

because she is fasting. In addition, he may be tempted to commit a sin. This prohibition rests on the hadith reported by Abu Hurairah (raa) that the Prophet (saas) said:

“Women should not fast one day while her husband is present, without his permission, except in Ramadan.”
(Muslim, Bukhari and others)

Deducing from this hadith, if the husband travels or he is absent, she may fast, or if he is sick or he is unable to consummate there is no need to seek his permission.

8. Continuous Fast of Days and Nights without Break is Prohibited (Wisaal)

Wisaal is to fast days and nights non-stop, without break, and continuing yet with another day and night and so on. This kind of fasting is prohibited. In a hadith reported by the Messenger of Allah (saas), he said:

“Beware of *wisaal*, fasting nights and days uninterrupted.”

He repeated the warning three times. When the companions inquired,

“O Messenger of Allah, don't you practice *Wisaal* sometimes?”

The Prophet (saas) explained,

“That is true but you are not like me. My Lord nourishes me with food and drink. So, observe of the deeds what you are capable of.” (Bukhari/Muslim)

However, the Islamic jurists, while analyzing the whole case of *wisaal*, concluded that the restriction may be lifted if the fast is broken by the time of the last meal, *sahuur*. In a Hadith related by Abi Sa'eed Al-Khudari, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Do not practice *wisaal*, however, whoever wants to continue, may do so up to the time of the last meal, *sahuur*, and then eat” (Bukhari)

Voluntary Fast - *Tatawwu'u*

It has been mentioned earlier that there are two kinds of fasting, obligatory (*Fard*) and voluntary (*Tatawwu'u*). The first has been discussed in some detail. Now we will discuss voluntary fast.

In Islam, deeds do not end with nor rest only on the obligatory deeds. *Fard* are the minimum duties required on an average believer. Thus, the Lawgiver instituted voluntary deeds, to assist a devoted believer who has the will to do more, and also assist the believers in general in repairing and complementing their obligatory deeds with voluntary deeds. The voluntary deed comes with every pillar in Islam, including fasting.

The voluntary fast is for men as well as for women. The method and restriction of this fast is no different from regular Ramadan fast. The difference is in the *niyyah* (intention).

Fasting Six Days of *Shawwal* (*Sittu min Shawwal*)

Shawwal is the tenth month in the lunar calendar, as mentioned earlier. The first of *Shawwal* is *Eidul Fitr*. After the festivity of Eid it is recommended to observe six days of fast. This fast may be observed continuously non-break, or it may be observed one day at a time. If you observe it continuously, you may start on the fourth day and end on the ninth of day *Shawwal*, or you may select days at random, provided you complete six days before the end of *Shawwal*. For instance, you may observe the third, fifth, seventh, ninth, 14th and 15th days. Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari (raa) related the Messenger of Allah, (saas), said:

“Whoever observes the Ramadan fast and follows it with six days of fast in Shawwal, it is as if he has fasted *Dahr* (the whole year).” (Bukhari)

It has been mentioned earlier that *Dahr* means the whole year. Possibly it may also mean forever, or for life.

Analyzing this hadith, our jurists (*‘Ulama*) explained how according to this hadith, a Muslim who fasts during Ramadan every year and follows it with six days fast of Shawwal, will be credited for fasting a whole lifetime. The Jurists correctly said: a good deed (*hasanah*) is rewarded a minimum of ten times its equivalent. It follows, then, that one Ramadan is equivalent to ten months of fasting, and the clincher, six days, is equal to two months, ($6 \times 10 = 60$). That undoubtedly completes the year's twelve months. Thus, we see the wisdom and the reason why the Prophet (*saas*) mentioned six days after Ramadan in *Shawwal*, not five or seven.

Fasting on the Day of 'Arafah

The ninth day of *Zulhijjah* is the day of 'Arafah. It is the day when pilgrims stand on the plain of 'Arafah to pray. On this day, Muslims all over the world who do not witness the annual *Hajj*, should spend the day in fasting in preparation for the three days festivity following *‘Eidul Adha*.

Abu Hafasah (*raa*) said the Prophet (*saas*) said:

“Fasting on the day of 'Arafah absolves the sins for two years: the previous year and the coming years, and fasting on 'Ashura, (the tenth day) of Muharram atones for the sins of previous years.” (Reported by Jama'ah except Bukhari and Tirmidhi)

In another hadith, the Prophet's wife Hafasah (*raa*) said:

“Four things the Messenger of Allah never neglected: Observing fast on the day of 'Ashura, (on the tenth of Muharram), three days every month, and offering Fajr sunnah prayers early in the morning.” (Muslim)

These ahadiths are proof that fasting on the tenth of *Zulhijjah*, the day before *Eidul Adha* was a lifelong practice of the Prophet (saas) as his wife reported.

There are some reports that fasting is prohibited on the day of *'Arafah*. However, it must be understood that this refers to a person performing Hajj. If a person is on Hajj, there is no fast for him or her on the day of *'Arafah*. That is undoubtedly a blessing for him because of the hardships of the pilgrimage. In a hadith reported by Umm al-Fadl (raa) she said:

“The companions doubted whether the Prophet was fasting on 'Arafah or not. She decided to prove to them that he was not, so she said, ‘I sent to him milk, which he drank while he was delivering the *Khutbah* on 'Arafah.’” (Bukhari)

Prohibiting the pilgrim from fasting on these days is a great mercy for him, for fasting will exert undue hardship on the person performing the Hajj, while he is concerned with his pilgrimage. Above all, the pilgrim would not be fasting anyway because he is traveling.

Fasting in Muharram (*theFirst Month of Islamic Year*)

Fasting in the month of Muharram is highly desired, especially on the tenth day, *'Ashura*. The Messenger of Allah (saas) has been reported as saying when asked which prayer is better after obligatory prayer:

“Prayer in the middle of the night.”

He was asked again which fast is better after Ramadan. He said:

“In the month that is called *Al-Muharram*.” (Ahmed, Muslim, and Abu Dawud)

This hadith clearly indicates the importance of voluntary fasting in Muharram, among all the months. The Prophet (saas) however, emphasizes the fast of the tenth day, *'Ashura*. The word “*'Ashura*” is derived from *'Ashara*, which means ten. The observation of this day goes back to Prophet Musa bin 'Emran (saas). In a hadith related by Ibn Abbas (raa) when the Messenger of Allah (saas) came to Medina, he found the Jews fasting the day of *'Ashura*. He inquired why do they did so. They replied that it was a good day, the day which Allah delivered Prophet Musa (saas) and the children of Israel from their enemy. As gratitude Musa (saas) fasted that day.

The Prophet (saas) responded:

“I have more right to Musa than you.” He fasted the day and commanded the believers to fast. (Agreed upon.)

This hadith indicates that the Prophet (saas) was in complete agreement with Prophet Musa (saas) as well as the other prophets. The point here is that the Messenger of Allah would always do an act of worship if it was prophecy reported from any of the prophets. Earlier, we see how he told us that the best voluntary fast is the fast of Dawud.

This is why the following hadith is of great interest to us. Ibn Abbas related when Prophet Muhammad (saas) observed the day of *'Ashura* and commanded his followers to observe it, they asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah (saas) this is the day the Jews, and Christians respect and honor...”

The Prophet (saas) promised them that:

“Next year Allah willing, we shall fast the ninth, *tasuu'aa*, along with the tenth.”

By the next Muharram, the Prophet (saas) had already passed away. Because the believers, desire to emulate Prophet Musa in fasting on '*Ashura* do so with the desire not to participate in the festivity of the People of the Book, who have reduced the day to a mere formality. The Prophet (saas) decided to remove this ambiguity with the fast of the ninth day.

Our 'Ulama, analyzing all reports from the Prophet (saas) regarding Muharram, stated the fast of Muharram can be viewed in three ways:

1. Fasting three days of Muharram, the ninth, tenth and eleventh.
2. Fasting on the ninth and tenth days because of two previous Hadiths.
3. Fasting on the tenth day alone.

It is to celebrate on the day of '*Ashura*. In a hadith by Jabir Bin Abdullah, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Whoever spends generously on himself and his family on the day of '*Ashura*, Allah will provide for him generously the rest of his year.” (Al-Bayhaqi)

Fasting of *Sha'aban*

It is recommended to fast most of the eighth month *Sha'aban*. However, there is no proof or merit to the fasting half of *Sha'aban* (*nisf Sha'aban*), as is commonly known, because there is no verifiable evidence (*daleel*) to support that fasting. 'Aisha (raa) related:

“I have never seen the Prophet (saas) complete the fasting of a month at all, except the month of Ramadan. I have never seen him fast most of a month, except Sha'aban.” (Bukhari/Muslim)

The hadith indicates clearly the Prophet's Sunnah in preparation for the month of Ramadan is fasting most of the eighth month, Sha'aban, in anticipation for Ramadan. Thus, the believer may fast during Sha'aban as much as he or she pleases, the more the better.

Again, there is no evidence, or at least the hadith is incorrect, that Sha'aban is the month in which the annual recording of deeds is done. The hadith in question is reported by Osamah Bin Zaid (raa) who asked the Prophet (saas):

“O Messenger of Allah, why don't you observe fast in other months as you do in Sha'aban?”

The Messenger responded:

“This is a month most people neglect, between Rajab and Ramadan, the month in which (the annual deeds of humanity) are raised to the Lord of the worlds. So, I want my deeds to be raised while I am observing fast.”
(Abu Dawud, Nasa'e, and Ibn Khuzaimah)

This Hadith is not authentic, for it contradicts a verse in Al-Qur'an, according to many scholars. They stated Allah (SWT) said:

“We sent it down during a blessed night, for We (ever) wish to warn against evil. In that night is made distinct every affair of wisdom.”

(Al-Qur'an, 44-3)

This is the Night of Power (*Lailatul Qadr*), the night in which the deeds of humanity are returned and the decrees for the following year are announced to the angels, not as the above

hadith alleged. The Qur'anic commentators said: On this night, Allah will decree and explain what will take place in the affairs of humanity and the world, their earnings, longevity, who will live or die, what type of deeds, good or bad, virtues or non-virtues and what type of work. Allah (SWT) will reveal from the protective slate, *Lawhul-Mahfuz* the record of every living being to the Angels as the annual records are being raised and stored away.

Fasting on Monday and Thursday

It has been reported that the Messenger of Allah (saas) fasted the second and fifth days of the week, namely, Monday and Thursday. These two days, as the Hadith explained, are the days in which, twice weekly, the deeds are raised into the heavens and are the days of forgiveness. Abu Hurairah related the Messenger of Allah (saas) was asked why he rarely missed these two days of fasting. He replied:

“Indeed, the deeds of humanity are exhibited every Monday and Thursday. Then Allah will further pardon every Muslim for every behavior, except the two believers who part from each other's company; Allah will say to the angels delay the two of them. (Ahmed)

He (saas) was asked again. He said,

“I observe this day in fasting because it was a day in which I was born, and on it the revelation of (Al-Qur'an) was inaugurated.” (Muslim)

This hadith added another reason for fasting on Monday. It was the Messenger's birthday. This is an indication of the fallacy of the annual celebration of the Prophet's birthday, which some Muslims observe every year on the 12th of Rabee`ual Awwal. This is nothing but innovation, because there is no record of a hadith regarding it. The only thing reported in respect to the

birth of Muhammad (saas) is this hadith, and that is celebrated with fasting on Mondays.

One may ask also why is his birth celebrated? Undoubtedly, the birth of the Seal of the Prophets represents a mercy to humanity, as it marked the dawning of a new era in human history.

The inauguration of the Book of Allah, Al-Qur'an, which confirmed and updated previous scriptures occurred on a Monday, when Allah (SWT) revealed the first *ayah* of Al-Qur'an in the cave of *Hira*. That was an important event because that was the time humanity began receiving the correct updated manual of life.

For a believer who seeks nearness to Allah (SWT) fasting, as mentioned earlier, is an important and proper way to offer worship (Ebadah). Abu Az-Zarr Al-Ghifari (raa) reported that:

“The Messenger of Allah (saas) commanded us to fast in every calendar month three days: the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth. The Prophet added fasting these days is like fasting a whole year.” (Nasa'e)

There is room in the way these days are observed, because there are other Ahadiths relating to the Sunnah of three days fasting that can be observed in a different way. The report indicated that the Prophet (saas) fasted every month on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. In different months, he would fast Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Elsewhere, he was observed fasting on the first Thursday of the month, and the following Monday, and the following Monday. Of these methods, any one you choose is proper and correct.