

**Ashura: It is Allaah's Revelation,
not a copy of Jewish Tradition
- Abu Abu Hurayrah**

Few weeks ago, one brother asked me about Ashura. He said that he heard it is ok to follow the Jewish and Christian tradition because our Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) approved the fasting of Ashura after he found the Jews were fasting that day in Medinah.

This article is to understand the history of Ashura, how it was approved, and that all of the rulings of Ashura and any other matter of our religion are not from the Prophet's decision but they are all from Allaah. So, Ashura is not a copy of Jewish tradition, but a command from the commands of Allaah's revelation.

Prophet's fasting of Ashura before migration:

Our Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayih wa sallam) and the Quraish used to fast this day in Jahiliyyah. Why they used to fast this day at that time is not known. All what is mentioned is that they used to fast this day in Jahiliyyah.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا - قَالَتْ كَانَ عَاشُورَاءَ يَوْمًا تَصُومُهُ قُرَيْشٌ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ، وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَصُومُهُ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمَ الْمَدِينَةَ صَامَهُ وَأَمَرَ بِصِيَامِهِ، فَلَمَّا نَزَلَ رَمَضَانَ كَانَ مِنْ شَاءِ صَامَهُ، وَمَنْ شَاءَ لَا يَصُومُهُ [صحيح البخاري].

Narrated `Aisha: 'Ashura' (i.e. the tenth of Muharram) was a day on which the tribe of Quraish used to fast in the pre-Islamic period of ignorance. The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) also used to fast on this day. So when he migrated to Medina, he fasted on it and ordered (the Muslims) to fast on it. When the fasting of Ramadan was enjoined, it became optional for the people to fast or not to fast on the day of Ashura. [Bukhari]

Prophet's fasting of Ashura after migration: Let's examine the various narrations and additions.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - قَالَ قَدِمَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمَدِينَةَ، فَرَأَى الْيَهُودَ تَصُومُ يَوْمَ عَاشُورَاءَ، فَقَالَ " مَا هَذَا " . قَالُوا هَذَا يَوْمٌ صَالِحٌ، هَذَا يَوْمٌ نَجَّى اللَّهُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ عَدُوِّهِمْ، فَصَامَهُ مُوسَى. قَالَ " فَأَنَا أَحَقُّ بِمُوسَى مِنْكُمْ " . فَصَامَهُ وَأَمَرَ بِصِيَامِهِ [صحيح البخاري].

Narrated Ibn `Abbas:

The Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) came to Medina and saw the Jews fasting on the day of Ashura. He asked them about that. They replied, "This is a good day, the day on which Allah rescued Bani Israel from their enemy. So, Moses fasted this day."

The Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, "*We have more claim over Moses than you.*" So, the Prophet fasted on that day and ordered (the Muslims) to fast (on that day). [Bukhari]

مِنْ رِوَايَةِ مُسْلِمٍ... قَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " مَا هَذَا الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي تَصُومُونَهُ " . فَقَالُوا هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَظِيمٌ أَنْجَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ وَغَرَّقَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمَهُ فَصَامَهُ مُوسَى شُكْرًا فَحَنَّنْ نَصُومَهُ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَحَنَّنْ أَحَقُّ وَأَوْلَى بِمُوسَى مِنْكُمْ " [في رواية البخاري " أَنْتُمْ أَحَقُّ بِمُوسَى مِنْهُمْ، فَصُومُوا "] . فَصَامَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَمَرَ بِصِيَامِهِ.. [هَذَا الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي أَظْهَرَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ مُوسَى وَبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى فِرْعَوْنَ فَحَنَّنْ نَصُومَهُ تَعْظِيمًا لَهُ]

From the reports of Imam Muslim, we find these additions,

The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa salalm) said to them: *What is the (significance) of this day that you observe fast on it?* They said: It is the day of great (significance) when Allah delivered Moses and his people, and drowned the Pharaoh and his people, and Moses observed fast out of gratitude and we also observe it. Upon this the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: *We have more right, and we have a closer connection with Moses than you have* [in the addition of Bukhari: he said to the companions: *you have more right over Musa from them (i.e. Jews) so (you all) fast*]; so Allah's Messenger (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) observed fast (on the day of 'Ashura), and gave orders that it should be observed.

In another addition in Saheeh Muslim, the Jews said: "It is the day on which Allah granted victory to Moses and (his people) Bani Isra'il over the Pharaoh and we observe fast out of gratitude to Him"

So from these narrations, we understand that after the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was informed by the Jews, Allaah approved the truthfulness of the story that the Jews related and Allaah legislated the ruling of fasting Ashura as an obligatory fasting. Although, the narrations explicitly don't clarify this point, however, this belief is linked with the foundation of this noble religion, it is also linked to the purity of Allaah's revelation. The discussion below will clarify this issue by Allaah's Permission.

- a) The Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) wouldn't say anything or approve anything unless it is a revelation from Allaah (and/or approved by Allaah). Allaah says in Sura Al-Najm:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ (٣) إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ (٤)

He doesn't speak from his desires, Indeed It is not but a revelation revealed [Al-Najm, 3-4].

This is Allaah's religion and Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) was just a conveyer, a trustworthy Messenger. There are numerous verses in the Quran and authentic narrations that clearly prove that Quran and Sunnah both are revelation from Allaah and in legislative authority both are equal.

- b) The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) was warned regarding the Jewish tradition of inventing lies against Allaah and then attributing it to Him.

Allaah says in Sura Al-Baqarah:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allah," to purchase with it a little price! Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn thereby. [Al-Baqarah, 79]

Imam Bukhari reported in his book Khalq Af'aal Al-'Ebaad, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that this verse was revealed because of the people of the books (i.e Jews and Christians). [authenticated by Imam Muqbil in his book Saheeh Al-Musnad]

Also, in Sura Aale-Imran:

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُؤُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And verily, among them is a party who distort the Book with their tongues (as they read), so that you may think it is from the Book, but it is not from the Book, and they say: "This is from Allah," but it is not from Allah; and they speak a lie against Allah while they know it. [Alee Imran, 78]

So, it is clear that, Prophet (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) knew the Jews very well and would never approve something that they said unless it is supported and confirmed to be true by Allaah (Ta'aalaa).

- c) The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) himself warned his companions not to take from the people of the book, nor to reject just based upon hearing from them.

عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ كَانَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ يَقْرَعُونَ التَّوْرَةَ بِالْعِبْرَانِيَّةِ، وَيُفَسِّرُونَهَا بِالْعَرَبِيَّةِ لِأَهْلِ
 الْإِسْلَامِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا تُصَدِّقُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا تَكْذِبُوهُمْ، وَقُولُوا {آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ} الْآيَةَ"
 [صحيح البخاري]

Narrated Abu Huraira: The people of the Scripture (Jews) used to recite the Torah in Hebrew and they used to explain it in Arabic to the Muslims. On that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, *"Do not believe the people of the Scripture or disbelieve them, but say:-- "We believe in Allah and what is revealed to us."* (2.136)

The information that we receive from the ahle-Kitab are three types:

- Information which clearly matches our revelation: for example first man was Adam and the first woman was Eve etc...
 - Information that clearly contradicts our revelation: for example Jesus is the son of God!
 - Information that are neutral, could be made up, could be correct. There is no way to verify except with revelation. The hadith of Ahu Hurayah is talking about this category of information; i.e not to accept, neither to reject.
- d) The Prophet (Sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) couldn't have verified the truthfulness of the stories of the past unless Allaah would reveal to him. How would he know if Allaah really saved Prophet Musa ('alayhis-salaam) and Bani Israel from their enemy on the day of Ashura? How would he know if Prophet Musa really fasted that day? This could be a fabrication or this could be reality? Even if it is reality, how can he (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) legislate an act of worship in the religion without the permission of Allaah? So, take note, may Allaah bless you.

Referring to the fact and obligation that our Prophet (Sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) is only allowed to speak of the matters of unseen/religion after he receives revelation, Allaah says in Sura Alee-Imran:

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ

This is a part of the news of the *Ghaib* (unseen, i.e. the news of the past nations of which you have no knowledge) which We inspire you with (O Muhammad). **You were not with them**, when they cast lots with their pens as to which of them should be charged with the care of Maryam (Mary); nor were you with them when they disputed.

Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was not with Prophet Musa on the day of Ashura. He was not in the time Musa to witness if Musa alayhis-salaam really fasted that day. Hence, when we understand from the narrations that the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) testified to the truthfulness of the information of the Jews, then definitely, he must have received revelation from Allaah and after the confirmation of Allaah, he (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallaam) conveyed what has been protected in the books of sunnah for us. So, we sunnis should have no doubt about this understanding which is as clear as the bright sun!

- e) The Jews celebrated the Ashura as a day of Eid. This was their innovation! They are a nation that attained Allaah’s wrath. And this is because throughout the generations, their disobedience, their innovation only increased didn’t decrease, didn’t stay same! Would our Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) be so naive to approve their tradition without Allaah’s approval!

عَنْ قَيْسِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ عَنْ طَارِقِ بْنِ شِهَابٍ عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ كَانَ أَهْلُ خَيْبَرَ يَصُومُونَ يَوْمَ عَاشُورَاءَ يَتَّخِذُونَهُ عِيدًا وَيُلْبَسُونَ نِسَاءَهُمْ فِيهِ حُلِيِّهِمْ وَشَارَتُهُمْ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَصُومُوهُ أَنْتُمْ " . [صحيح مسلم]

Abu Musa reported that the people of Khaibar (i.e. Jews) observed fast on the day of 'Ashura and they treated it as 'Id and gave their women ornaments and beautiful dresses to wear. The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: You (only) observe fast on this day.

It is clear that not everything that the Jews did or said was approved by Allaah. What was only approved by Allaah is the part of recognizing this day by fasting this day.

Today, the Jews do still celebrate the ashura but they changed everything. Now-a-days this celebration is celebrated for 7-8 days known as passover celebration. The month it is celebrated is called Nisan (which is during Spring time in March-April). Also, to note here that Jews no longer follow the lunar month but their Hebrew calendar is a lunisolar calendar. Today, if anyone with a fair mind study the passover celebration, would realize that the Jews really write things with their own hands then claim that it is from God! What started with a simple fasting with Prophet Musa (alayhis-salaam) ended up with 7-8 days of ritual, all of it has nothing to do with Allaah revelation!

How can a Muslim conclude from these narrations that our Prophet Mohammad (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) would listen to them and without verification would legislate something in Islam without Allaah’s Permission!!!

- f) The Prophet (Sallallaahu wa sallam) was instructed by Allaah to be different from the Jews. Hence with regards to Ashura, he wished to fast a day before to be different than Jews.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، يَقُولُ جِئْتُ صَامَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمَ عَاشُورَاءَ وَأَمَرَنَا بِصِيَامِهِ قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ يَوْمٌ تُعَظَّمُهُ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَإِذَا كَانَ الْعَامُ الْمُقْبِلُ صُمْنَا يَوْمَ التَّاسِعِ " . فَلَمْ يَأْتِ الْعَامُ الْمُقْبِلُ حَتَّى تُوَفِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ . [ابو داود، صححه الالباني]

Ibn 'Abbas said: When the Prophet (Sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) fasted on the day of 'Ashurah and commanded us to fast on it, they (i.e. Companions) said: Messenger of Allah, this is a day which is considered great by Jews and Christians ? The Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: When the next year comes, we shall fast on the 9th of Muharram. But the next year the Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) breathed his last. [reported by Muslim and wordings here are from Abu Dawud and the narration of Abu Dawud is authenticated by Imam Al-Albaani]

So, to conclude that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) introduced the fasting of Ashura by listening to the Jews is a wrong, blasphemous and dangerous statement and an attack to the purity of the revelation. Every command in our religion, big or small, are directly from Allaah.

Rather it is clear that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) was instructed by Allaah to command the Muslims to fast and later on this order was abrogated by Allaah with the revelation of Ramadaan.

I ask Allaah (ta'ala) to bless us with beneficial Knowledge, good sustenance and deeds which will be accepted.

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Austin, Texas
Night of Muharram 6, 1439H
September 28, 2017