41901 - Can You Fast ‘Arafah If You Have Days to Make Up?

the question

I did not fast some days in Ramadan because of my period, and I have not made up the days I owe yet. Can I fast the first ten days of Dhu’l-Hijjah?

Summary of answer

Whoever fasts on the day of `Arafah or `Ashura, and still owes some days from Ramadan, his fast is valid. But if he has the intention of fasting this day to make up for a missed Ramadan fast, he will have two rewards – one for the day of `Arafah or `Ashura and another for making up the missed fast.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This issue is known to the scholars as observing nafll fasts before making up missed Ramadan fasts . There is a difference of scholarly opinion concerning this matter. Some scholars say that it is haram to observe nafll fasts before making up days that one owes, because it is more important to start with an obligatory action than a nafll one. Some of the scholars say that it is permissible.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about combining making up a missed obligation and doing something that is mustahabb: is it permissible for a person to do the mustahabb action and make up the obligatory action later on, or should he do the obligatory action first, such as fasting the day `Ashura which coincides with making up a missed Ramadan fast?

He replied:

“With regard to obligatory and voluntary fasts, what is prescribed in the Shari`ah and what makes

sense is to start with the obligatory fasts and then do the nafll ones, because the obligatory fast is a debt which must be paid, whereas the nafll fast is voluntary and is to be done if one can manage it, otherwise there is no sin on one. Based on this, we say to the one who owes a missed Ramadan fast: make up what you owe before you observe a voluntary fast. If he observes a voluntary fast before making up what he owes then the correct view is that his voluntary fast is valid so long as there is still enough time to make up the missed fasts, because a person may make up missed Ramadan fasts so long as there is still enough time for him to do so before the next Ramadan comes. So long as there is still plenty of time, it is permissible for him to observe voluntary fasts. This is similar to the case of obligatory prayers, such as if a person offers a nafll prayer before an obligatory prayer when there is still plenty of time, this is permissible. Whoever fasts on the day of `Arafah or `Ashura , and still owes some days from Ramadan, his fast is valid. But if he has the intention of fasting this day to make up for a missed Ramadan fast, he will have two rewards – one for the day of `Arafah or `Ashura and another for making up the missed fast. This applies to all voluntary fasts that are not connected to Ramadan. With regard to fasting the six days of Shawwal, these are connected to Ramadan and can only be done after making up missed Ramadan fasts. If a person fasts these days before making up his missed Ramadan fasts, he will not get the reward for them, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever fasts Ramadan then follows it with six days of Shawwal , it will be as if he fasted for a lifetime." It is known that the one who still has some days to make up is not regarded as having fasted Ramadan until he makes up those days. Some people think that if they fear Shawwal is going to end soon and they fast the six days even though they still owe some days from Ramadan, that this is acceptable. This is a mistake, because these six days cannot be fasted until a person has made up the days that he owes from Ramadan." (Majmu' Fatawa Ibn 'Uthaymin, 20/438)

Based on this, it is permissible for you to fast the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah as a nafll fast, but it is better for you to fast them with the intention of making up what you owe of Ramadan, and you will have two rewards in sha Allah.

And Allah knows best.