4033 - Is It Permissible to Celebrate Ashura?

the question

What is the ruling on what people do on the day of Ashura, such as wearing kohl, taking a bath (ghusl), using henna, shaking hands with one another, cooking grains (huboob), showing their happiness and so on…? Has any saheeh hadeeth to that effect been narrated from the Prophet peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or not? If there is no saheeh hadeeth to that effect, does doing these things constitute bid'ah, or not? What about the things that the other people do, such as mourning, grieving, going without anything to drink, eulogizing, wailing, rending their garments, etc.? Is there any basis for that or not?

Summary of answer

1. If a person misses the fast of 'Ashoora', it cannot be made up because there is no proof for that, and because the reward is connected to fasting on the tenth day of Muharram, and that time has passed.
2. If a person is excused for not fasting – such as women who are menstruating or bleeding following childbirth, or those who are sick or are travelling – and he usually fasts on that day or he had the intention of fasting that day, then he will be rewarded for his intention.

Detailed answer

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked this question and he replied as follows:

'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. Nothing to that effect has been reported in any saheeh hadeeth from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or from his Companions. None of the imams of the Muslims encouraged or recommended such things, neither the four imams, nor any others. No reliable scholars have narrated anything like this, neither from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), nor from the Sahabah, nor from the Tabi'een; neither in any saheeh report or in a da'eef (weak) report; neither in the books

of Saheeh, nor in al-Sunan, nor in the Musnads. No hadeeth of this nature was known during the best centuries, but some of the later narrators reported ahadeeth like the one which says "Whoever puts kohl in his eyes on the day of Ashura will not suffer from eye disease in that year, and whoever takes a bath (does ghusl) on the day of Ashura will not get sick in that year, etc." They also narrated reports concerning the supposed virtues of praying on the day of Ashura, and other reports saying that on the day of Ashura Adam repented, the Ark settled on Mount Joodi, Yoosuf returned to Ya'qoob, Ibraheem was saved from the fire, the ram was provided for sacrifice instead of Ismaa'eel, and so on. They also reported a fabricated hadeeth that is falsely attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), which says, "Whoever is generous to his family on the day of Ashura, Allah will be generous to him for the rest of the year."

(Then Ibn Taymiyah discussed the two misguided groups who were in Koofah, Iraq, both of whom took Ashura as a festival because of their bid'ah). The Rafidi group made an outward show of allegiance to the Ahl al-Bayt although inwardly they were either heretics and disbelievers or ignorant and bound by whims and desires. The Nasibi group hated 'Ali and his companions, because of the troubles and killings that had occurred. It is reported in Saheeh Muslim that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "In (the tribe of) Thaqeef there will be a liar and an oppressor." The liar was al-Mukhtar ibn Abi 'Ubayd al-Thaqafi, who made an outward show of allegiance to and support of the Ahl al-Bayt, and killed 'Ubayd-Allah ibn Ziyad, the governor of Iraq, who had equipped the party that killed al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with them both); then he (al-Mukhaar) made it clear that he was a liar, by claiming to be a prophet and that Jibreel (peace be upon him) brought revelation to him. People told Ibn 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbas about this, and said to one of them, "al-Mukhtar ibn Abi 'Ubayd is claiming to receive revelation [annahu yanzilu 'alayhi]." He said, "He is telling the truth, for Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): 'Shall I inform you (O people) upon whom the shayateen (devils) descend [tanazzalu]? They descend upon every lying, sinful person.' [al-Shu'ara' 26:221]." [Translator's note: the words translated as "receive revelation" and "descend" both come from the same root in Arabic]. They said to the other: "Al-Mukhtar is claiming that he receives inspiration." He said, "he is telling the truth. '… And certainly, the Shayateen (devils) do

inspire their friends (from mankind) to dispute with you…' [al-An'aam 6:121 – interpretation of the meaning]." As for the oppressor , this was al-Hajjaj ibn Yoosuf al-Thaqafi, who was opposed to 'Ali and his companions. Al-Hajjaj was a Nasibi and al-Mukhtar was a Rafidi, and this Rafidi was a greater liar and more guilty of fabrication and heresy, because he claimed to be a prophet…

There was much trouble and fighting between these two groups in Kufa. When al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with them both) was killed on the day of Ashura, he was killed by the sinful, wrongdoing group. Allah honoured al-Husayn with martyrdom, as He honoured other members of his family, and raised his status, as He honoured Hamzah, Ja'far, his father 'Ali and others. Al-Husayn and his brother al-Hasan are the leaders of the youth of Paradise. High status can only be attained through suffering, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him said, when he was asked which people suffer the most. He said, "The Prophets, then righteous people, then the next best and the next best. A man will suffer according to his level of faith. If his faith is solid, he will suffer more, but if his faith is shaky, he will suffer less. The believer will keep on suffering until he walks on the earth with no sin." (reported by al-Tirmidhi and others). Al-Hasan and al-Husayn achieved what they achieved and reached the high status they reached by the help and decree of Allah. They did not suffer as much as their forefathers had, for they were born and raised during the glory days of Islam, and the Muslims respected and honoured them. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) died when they were still young, and Allah blessed them by testing them in such a manner that they would be able to catch up with the rest of their family members, as those who were of a higher status than them were also tested. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib was better than them, and he was killed as a shaheed (martyr). The killing of al-Husayn was one of the things that caused fitnah (tribulation) among the people, as was the killing of 'Uthman, which was one of the greatest causes of fitnah, because of which the ummah is still split today. Thus the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "There are three things, whoever is saved from them is truly saved: my death, the killing of a patient khaleefah, and the Dajjal ('antichrist')."

Then Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned a little about the biography of al-Hasan and his just character, then he said:

“Then he died, and Allah was pleased with him and honoured him. Some groups wrote to al-Husayn and promised to support and help him if he went ahead and declared himself khaleefah, but they were not sincere. When al-Husayn sent his cousin [son of his paternal uncle] to them, they broke their word and gave help to the one they had promised to defend him against, and fought with him against [al-Husayn’s cousin]. Those who were wise and who loved al-Husayn, such as Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn ‘Umar and others, advised him not to go to them, and not to accept any promises from them. They thought that his going to them served no useful interest and that the consequences would not be good. Things turned out just as they said, and this is how Allah decreed it would happen. When al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) went out and saw that things were not as he had expected, he asked them to let him go back, or to let him join the army that was defending the borders of Islam, or join his cousin Yazeed, but they would not let him do any of these things unless he gave himself up to them as a prisoner. So he fought with them, and they killed him and some of those who were with him, and he was wrongfully slain so he died as a shaheed whose martyrdom brought him honour from Allah, and so he was reunited with the good and pure members of his family. His murder brought shame on those who had wrongfully killed him, and caused much mischief among the people. An ignorant, wrongful group – who were either heretics and hypocrites, or misguided and misled – made a show of allegiance to him and the members of his household, so they took the day of ‘Ashura as a day of mourning and wailing, in which they openly displayed the rituals of jahiliyyah such as slapping their cheeks and rending their garments, grieving in the manner of the jahiliyyah. But what Allah has commanded us to do when disaster strikes – when the disaster is fresh – is to bear it with patience and fortitude, and to seek reward, and to remember that all things come from Allah and we must return to Him, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): “… but give glad tidings to al-sabiroon (the patient ones), who, when afflicted with calamity, say: ‘Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.’ They are those on whom are al-salawat (the blessings) (i.e., who are blessed and will be forgiven) from their Lord, and (they are those who) receive His Mercy, and it is they who are the guided ones.” [al-Baqarah 2:155-157] .

It is reported in al-Saheeh that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “he is not one of us who strikes his cheeks, rends his garments and prays with the prayer of

Jahiliyyah." And he said: "I have nothing to do with those who strike [their cheeks], shave [their heads] and rend [their garments]." And he said: "If the woman who wails does not repent before she dies, she will be raised up on the Day of Resurrection wearing trousers made of tar and a shirt of scabs." In al-Musnad, it is reported from Faatimah bint al-Husayn, from her father al-Husayn, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "There is no man who suffers a calamity, and when he remembers it, even if it is old, he says 'Innaa Lillaahi wa innaa ilayhi raaji'oon (Truly, to Allaah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return),' but Allaah will give a reward equal to the reward He gave him on the day he suffered the calamity." This is how Allaah honours the Believers. If the disaster suffered by al-Husayn, and other disasters, are mentioned after all this time, we should say "Innaa Lillaahi wa innaa ilayhi raaji'oon (Truly, to Allaah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return)," as Allaah and His Messenger commanded, so as to be given the reward like that earned on the day of the disaster itself. If Allaah commanded us to be patient and steadfast and to seek reward at the time of the disaster, then how about after the passing of time? The Shaytaan made this attractive to those who are misled, so they took the day of 'Aashooraa' as an occasion of mourning, when they grieve and wail, recite poems of grief and tell stories filled with lies. Whatever truth there may be in these stories serves no purpose other than the renewal of their grief and sectarian feeling, and the stirring up of hatred and hostility among the Muslims, which they do by cursing those who came before them, and telling many lies, and causing much trouble in the world. The various sects of Islam have never known any group tell more lies or cause more trouble or help the kuffaar against the Muslims more than this misguided and evil group. They are even worse than the Khawaarij who went beyond the pale of Islam. They are the ones of whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "They will kill the people of Islam and will leave alone the people who worship idols." This group cooperated with the Jews, Christians and mushrikeen against the members of the Prophet's household and his believing ummah, and also helped the mushrik Turks and Tatars to do what they did in Baghdaad and elsewhere to the descendents of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), i.e., the 'Abbaasid rulers and others, and the believers; the Turks and Tatars killed them, enslaved their women and destroyed their homes. The evil and harm that they do to the Muslims cannot be enumerated by any man, no matter how eloquent he is. Some others – either Naasibis who oppose and have enmity towards

al-Husayn and his family or ignorant people who try to fight evil with evil, corruption with corruption, lies with lies and bid'ah with bid'ah – opposed them by fabricating reports in favour of making the day of 'Aashooraa' a day of celebration, by wearing kohl and henna, spending money on one's children, cooking special dishes and other things that are done on Eids and special occasions. These people took the day of 'Aashooraa' as a festival like Eid, whereas the others took it as a day of mourning. Both are wrong, and both go against the Sunnah, even though the other group (the Rafidis) are worse in intention and more ignorant and more plainly wrong… But Allaah commands us to be just and to treat others well. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Those of you who live after my death will see many disputes. I urge you to adhere to my Sunnah and the sunnah of my rightly-guided successors (al-khulafa' al-raashidoon) who come after me. Hold onto it as if biting it with your eyeteeth. Beware of newly-innovated matters, for every innovation is a going astray." Neither the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) nor his rightly-guided successors (the khulafa' al-raashidoon) did any of these things on the day of 'Aashooraa', they neither made it a day of mourning nor a day of celebration.

But "when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah, he saw the Jews fasting on the day of 'Aashooraa'. He said, 'What is this?' They said, 'This is the day when Allaah saved Moosa from drowning, so we fast on this day.' He said, 'We have more right to Moosa than you,' so he fasted on that day and commanded [the Muslims] to fast on that day."

Quraysh also used to venerate this day during the Jaahiliyyah. The day on which people were ordered to fast was just one day. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah it was Rabee' al-Awwal, and the following year he fasted 'Aashooraa' and commanded the people to fast. Then in that year fasting in Ramadaan was made obligatory and fasting on 'Aashooraa' was abrogated. The scholars disputed as to whether fasting on that day ('Aashooraa') was waajib (obligatory) or mustahabb (encouraged). Of the two best known opinions, the more correct view is that it was waajib, then after that whoever fasted it did it because it was mustahabb. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not tell ordinary Muslims to fast on 'Aashooraa', but he used to say, "This is the day of 'Aashooraa'; I am fasting on this day and whoever wishes to fast on this day may fast." And he said: "Fasting on

‘Aashooraa’ expiates for the sins of one year and fasting on the day of ‘Arafaah expiates for the sins of two years.” When, towards the end of his life, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) heard that the Jews took the day of ‘Aashooraa’ as a festival, he said, “If I live until next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth” – to be different from the Jews, and not to resemble them in taking the day as a festival.

There were some of the Sahaabah and scholars who did not fast on this day and did not regard it as mustahabb, but thought it makrooh to single out this day for fasting. This was reported from a group of the Koofiyeen (scholars of Kufa). Some other scholars said that it was mustahabb to fast on this day. The correct view is that it is mustahabb for the one who fasts on ‘Aashooraa’ to fast on the ninth day [of Muharram] too, because this was the ultimate command of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as he said: “If I live until next year, I will certainly fast on the ninth as well as the tenth.” This was reported with a variety of isnaads. This is what is prescribed in the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

As for the other things, such as cooking special dishes with or without grains, or wearing new clothes, or spending money on one’s family, or buying the year’s supplies on that day, or doing special acts of worship such as special prayers or deliberately slaughtering an animal on that day, or saving some of the meat of the sacrifice to cook with grains, or wearing kohl and henna, or taking a bath (ghusl), or shaking hands with one another, or visiting one another, or visiting the mosques and mashhads (shrines) and so on… all of this is reprehensible bid’ah and is wrong. None of it has anything to do with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or the way of the Khulafa’ al-Raashidoon. It was not approved of by any of the imaams of the Muslims, not Maalik, not al-Thawri, not al-Layth ibn Sa’d, not Abu Haneefah, not al-Oozaa’i, not al-Shaafa'i, not Ahmad ibn Hanbal, not Ishaaq ibn Raahwayh, not any of the imaams and scholars of the Muslims.

The religion of Islam is based on two principles: that we should worship nothing besides Allaah Alone, and that we should worship Him in the manner that He has prescribed, not by means of bid’ah or reprehensible innovations. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “… So

whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord." [al-Kahf 18:110].

Righteous deeds are those which are loved by Allaah and His Messenger, those which are prescribed in Islam and in the Sunnah. Thus 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) used to say in his du'aa': "O Allaah, make all of my deeds righteous and make them purely for Your sake, and do not let there be any share for anyone or anything else in them."

(The above is summarized from the words of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah – may Allaah have mercy on him. Al-Fataawa al-Kubra, part 5). And Allaah is the Guide to the Straight Path.

For more information, please see the answers to questions No. (21775) and (303756).

And Allah knows best.