the Muslims to be different from the Jews, who took it as a festival.

Apparently the motive for commanding the Muslims to fast on this day was the desire to be different from the Jews, so that the Muslims would fast when the Jews did not, because people do not fast on a day of celebration.

Fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ was a gradual step in the process of introducing fasting as a prescribed obligation in Islam. Fasting appeared in three forms. When the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, came to Madeenah, he told the Muslims to fast on three days of every month and on the day of ‘Aashooraa’, then Allaah made fasting obligatory in the verse (which means): **“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting …”** [Quran 2:183]

The obligation was transferred from the fast of ‘Aashooraa’ to the fast of Ramadhaan, and this is one of the proofs in the field of Usool Al-Fiqh (Judicial fundamentals) that it is possible to abrogate a lighter duty in favour of a heavier duty.

**The virtues of fasting ‘Aashooraa’**

Ibn ‘Abbaas,  may Allaah be pleased with them , said: “I never saw the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, so keen to fast any day and give it priority over any other than this day, the day of ‘Aashooraa’, and this month, meaning Ramadhaan.” [Al-Bukhaari]

The meaning of his being keen was that he sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam intended to fast on that day in the hope of earning the reward for doing so.

The Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, said: “For fasting the day of ‘Aashooraa’, I hope that Allaah will accept it as expiation for the year that went before.” [Muslim]

**The virtues of Muharram and fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ - II**

Which day is ‘Aashooraa’?

Ibn Qudaamah may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said: “‘Aashooraa’ is the tenth day of Muharram..”. It was what was reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas, who said: ‘The Messenger of Allaah  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention ) commanded us to fast ‘Aashooraa’, the tenth day of Muharram.’ [At-Tirmithi] ‘Ataa’ reported that he  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )said: ‘Fast the ninth and the tenth, and do not be like the Jews.’ If this is understood, we can say on this basis that it is likable to fast on the ninth and the tenth, for that reason. This is what Ahmad said, and it is the opinion of Ishaaq.”

It is likable to fast Taasoo’aa’ with ‘Aashooraa’

‘Abdullaah Ibn ‘Abbaas  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  them, said: “When the Messenger of Allaah  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )  fasted on ‘Aashooraa’ and commanded the Muslims to fast as well, they said: ‘O Messenger of Allaah, it is a day that is venerated by the Jews and Christians.’ The Messenger of Allaah  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )said: ‘If I live until the next year, we will fast on the ninth day too.’ But it so happened that the Messenger of Allaah  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention ) passed away before the next year came.” [Muslim]

Al-Shaafi'i and other scholars  may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  themsaid: “It is likable to fast on both the ninth and tenth days, because the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )fasted on the tenth, and intended to fast on the ninth.”

On this basis, it may be said that there are varying degrees of fasting ‘Aashooraa’, the least of which is to fast only on the tenth, and the best of which is to fast the ninth as well. The more one fasts in Muharram, the better it is.

The reason why it is likable to fast on Taasoo’aa’

An-Nawawi may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said: “The scholars – our companions and others – mentioned several reasons why it is likable to fast on Taasoo’aa’:

-   The intention behind it is to be different from the Jews, who only venerate the tenth day. This opinion was reported from Ibn ‘Abbaas  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  him.

- The intention is to add another day’s fast to ‘Aashooraa’. This is akin to the prohibition on fasting a Friday by itself, as was mentioned by Al-Khattaabi may Allaah have mercy on him and others.

- To be on the safe side and make sure that one fasts on the tenth, in case there is some error in sighting the crescent moon at the beginning of Muharram and the ninth is in fact the tenth.”

The strongest of these reasons is being different from the People of the Book. Ibn Taymiyyah may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said: “The Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )forbade imitating the People of the Book in many Ahaadeeth (narrations), for example, his words concerning ‘Aashooraa’: ‘If I live until the next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth day.’” [Al-Fataawa Al-Kubra]

Ibn Hajar may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said in his commentary on the Hadeeth: “If I live until the next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth day”: “What he  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )meant by fasting on the ninth day was probably not that he would limit himself to that day, but would add it to the tenth, either to be on the safe side or to be different from the Jews and Christians, which is more likely. This is also what we can understand from some of the reports narrated by Muslim may Allaah have mercy on him.”

Ruling on fasting only on the day of ‘Aashooraa’

Ibn Taymiyyah may Allaah have mercy on him said: “Fasting on the day of ‘Aashooraa’ is expiation for a year, and it is not disliked to fast only that day…” [ibid]

Ibn Hajar may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “There is nothing wrong with fasting only on ‘Aashooraa’.”

Fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ even if it is a Saturday or a Friday

At-Tahaawi may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said: “The Messenger of Allaah  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )allowed us to fast on ‘Aashooraa’ and urged us to do so. He did not say that if it falls on a Saturday we should not fast. This is evidence that all days of the week are included in this. In our view – and Allaah knows best – it could be the case that even if this is true (that it is not allowed to fast on Saturdays), it is so that we do not venerate this day and refrain from food, drink and intercourse, as the Jews do. As for the one who fasts on a Saturday without intending to venerate it, and does not do so because the Jews regard it as blessed, then this is not disliked…” [Mushkil Al-Aathaar]

Al-Bahooti may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said: “It is disliked to deliberately single out a Saturday for fasting, because of the Hadeeth of ‘Abdullaah Ibn Bishr, who reported from his sister: ‘Do not fast on Saturdays except in the case of obligatory fasts’ [Ahmad]

What should be done if there is confusion about the beginning of the month?

Ahmad may Allaah have mercy on him said: “If there is confusion about the beginning of the month, one should fast for three days, to be sure of fasting on the ninth and tenth days.”

If a person does not know when Muharram began, and he wants to be sure of fasting on the tenth, he should assume that Thul-Hijjah was thirty days – as is the usual rule – and should fast on the ninth and tenth. Whoever wants to be sure of fasting the ninth as well should fast the eighth, ninth and tenth (then if Thul-Hijjah was twenty-nine days, he can be sure of having fasted Taasoo’aa’ and ‘Aashooraa’).

But given that fasting on ‘Aashooraa’ is likable rather than obligatory, people are not commanded to look for the crescent of the new moon of Muharram as they are to do in the case of Ramadhaan and Shawwaal.

Fasting ‘Aashooraa’ – for what does it offer expiation?

Imaam An-Nawawi may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  him said: “It expiates for all minor sins, i.e., it brings forgiveness of all sins except major sins.” Then he said: “Fasting the day of ‘Arafah (ninth day of Thul-Hijjah) expiates for two years, and the day of ‘Aashooraa’ expiates for one year. If when a person says ‘Aameen’ it coincides with the ‘Aameen’ of the angels, he will be forgiven all his previous sins… Each one of the things that we have mentioned will bring expiation. If there are minor sins for which expiation is needed, expiation for them will be accepted; if there are no minor sins or major sins, good deeds will be added to his account and he will be raised in status… If he had committed major sins but no minor sins, we hope that his major sins will be reduced.”

Not relying too much on the reward for fasting

Ibn Al-Qayyim  may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  himsaid: “This misguided person does not know that fasting in Ramadhaan and praying five times a day are much more important than fasting on the day of ‘Arafah and ‘Aashooraa’, and that they expiate for the sins between one Ramadhaan and the next, or between one Friday and the next, so long as one avoids major sins. But they cannot expiate for minor sins unless one also avoids major sins; when the two things are put together, they have the strength to expiate for minor sins.

Fasting ‘Aashooraa’ when one still has days to make up from Ramadhaan

Muslim scholars differed concerning the ruling on observing voluntary fasts before a person has made up days that he or she did not fast in Ramadhaan. The Hanafis said that it is permissible to observe voluntary fasts before making up days from Ramadhaan, and it is not disliked to do so. The Hanbalis said that it is Haraam (forbidden) to observe a voluntary fast before making up any fasts missed in Ramadhaan, and that a voluntary fast in such cases does not count.

Bid’ahs (innovations) common on ‘Aashooraa’

Ibn Taymiyah  may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  himwas asked about the things that people do on ‘Aashooraa’, such as wearing kohl, taking a bath (Ghusl), wearing henna, shaking hands with one another, cooking grains, showing happiness and so on. Was any of this reported from the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention ) in an authentic narration, or not? If nothing to that effect was reported in an authentic Hadeeth, is doing these things Bid’ah or not? Is there any basis for what some groups do, such as grieving and mourning, going without anything to drink, eulogizing and wailing, reciting in a crazy manner, and rending their garments?

His reply was: ‘Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Nothing to that effect has been reported in any authentic narration from the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )or from his Companions  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  them. None of the Imaams of the Muslims encouraged or recommended such things, neither the four Imaams, nor any others. No reliable scholars have narrated anything like this, neither from the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )nor from the Companions  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  themor the Taabi’een (companions’ successors  may  Allaah  have  mercy  upon  them); neither in any authentic report or in a weak report; neither in the books of Saheeh, nor in An-Sunan or in the Musnads. No Hadeeth of this nature was known during the best centuries, but some of the later narrators reported narrations like the one which says: “Whoever puts kohl in his eyes on the day of ‘Aashooraa’ will not suffer from eye disease in that year, and whoever takes a bath on the day of ‘Aashooraa’ will not get sick in that year,” and so on. They also reported a fabricated narration that is falsely attributed to the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )which says: “Whoever is generous to his family on the day of ‘Aashooraa’, Allaah will be generous to him for the rest of the year.” Attributing such fallacies to the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )is a grave sin.’

We ask Allaah to make us followers of the Sunnah of His Noble Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )to make us live in Islam and die in a state of faith. May He help us to do that which He loves and which pleases Him. We ask Him to help us to remember Him and be thankful to Him, to worship Him properly and to accept our good deeds. May He make us of those who are pious and fear Him.  Aameen

**The battle of Karbalaa’**

Fatwa:

All perfect praise be to Allaah, The Lord of the Worlds. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

Al-Husayn Ibn Ali  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himwas martyred in Karbalaa' on the tenth of Muharram when he was 56 years old. The main reason was that he refused to pledge allegiance to Yazeed Ibn Mu’aawiyah after his father Mu’aawiyah  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himchose him as the Caliph and people acknowledged him for a Caliph.

Al-Husayn Ibn Ali  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himwas one of four who refused to acknowledge Yazeed Ibn Mu’aawiyah for Caliphate. The other three were Abdullah Ibn Umar, Abdullah Ibn az-Zubayr and Abdur Rahmaan Ibn Abi Bakr  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  them.

Yazeed sent an order to al-Waleed Ibn Utba, the ruler of Madeenah to take a pledge to him (Yazeed). In the meantime, messages came from Iraq asking al-Husayn  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himto come and to stay with the people there. He took his whole family and when he reached Karbala’a, close to Koofah, Abdullah Ibn Zeyaad’s army attacked and killed him and many members of his family. Indeed, Allaah honored al-Husayn  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himand his family with martyrdom by these people.

Although al-Husayn’s killing was an event which saddened and depressed all Muslims, these are no Islamic rules related to it. Some people believe wrongly that the day of his martyrdom should be celebrated by showing great sorrow, beating oneself … etc. All this has nothing to do with Shariah. In fact, it is nothing but innovations in Islam which are forbidden.

Muslims lived many sad events before the murder of Al Husayn, the most important being the death of Prophet Muhammad  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )the death of Caliph Abu Bakr  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himand the murder of the three other Caliphs  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  them. If Muslims had to have some special rituals to show sadness and sorrow on the anniversary of these occasions, they would spend most of their lives in mourning. Such remembrances have nothing to do with the true religion.

In fact, it is so far from the guidance and conduct of the Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention ).  The Prophet  sallallaahu  `alayhi  wa  sallam ( may  Allaah exalt his mention )lost seventy of his companions, Allaah be pleased with them, among whom was his uncle Hamzah  may  Allaah  be  pleased  with  himin Uhud and a similar number in Bi’ir Ma’oonah and he did not make from any of the two days a yearly occasion to mourn or show sadness and grief.Allah Knows best.

**The significance of Hijrah**

The significance of Hijrah (the migration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah) is not limited to the Islamic history or to the Muslims. The Hijrah not only reshaped — socially and politically — the Arab Peninsula, but also had its impact on worldwide civilizations.  
  
Throughout the history of Islam, the migration was a transitional line between the two major eras, regarding to the message of Islam; the era of Makkah and the era of Madinah. In its essence, this signified a transition from one phase to another, as follows:

* Transition from the position of weakness, where the non-believers of Makkah — particularly the people of Quraish — humiliated, tortured and killed Muslims, to the position of strength. This is where Muslims were allowed to defend themselves and were able to defeat their adversaries.
* Transition form spreading Islam through individual *dawah* (inviting others to Islam) to the spreading of Islam through institutionalized *dawah*, initiated by the state.
* Transition from a position where Muslims represented a small group of people, surrounded by enemies and threatened by death, to the position of a regional power with a strong central leadership. This was one that was surrounded by a large number of followers and allies.
* Transition of *dawah* from regionalism, in which the focus was only on Quraish and the tribes surrounding Makkah, to the phase of universalism. This is where the Muslim State began reaching out to Persia, Egypt, and the Byzantine Empire.
* Transition from being a simple Islamic group of believers, to being the Islamic Ummah (nation). This is which was an organized Islamic state, with a central leadership and other organizations.
* Transition, which is most significantly for early Muslims, to the phase in which Islam was not only the act of worship, but a way of life. This was encompassing politics, economy, social interactions and every other aspect of life. This was the first time when Islam was looked upon as a comprehensive religion.

This contrast between the two periods is clearly noticeable in the Quranic discourse. Muslim scholars describe the part of Quran that was revealed in Makkah as the Makkan Quran, and that which was revealed in Madinah as the Madani Qur'an.  
  
Although both parts are intermingled in the Quran and constitute one divine script, the discourse of both parts is clearly distinguishable. Whereas the part revealed in Makkah concentrated on *tawhid* (the Oneness of Allah/monotheism), the part revealed in Madinah covered rules regarding Islamic life in general.  
  
There is no doubt whatsoever that the migration of Prophet Muhammad to Madinah was the crucial event, which established the Islamic civilization. This was a civilization that thrived for many centuries.

Hijrah, the turning point in Islamic history, as you have stated. Hijrah, no doubt, kindled the light of hope in the hearts of the early Muslims who set a shinning example for all Muslims, in every generation, to emulate.   
  
Hijrah, in essence, is a process of transfer to a better situation. It is not meant to find a comfortable place where one would relax and stop endeavor. Rather, it is a search for an environment more favorable to continuous and constructive effort. Immediately after reaching Madinah, the Prophet undertook an all-embracing process to establish a faithful and strong society. This is a significant aspect and important lesson to learn from Hijrah.

Responding to the question, **Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi**, President of the Fiqh Council of North America, states the following:

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, Most High, says, **Those who believe, and migrate and strive in Allah’s cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are indeed the successful people. Their Lord does give them glad tidings of a Mercy from Himself, of His good pleasure, and of Gardens where enduring pleasure will be theirs: They will dwell therein forever. Verily in Allah’s presence is a reward, the greatest (of all).**  (Al-Tawbah 9: 20-22)  
  
We are approaching the New Year of Hijrah. Our religious calendar is the Hijri calendar. It is important for us to keep in mind the meaning and significance of Hijrah.  
  
Hijrah was one of the most important events in the history of Islam. It is for this reason `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) adopted Hijrah date to calculate years. Muslims chose Hijrah as the focal point to reckon their chronology. In physical terms, Hijrah was a journey between two cities about 300 miles apart, but in its grand significance it marked the beginning of an era, a civilization, a culture and a history for the whole mankind. Islam progressed not only from the physical Hijrah, but because Muslims took Hijrah seriously in all its aspects and dimensions.  
  
When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) made the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah, he did not just transfer his residence or took shelter in another city, but as soon as he arrived in Madinah he began the transformation of that city in every aspect.  
  
It is important for us to study and reflect on the things that he did in Madinah. There are many lessons for us in that history and we can learn many things for our life.  
  
**1. *Masjid* (Mosque):** The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) first established a *Masjid* for the worship of Allah. He himself worked in carrying the stones and building that small, humble but most powerful structure. This was the beginning, but soon other *Masajid* (mosques) were established in Madinah.  
  
**2. *Madrasah*( Islamic school and educational institution for the community):**. The first school under the supervision of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was the school of *Suffah*. Later many other schools were opened. According to Maulana Shibli Numani, there were nine schools opened in Madinah alone in the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).  
  
**3. *Mu'akhah*:** He established brotherly relations between the *Muhajirun* (Muslims who migrated from Makkah) and the *Ansar* (residents of Madinah who helped the Prophet and his Companions). *Masjid* and *Madrasah* were not enough; what was also important was to have good relations between Muslims. They should have their brotherhood on the basis of faith, not on the basis of tribes as they used to have prior to Islam.  
  
**4. Intercommunity and Interfaith Relations:** Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also established good relations with other communities living in Madinah. There was a large Jewish community as well as some other Arab tribes who had not accepted Islam. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) prepared a *Mithaq* (a covenant or a constitution) for relations between these communities.  
  
**5. Cleaning the City:** Yathrib (previous name of Madinah) was a dirty city. When the *Sahabah* (Prophet's Companions) came from Makkah to Madinah, many of them got sick and did not like that city. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked them to clean the city and remove its dirt and filth. `Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said: “We came to Madinah and it was the most polluted land of Allah. The water there was most stinking. (Al-Bukhari, 1756)  
  
**6. Water System in the City:** The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked the *Sahabah* to dig wells in different parts of the city. It is mentioned that more than 50 wells were opened in the city of Madinah and there was enough clean water for every one.  
  
**7. Agriculture and Gardening:** The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged the *Sahabah* to cultivate the land and make gardens. He told them that any one who would cultivate any dead land, would own it. Many people started working and cultivating and soon there was enough food for every one.  
  
**8. Poverty Eradication:** In a short period of time it happened that there were no poor people in Madinah. Every one had enough and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to give gifts to coming delegations.  
  
**9. Safety, Security, Law and Order:** Madinah became the safest city in the world. There were very few incidents of theft, rape, drunkenness or murder and they were immediately taken care of.

In short, Hijrah teaches us that wherever Muslims go, they should bring goodness to that land. Muslims should work for both moral and material goodness of the society.

A new year begins. Islamic history is full of days and great occasions that are good to celebrate - taking from them that which guides us to the right path in difficult times.

The noble Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah is one of the grandest events in the history of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) gives us through the two migrations - the first Hijrah of the Muslims to Ethiopia and his own to Madinah, then called Yathrib - many lessons and examples. He teaches us that change requires hard work and sacrifice.

When the followers of the Prophet were harmed in Makkah and could find no one to champion them and feared sedition, the Prophet reviewed all the countries of the neighboring world for a place to command them to migrate to. If they went any region in the Arabian Peninsula they would be returned to Quraysh. Persia was overlooked because the Persians were idolaters, and the Romans, though people of the book, were known for being tough and tyrannical. The Prophet thought Ethiopia would be the best. He ordered the companions to migrate to Ethiopia. “**Go to Ethiopia,**” he told them, “**there is a king there who is just.**” This Hijrah was termed the migration to the abode of safety, while the migration to Madinah was termed the migration to the abode of belief.

We thus learn from the Prophet that when we plan for something we should make our plans considering all aspects of the situation. He planned for the method of travel, the provisions and who would lead the way. When everything was meticulously planned, he put his faith in Allah.

In the grand welcome the Prophet received upon arriving in Madinah we find lessons and examples. For the people of Madinah welcomed him and the immigrants with great hospitality, knowing that they would have to share with the immigrants their money and homes and become their family - for the immigrants had left their families behind in Makkah - and asked rewards only from Allah. In this way, the Prophet achieved brotherhood between the Ansar (helpers of the Prophet) and the Muhajirun (migrants), and they became an example of the depth of belief.

The lessons and examples in the life of the Prophet and the Hijrah to Madinah should not simply be seen as a historical story to enjoy reading or hearing but one that we should consider a model for our own actions, so that we may truly be one of his followers.

O! Lord, do not deny us the joy of looking upon Your noble face for our failings or the intercession of the Prophet or Heaven.