**The Month of Allaah Al-Muharram & the Day of Aashuura’**

After the season of Hajj and the month of Dhilhijjah, we welcome in the great month of Allaah Al-Muharram. This month is the first month of the Hijri, lunar year. Allaah legislated fasting during this month and made fasting during this time, the best kind of voluntary fasting after the fasting of the month of Ramadaan.

The prophet was asked about which Salaah is the best after a person performs the obligatory Salaah. He replied, "The Salaah in the last third of the night.” Then, he was asked about the best fasting after the fasting of the month of Ramadaan. He replied, "The month of Allaah that you call Al-Muharram”. [Recorded by Imaams Muslim and others] The prophet referred to this month as the month of Allaah as a way of honoring it.

Fasting was legislated on the tenth day of this month called the day of Aashuura'. Actually, fasting on this day was mandatory upon Muslims even before the fasting of the month of Ramadaan. However, later when fasting the whole month of Ramadaan was made an obligation, fasting on the day of Aashuura' became recommended. Aishah said, “The tribe of Quraish used to fast on the day of Aashuura’ in the Pre-Islamic Period of Jaahilliyyah, and Allaah’s Messenger used to fast on that day too and ordered others to fast as well. Later when the fasting of the month of Ramdaan was prescribed, he gave up fasting on the day of Aashuura’ and it became optional for one to fast on it or to leave its fast.” [Recorded by Imaams Buhkaari and Muslim]

During the life of the Prophet, the Jews and the Christians used to fast on the day of Aashuura', out of respect and reverence, because it was the special day on which Allaah saved Mousa and his followers, from Pharaoh and his soldiers. Mousa fasted on that day as a way of showing his gratitude to Allaah for saving him and his followers. Ibn Abbaas said, “The Prophet came to Al-Madinah from Mecca and saw the Jews fasting on the day of Aashuura’ and asked them about their fasting. They replied, “This is a good day, the day on which Allaah rescued the children of Israel from their enemy. So, Mousa fasted on this day.” Therefore, the prophet fasted on that day and ordered (the Muslims) to fast on that day as well.” [Recorded by Imaams Buhkaari and Muslim] In anther narration the Prophet said: “If I live to next year I will fast the ninth day (as well as the tenth).” [Recorded by Imaams Muslim and Ahmad]
From this hadeeth, we learn the historical importance of fasting on the day of Aashuura'. It is a good day in which Allaah saved Mousa and his followers from their enemy: Pharaoh and his soldiers. To show his appreciation to Allaah , Prophet Mousa fasted on that day. Furthermore, the messenger Muhammad and we are more worthy of honoring Mousa than the Jews because we are the true followers of the message of pure Oneness that Mousa and all the other messengers came with. Also to set us apart from the Jews in their fasting of this day, we follow the Prophet’s orders to fast the day before and the day of Aashuura'.

The victory of Mousa and the believers over Pharaoh and his soldiers is a victory of truth over falsehood. This was a victory for truth and for oppressed people; the followers of Mousa over falsehood, aggressors, the arrogant and oppressors. All this occurs by the will of Allaah and only with His help. It is His decree for His creation and this is the way it has always been and will forever be.

The Noble Qur'aan tells us in many verses about the story of Mousa and his people, and their struggle against Pharaoh and his soldiers. This story will always be an unforgettable lesson for us all until the Day of Judgment. Allaah knows that there will always be the likes of Pharaoh in every nation to arrogantly reject the truth; even the prophet Muhammad described Abuu-Jahl, the leader of the Quraysh, as the Pharaoh of his time. Since there are no more messengers from Allaah to battle against aggressor, we must continually bring about and develop sincere individuals to play the role of Mousa and patiently carry on the message of Allaah to those who reject it like Pharaoh.

In brief, the Qur’aan describes the story of Pharaoh as follows: Pharaoh wreaked havoc and mischief on earth. He became arrogant, oppressive, and divided society into different classes, weakening, humiliating and persecuting one class of people. This class of people came to be known as the Children of Israel.

One day, Pharaoh was told by dream interpreters that a boy would come from the Children of Israel and would destroy his entire kingdom. Upon hearing this, Pharaoh ordered that every newborn male be slaughtered.
When Mousa was born, his mother feared that her son would be killed if Pharaoh and his soldiers knew about him. But, Allaah inspired her to put her son in a wooden box and put the box in the Nile River. The river took the box to the Palace of Pharaoh. "The household of Pharaoh picked him up, that he should be to them an enemy and a cause of grieve," this was Allaah’s decree for the people of Pharaoh, and all of the powers of the kingdom could not overcome His Decree.

As the story goes, Mousa grows up being raised in the palace of Pharaoh. Then, the heavenly message was sent to Mousa, and Allaah orders him to convey it to Pharaoh. Mousa obeyed Allaah’s orders, and called Pharaoh to worship Allaah alone. But Pharaoh rejected Mousa's message and asked: "Who is the Lord of Al-Aa’lameen?" Mousa answered: He is the "Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them." As Musa presented more and more compelling evidence, the debate got so intense to the point that Pharaoh resorted to threats, torture, and murder. Pharoah’s actions are similar to all other oppressors in human history. In response to the persecution, Allaah ordered Mousa to escape the land of Egypt with his people. They traveled toward the East to find refuge. When Pharaoh heard about them, he got very angry and mobilized his troops capture and destroys Mousa and his people.

Eventually, Pharaoh found Mousa and the Children of Israel on the coast. The followers of Mousa got so scared and said to Mousa: “We are sure to be overtaken.” Mousa replied: "No, verily! With me is my Lord, He will guide me.” Allaah revealed to him, "Strike the sea with your stick." When Mousa hit the sea with his stick, the seawater miraculously split into two parts, each part became like a huge mountain. Mousa and his people entered the dry pathway. Pharaoh and his soldiers followed them into the dry sea path. Once the believers made it safely to the coast, Allaah ordered the water to return to the sea drowning Pharaoh and his soldiers.

Here in the last moments of his life, while Pharaoh was drowning, he said: “I believe in the Lord of Mousa and Aaron whom the children of Israel believe in, and I am one of the Muslims.” Allaah scolded Pharaoh, rejecting his belief: "Now you believe while you refused to believe before and you were one of the mufsideen (evil-doers, corrupters). So today, We shall deliver your dead body out (from the sea), that you may be a sign to those who come after you!"

Just as Pharaoh led his people to total destruction in this world, he will lead them to total loss in the Hell Fire in the Hereafter. Allaah says what may be translated as, “He (Pharaoh) will go ahead of his people on the Day of Resurrection, and will lead them into the Fire, and evil indeed is the place to which they are led.” [surat Houd, (verse 98)]

This is how one story of struggle between truth and falsehood ends. It ended with the drowning and total destruction of Pharaoh and his soldiers, and the victory of Mousa and his followers. This is what happened on the Day of Aashuura’, the tenth day of the month of Muharram. To show appreciation to Allaah Mousa and his followers fasted on this day. But we are more worthy of Mousa than the Jews, so we fast on this day to thank Allaah for the victory that he granted, for truth, and its followers, and we fast one day before it, like the prophet taught us to distinguish ourselves from the Jews.
The prophet was asked about the rewards of fasting on this day and he replied: “It wipes off the sins of the last year.” [Recorded by Imaams Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, and Ahmed] The opportunity to fast on this day and reap its rewards is a blessing and mercy of Allaah upon His believing servants. We ask Allaah to help us fast on this day and accept it.