Productivity Lessons from Ashura

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Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta’ala) has given us a calendar with periods of time to increase our worship, reflect and renew our faith. Amidst our fast-paced lives, we need these times as a re-energizer, and a reminder to gain or carry on with momentum to strive for the akhirah. Ramadan has passed, so have the 10 Days of Dhul Hijjah, as well as the 2 Eids; now we have Ashura. It is a good chance to recharge spiritually. **Fasting Ashura, in fact, can become meaningful to us if we reflect on the stories of Prophet Moses and Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon them both).**

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**About Ashura**

Ashura is the 10th day of Muharam, the first month in the Hijri calendar/lunar year. With regard to the reason why the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fasted on the day of ‘Ashura’ and urged the people to do likewise, it is mentioned: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to Madeenah and saw the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Ashura’. He said, *“What is this?”* They said, “*This is a good day, this is the day when Allah saved the Children of Israel from their enemy and Musa fasted on this day.*” He (Peace and blessings be upon him) said, *“We are closer to Musa than you.”* So he (Peace and blessings be upon him) fasted on this day and told the people to fast.

This is a great day because Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta’ala) saved Musa (Peace and blessings be upon him) and his people and drowned Pharaoh and his people.

Al-Shaafa’i and his companions, Ahmad, Ishaaq and others said: It is mustahabb [recommended] to fast both the ninth and the tenth, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) fasted the tenth and intended to fast the ninth the following year but passed away (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Based on this, there are different ways of fasting ‘Ashoora’, the least of which is to fast the tenth only, but it is better to fast the ninth as well. The more one fasts in Muharram, the better. (IslamQA)

1. **Hope and Tawakkul**:  
   In addition to fasting on this day insha’Allah, let us take some time to contemplate. Beginning with Moses (Peace and blessings be upon him): he had strong faith that Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta’ala) will save him, full of certainty, hope, and trust. Well, do we believe like this? Do we really act with such confidence – for example, are we willing to give sadaqah when we face financial difficulties, feeling assured that Allah Ta’ala will replace it and reward us multifold. Often, we are full of doubts. Musa (Peace and blessings be upon him) is truly an example for us in his tawakkul.
2. **Brotherhood**:  
   The Prophets all carried the message of tawheed (Oneness of God) and submission to Him. Musa (Peace and blessings be upon him) is our Prophet, and his story is mentioned in several places in the Qur’an. Our Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) advised us to fast on this day; we should be grateful that Allah (Subhanahu wa at’ala) saved Musa (Peace and blessings be upon him).The act of loyalty and respect the Prohpet (Peace and blessings be upon him) shows to his brother in faith is beautiful. Do we show loyalty and respect to our Muslim brothers and sisters? Remember this sense of brotherhood everyday.
3. **Forgiveness, Reward, & Gratitude**:  
   Fasting in itself is a ritual with secrets. We know that fasting Ashura expiates our minor sins insha‘Allah, but still we do not know how Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta’ala) is going to reward us exactly in the Hereafter. There is two joys for the believer who fasts; one when he breaks his fast, and one in the Hereafter. The ability to fast in itself deserves thanks, as Allah has made it easy for us to worship him. Alhamdulillah.

To wrap things up, remember that stopping to reflect gives us the chance to learn many lessons and apply them to our own lives. While fasting on Ashura is not obligatory, who wouldn’t want to pick up more good deeds? May Allah accept from us all our fasting this day. Ameen.

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**About the author**

*Dina Eletriby is a writer & blogger about spiritual, social, and personal development topics at*[*http://www.dinaeletriby.com/*](http://www.dinaeletriby.com/)*. Dina has experience in education, training and development fields. She prepares & facilitates training in English and soft skills to almost all ages. She has been a mentor for young Muslim girls in Alsahaby Mosque, Cairo, Egypt since 2006. She has also been coordinating community service & charitable activities since 2003, and is the Head of community service activity at Bayan for Human Development (*[*http://www.bayan-online.com*](http://www.bayan-online.com/)*).*

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