

The Story of the ‘Ashura’ Day

Part One

Praised be to Allah Who rescues the believers and eradicates the infidels and humiliates them. I praise Him, the Almighty, as praise is due to Him at all times. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah Who has no partner, a witness whereby we hope to win His satisfaction on the Day of Judgment. I also bear witness that our master and Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), is Allah’s servant and Messenger, the last of the prophets and the Imam [leader] of the God-fearing and His Mercy to the ‘*alamin* (the worlds). O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honors, Mercy) and Peace on Your servant and Messenger Muhammad, on his family, his venerable, pious and blessed Companions, the *tab’in* (the contemporaries of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) after his death), and those who righteously follow them till the Day of Resurrection.

O Muslims!

Fear Allah, servants of Allah, always observe His commands, and remember that you will meet Him [on the Day of Judgment] and stand before Him. ﴿(It will be) the Day when no person shall have power (to do) anything for another, and the Decision, that Day, will be (wholly) with Allâh.﴾ [Al-Infîtâr: 19]

O Muslims!

You need to recall Allah’s immortal days, to meditate thereon in order to draw lessons from them, to remember Allah’s blessings, and to lay out plans for future conduct: these are the practices of the oft-returning (to Allah) in sincere repentance and the path pursued by the select few of Allah’s servants and the habit of successful people, those gifted with understanding hearts.

One of the greatest days that Muslims celebrate is the day of ‘*Ashura*, that blessed day on which Allah reminds us, the faithful, of one of His most exalted, most memorable and most significant blessings, which is His saving of Moses (ﷺ) and whoever was with him and, on the other hand, the drowning of the tyrannical pharaoh, his party and soldiers:

¹ The tenth day of the Hijri month of Muharram.

﴿Who did transgress beyond bounds in the lands (in the disobedience of Allâh)﴾ (11), ﴿And made therein much mischief.﴾ [Al-Fajr : 11-12], when they arrogantly imposed their hegemony on others and turned their backs on what is true, rejecting the Day of Judgment and denying Resurrection. Meanwhile, the Pharaoh's unbridled arrogance, haughtiness, rebelliousness [towards Allah], and abusive perception of his own grandeur led him to say to his people: ﴿"O chiefs! I know not that you have an ilâh (a god) other than me"﴾ [Al-Qasas : 38]. He also said to them" ﴿"I am your lord, most high."﴾ [An-Nâzi'ât : 24]

Allah, therefore, told Moses' story in a Book to be recited so as to make it an everlasting moral. Allah (ﷻ) said: ﴿And We revealed to Mûsâ (Moses), saying: "Depart by night with My slaves, verily you will be pursued (52). Then Fir'aun (Pharaoh) sent callers to (all) the cities (53). (Saying): "Verily these indeed are but a small band. (54)."And verily, they have done what has enraged us (55)."But we are a host all assembled, amply fore-warned" (56). So, We expelled them from gardens and springs, (57). Treasures, and every kind of honourable place (58). Thus [We turned them (Pharaoh's people) out] and We caused the Children of Israel to inherit them (59). So they pursued them at sunrise (60). And when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Mûsâ (Moses) said: "We are sure to be overtaken" (61). [Mûsâ (Moses)] said: "Nay, verily with me is my Lord. He will guide me " (62).Then We revealed to Mûsâ (Moses) (saying): "Strike the sea with your stick." And it parted, and each separate part (of that sea water) became like huge mountain (63). Then We brought near the others [Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) party] to that place (64). And We saved Mûsâ (Moses) and all those with him (65).Then We drowned the others (66). Verily in this is indeed a sign (or

a proof), yet most of them are not believers (67). And verily your Lord, He is truly the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful (68)). [Ash-Shu‘arâ: 52-68]

Imam Al-Hafiz ibn Kathir explains the meaning of these great *Ayats* (verses) as follows: “Moses (ﷺ) stayed in Egypt for a prolonged period of time during which he managed to establish evidence about Allah’s existence, foiling the arguments of the Pharaoh and his crowd who, nonetheless, pursued their haughtiness and resentment. It was all too evident then that they were bound to suffer Allah’s harsh retribution. Hence, Allah ordered Moses (ﷺ) to take his people and leave Egypt by night and to proceed with them wherever he was ordered to go. Moses (ﷺ) did as his Lord (ﷻ) commanded him and took his people out of Egypt after they had borrowed much jewelry from the people of the Pharaoh.”

According to more than one scholar of the Holy Qur’ân exegesis, the departure of Moses and his people from Egypt took place when the moon was up. At daybreak, the people of the Pharaoh could find no one among themselves to pray for them or answer their prayers. This made the Pharaoh so angry at the Israelites for [he realized that] Allah wanted to destroy him. Therefore, he immediately dispatched throughout the land messengers to recruit and rally soldiers for him. He then addressed them saying: “*The people of Israel are small in number and yet we continue to receive news about them that make us angry. We, therefore, ought to be cautious of them as we intend to wipe them out.*”

And so the Pharaoh and his people ‘had a taste of their own medicine’; the bliss they had enjoyed for years suddenly vanished as they had to evacuate those tall houses, gardens, rivers, funds, assets, properties and that ample prestige in this world. As Allah Almighty said: *﴿We made the people who were considered weak to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof which We have blessed. And the fair Word of your Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel, because of their endurance. And We destroyed completely all the great works and buildings which Fir’aun (Pharaoh) and his people erected.﴾* [Al-A‘râf: 137]

More than one scholar of the Holy Qur’ân exegesis have mentioned that the Pharaoh went out at the head of a mighty procession that was made up of a large number of notables including princes, ministers, dignitaries, chiefs, and soldiers. They reached the people of Israel at sunrise. When the two parties could see each other, Moses’ followers

said: **﴿And when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Mûsâ (Moses) said: "We are sure to be overtaken.﴾** [Ash-Shu‘arâ :61] But Moses (ﷺ) said to them **﴿{Mûsâ (Moses)} said: "Nay, verily with me is my Lord. He will guide me.﴾** [Ash-Shu‘arâ :62]; that is, nothing of what you fear will reach you, for it is Allah Almighty Who ordered me to march here with you and He Almighty always keeps His promises.

Haroon (ﷺ), together with Youshe’ bin Noon, the believer from among the family of the pharaoh, and Moses (ﷺ) were stationed at the rear. More than one scholar of the Holy Qur’ân exegesis stated that they stood there not knowing what to do. Youshe’ bin Noon and the believer from among the family of the pharaoh kept asking Moses (ﷺ) *“Oh, Prophet of Allah, is it to this place that Allah commanded you to march?”* And Moses would answer: *“Yes.”*

The Pharaoh and his soldiers drew so near that only a short distance separated the two camps. Then Allah ordered His prophet Moses to strike the water with his stick, which he did saying *“split by Allah’s permission”,* **﴿And it parted, and each separate part (of that sea water) became like a huge mountain.﴾** [Ash-Shu‘arâ: 63]; that is, like a big mountain.

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with both of them) said: *“The sea became divided into twelve waterways for each of the twelve clans and Allah sent the wind to the bottom of the sea parching it and rendering it as dry as the face of the earth. Allah Almighty said:* **﴿And indeed We revealed to Mûsâ (Moses) (saying): "Travel by night with Ibâdi (My slaves) and strike a dry path for them in the sea, fearing neither to be overtaken [by Fir’aun (Pharaoh)] nor being afraid (of drowning in the sea).﴾** [Tâ-Hâ: 77] *He said in this story:* **﴿Then We brought near the others [Fir’aun’s (Pharaoh) party] to that place.﴾** [Ash-Shu‘arâ : 64]; that is, *We pushed the Pharaoh and his soldiers forward near the sea and We saved Moses, the people of Israel and those who followed them in religion so that none of them perished but the Pharaoh and his soldiers drowned and not a single one of them remained alive.”*

Servants of Allah!

This event conveys an unlimited number of meanings and lessons, the most prominent of which is that Allah (ﷻ) is the savior from the calamities and disasters befalling believers, especially the messengers among them, as Allah (ﷻ) said: ***«Then (in the end) We save Our Messengers and those who believe! Thus it is incumbent upon Us to save the believers.»*** [Yûnus: 103]

This is clear evidence that Faith and Islam are the cause of salvation from every harm and evil in this life, and the way to ensure reward with good and bliss in the Hereafter, provided the individual adheres to their rules and acts according to their provisions which require integrity on the part of the servant in his worship of Allah, in his seeking refuge in Him, in making perfect his reliance on Him, and in constantly knocking on His door begging and supplicating Him: ***«so invoke Him making your worship pure for Him Alone (by worshipping Him Alone.)»*** [Ghâfir: 65]

Furthermore, Allah's way in annihilating tyranny and defeating its soldiers is constant and it neither falters nor changes. Therefore, He (ﷻ) said: ***«So We seized him and his hosts, and We threw them all into the sea (and drowned them). So behold (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) what was the end of the Zâlimûn [wrong-doers, polytheists and those who disbelieved in the Oneness of their Lord (Allâh), or rejected the advice of His Messenger Mûsâ (Moses) عليه السلام] (40) [And We made them leaders inviting to the Fire: and on the Day of Resurrection, they will not be helped. (41) And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection, they will be among Al-Maqbuhûn (those who are prevented from receiving Allâh's Mercy or any good; despised or destroyed).»*** [Al-Qasas: 40-42]

Contrariwise, for those who were considered meek in this world and were therefore subjected to a great deal of maltreatment, aggression, harm and trouble, Allah crowned their ending with glory, sovereignty, leadership, empowerment in this world and eventually inheritance thereof. As Allah (ﷻ) said: ***«(And We wished to do a***

favour to those who were weak (and oppressed) in the land, and to make them rulers and to make them the inheritors, (5) [And to establish them in the land, and We let Fir'aun (Pharaoh) and Hâmân and their hosts receive from them that which they feared.] [Al-Qasas: 5-6]. And such has always been the end result as far as Truth and the truthful are concerned no matter how dust-coloured the face of truth has become and no matter how dimmed it was by falsehood. The glad tidings for achieving such ending regarding the oppressed believers in Gaza and all of Palestine, in Syria and Myanmar are appearing in the near horizon, Allah willing.

Good news for them indeed! *﴿And on that Day, the believers (i.e. Muslims) will rejoice (at the victory given by Allâh to the Romans against the Persians) - With the help of Allâh. He helps whom He wills, and He is the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful.﴾* [Ar-Ru:m: 4-5]

May Allah benefit you and I with His Book's guidance, the Sunnah of His Prophet (ﷺ). Having said this, I ask Allah, The Almighty, The Exalted to forgive my sins, yours and those of all Muslims; He is truly The Oft-Forgiving, The Most Merciful.

Part Two

All praise be to Allah! We praise Him, seek His assistance and guidance, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Him from the evils of our own souls and from our wicked deeds. Whoever Allah guides no one can misguide and whoever He misguides no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah, Who has no partners. I also bear witness that our Prophet, Muhammad, is His servant and Messenger. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his family, and Companions.

Servants of Allah!

The Prophet of guidance (ﷺ) prescribed for the nation the fasting of this great blessed day, in gratitude to Allah, be He exalted, for the blessings of saving Moses (ﷺ) and the believers who were with him, drowning Pharaoh and his troops, highlighting the strong rapport amongst the prophets –peace be upon them– and making clear to them that their religion is one though their divine laws are different.

The two Sheikhs, Al Bukhari and Muslim, narrated in Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari on the authority of Al Bukhari –may Allah bless his soul– that Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with both of them) said: "*The Prophet (ﷺ) came to Madinah and saw the Jews fasting on the day of 'Ashura'. He said, 'What is this?' They said, 'This is a good day, it is the day when Allah saved the Children of Israel from their enemies, so Musa fasted on this day.'* He (ﷺ) said, '*We are more entitled to Musa than you,' so he fasted on that day and commanded the Muslims to do the same.*"

Imam Muslim –may Allah bless his soul– reported: "*This is a great day, on which Allah saved Musa and his people, and drowned Pharaoh and his followers, so Musa fasted on this day.*"

Tabarani –may Allah bless his soul– reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said "***We are more entitled to follow Musa than you.***"

The Prophet (ﷺ) talked about the great merits of fasting this day and said: "***For fasting the day of 'Ashura', I hope that Allah will accept it as expiation for the year that went before***" [Narrated by Muslim in his "*Sahih*" in a report narrated by Abu Qatada al-Ansari (رضي الله عنه)]

It is a *Sunnah*, O servants of Allah, in fasting the Day of *Ashura* to fast the day before it; Muslim narrated in his *Sahih* that Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with both of them) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had said: "***If I live till the next (year), I would definitely observe fasting on the 9th.***"

O servants of Allah! What is sanctioned among the scholars of Hadith is that there is no authentic hadith talking about either the day of 'Ashura', the night before or about being especially generous to one's family on that particular day, and that all narrations in this respect are rejected and cannot be attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ). All that is recommended is to fast this Day and the day before.

Thus, all *bidahs* (heresies) concerning this Day have to be avoided including performing special acts of worship the night before 'Ashura such as invoking a special prayer called "'Ashura' prayer" and believing that whoever reads it shall not die in the current year; reciting a *surah* from Qur'ān in which Prophet Musa is mentioned in the dawn prayer of 'Ashura' Day; gathering on that day with the purpose of remembering and supplicating Allah and commemorating the death of Al-Hussein (ﷺ) on pulpits; believing that aloes wood on the Day of 'Ashura' is a *ruqya* (Quranic recitation over a patient) wherein magic, envy and grouch are repelled; in addition to believing in whatever Allah prohibited, whatever His Prophet (ﷺ) never permitted or whatever any of his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) avoided.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) warned against innovating in Allah's religion and said **"He who makes innovation in our affairs for no valid reason commits sin, and this is rejected."** [Narrated by Al Bukhari and Muslim in *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih Bukhari* in a report by Aisha, the Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her.]

As reported by Muslim –may Allah bless his soul– the Prophet (ﷺ) said: **"any deed in our affairs other than what we have commanded is rejected."**

Fear Allah, O servants of Allah! And make certain you achieve this great merit by fasting this great Day, observing *Sunnah* in it, following the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ) and avoiding to make innovation in whatever was not permitted by Allah on this day and every other day, for there is much good in following our ancestors, and much evil in the innovations of those who came after.

Always remember that Allah (ﷻ) ordered you to send your *salat* and peace on the best of all creatures (Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)) as He said in the Holy Qur'ān: **﴿Allâh sends His Salât (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy) on the Prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and also His angels (ask Allâh to bless and forgive him). O you who believe! Send your Salât on (ask Allâh to bless) him (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islâmic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As-Salâmu 'Alaikum).﴾** [Al-Ahzāb: 56]

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, and Mercy) and Peace on Your servant and Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ)! O Allah! Be pleased with the four Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali, with all of the family of the Prophet, his Companions, the *tab'in*, and those who follow them righteously until the Day of Resurrection! O Allah! Be

pleased with us all, along with them, by Your Pardon, Generosity and Bounty, O You, the Most Generous and Bounteous of all!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! And protect Your Religion! Destroy the enemies of Your religion and all the despots and the corruptors! Unite the hearts of Muslims and unify them, set right their leaders and unite their word on Truth! O You, Lord of *al-'alamîn* (the worlds)!

O Allah! Grant victory to Your religion, Your Book, the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and Your truthful believing servants!

O Allah! Grant us security in our homelands, set right our leaders and those responsible for our affairs, support with truth our Imam and leader, provide him with righteous retinue and guide him to do whatever you love and accept! O You, All-Hearing of our prayers! O Allah! Bestow upon him the blessing of perfect health! O You, Lord of *al-'alamîn* (the worlds)! O Allah! Guide him, his Crown Prince and his brothers to do what is good for Islam and Muslims, for the country and for the people! O You, to Whom people shall return in the Day of Resurrection!

O Allah! Make better our religion which is our bond, and make better our *Dunya* (life in this world) which is the source of our living, and make better our Hereafter to which we are returning, and make life for us an increase of all that is good, and death a relief from every evil.

O Allah! Grant us a good ending in all of our affairs and save us from the humiliation of the worldly life and the punishment of the Hereafter!

O Allah! Make good their recompense and make great their reward for their great efforts in the service of the pilgrims of Your Holy House! O Allah! Grant them and everyone (civilian or military they may be) who lent a helping hand in the service of the pilgrims of Your Holy Mosque, grant them a great reward! O You, Lord of *al-'alamîn* (the worlds)!

O Allah! We seek refuge in You against the vanishing of Your blessing, the change in the good health you granted us, the suddenness of Your vengeance, and all kinds of Your wrath! O Allah! We ask You of the good of what Your Servant and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) has asked You! And we seek refuge in You against what Your Servant and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) has sought refuge in You against! It is You (Alone) Whose help can be sought! And there is no strength or power except in Allah.

O Allah! Protect and grant victory to the Muslims in Syria, Gaza and the rest of Palestine, in Myanmar and everywhere O Lord of *Alamin!* O Allah! Grant them power and victory over their enemy! O Allah! Spare their blood! O Allah! Spare their blood! O Allah! Spare their blood! O Allah! Cure those of them who are injured! And make martyrs their dead!

O Allah! Cure those of us who are sick, have mercy on our dead, help us fulfill our hopes in accordance with what you please, and make our last deeds good ones.

O Allah! Protect us against Your enemies and ours in any way that pleases You, O Lord of *Alamin!* O Allah! Protect us against Your enemies and ours in any way that pleases You, O Lord of *Alamin!* O Allah! Protect us against Your enemies and ours in any way that pleases You, O Lord of *Alamin!* O Allah! We leave them to You (to deal with them) and seek refuge in You from their evils! O Allah! We leave them to You (to deal with them) and seek refuge in You from their evils!

﴿Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.﴾ [Al-A'rāf: 23] *﴿(They say): "Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower."﴾* [Āl-ʿImrān: 8] *﴿... Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!﴾* [Al-Baqarah: 201]

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, and Mercy) and Peace on our Prophet, Muhammad, on his family and Companions. All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

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