

## Why AAIIIL Does Not Practise Ashura?

Ashura is a word derived from the Semitic culture, which is taken to mean the tenth.

The Hebrew descendants, the Christian descendants and the Muslim descendants all have common lineage to Prophet Abraham and his two sons, Ishmael<sup>1</sup> and Isaac; accordingly they are commonly referred to as the Semitic groups.

In historical chronology, the Hebrew or Jewish aspect of "Ashura" comes first<sup>2</sup> and the Muslim aspect follows almost 1,800 years later. In the Hebrew or Jewish religious practise, the "Ashura" aspect is called Yom Kippur or the date when Prophet Moses<sup>3</sup> took the Israelites out of Egypt sometimes around 1200 BC. Amongst Jews this is called the Day of Atonement.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) first knew of the Day of Atonement when he came to Medina in 622AD. The Hadith reports "When Prophet Muhammad came to Medina, he saw that the Jews fasted upon the day of Ashura. He asked, 'What is this?' They answered, 'It is an "excellent day," the day on which God saved Israel from their enemy, whereupon Moses fasted.' Prophet Muhammad said, 'I have a nearer claim to Moses than you have'; then he fasted and commended others to fast also. (*Hadith Sahih Bukhari*).

Ashura in the Muslim system<sup>4</sup> historically refers to mourning the martyrdom of Hussein in 680 AD. It must be emphasised that Ashura is not mentioned whatsoever in the Holy Qur'an<sup>5</sup>, because the martyrdom of Hussein happened after the completion of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and after the death of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Amongst certain Shiites, the event of Ashura is marked with mourning rituals and passion-plays re-enacting the martyrdom. Amongst all the Shia Muslims<sup>6</sup>, this event is not seen as a festival of celebration but a day of deep sadness.

Ashura is observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram in the Islamic calendaring system. This event of rituals and re-enacting as street-plays of the martyrdom is governed by philosophies only for divisions within the Shia Muslims (Shiites).

Both the founder of AAIIIL as the 14<sup>th</sup> Hijri Mujaddid Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad; and the greatest writer on Islamic matters, Maulana Muhammad Ali, were strong followers and

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<sup>1</sup> Ishmael was the first born child of Prophet Abraham from his second wife Hagar. Details in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> The equivalent of "Ashura" amongst Jews is called Yom Kippur. Details in Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> Amongst the Jews, Prophet Moses is given the highest recognition as a prophet. Details in Appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ashura in the Muslim system refers to the martyrdom of Hussein in the battle of Karbala in 680AD. Details in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> The Holy Qur'an was completed in year 632AD. Details in Appendix 1.

<sup>6</sup> Shia Muslims are also called Shiites. Details in Appendix 1.

practisers of Imam Abu Hanifa. The AAIL is a movement within the Sunni practising system and is not in any way a part of the Shia system.

Generally, in countries which have close to 75% or greater as Shia practisers in their national population, Ashura is observed with a public holiday. This is evident in some of the Asian and Middle East countries.

Some divisions of Shia promote self-haemic flagellation rituals, using barbed chains, as a way of preserving the revolution of the martyrdom of Hussein. In most situations amongst Shiites, there is gathering at the local mosque with free distribution of food as acts of charity. This has been seen so in many Asian and Middle East countries with high Shia populations.

The AAIL does not require its members to do so in self-haemic flagellation rituals, using barbed chains, swords and knives.

As already mentioned, 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram is also the anniversary of the safe crossing of the Red Sea by Prophet Moses and the massive exodus of over 3 million Israelites out of bondage of slavery and tyranny, from Egypt to the Sinai Peninsula; and then beyond the Sinai Peninsula.

Consequently as a thanksgiving, Prophet Moses ordered his Israelite communities to fast on the anniversary of that day each year. As a follow up of tradition, over thousands of years, the Jews to this day observe this event of the safe crossing of the Red Sea and exodus of their ancestors with a day of fasting and prayers, all over the world.

Muslims of the Sunni sect follow the Hadith reporting and generally also fast on the 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram, because Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also fasted when he came to Medina and came to understand the significance of why the Jews in Medina were fasting. This fasting however, is purely optional and not compulsory as in the case of fasting in the month of Ramadan, which is one of the five pillars of Islam.

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## Appendix 1

Footnote No	Expanded Details of Explanation of Footnotes
1	Ishmael was the first born child of Prophet Abraham from his second wife Hagar. When Ishmael was still an infant, God ordered Prophet Abraham to take his wife Hagar and child Ishmael to a far away land in Arabia and abandon them there at a location called Mecca (Makkah in those days). Twelve years later God again ordered Prophet Abraham to return to Mecca and bring back his wife Hagar and son Ishmael. After bringing back his wife Hagar and now youthful son Ishmael, God then ordered Prophet Abraham to offer his only son Ishmael as a human sacrifice. In those days, human sacrifice of the first born son was an accepted norm. After both father and son were ready to perform the sacrifice, God ordered Prophet Abraham not to sacrifice his son but instead substitute with a fattened lamb in the meadow close by. Another year later, Prophet Abraham was informed of his having his second son Isaac from his first wife Sara. Several decades later, Isaac had a son Jacob and in turn Jacob had twelve sons, who became the

	<p>pioneers as Twelve Tribes of Israel. From the Twelve Tribes of Israel descended all the Hebrew prophets and the last Hebrew prophet was Jesus Christ. From the descendants of Ishmael, there was only one prophet, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who became the seal and Final Prophet to humanity.</p>
2	<p>Ashura is also observed amongst Jews as Jewish Day of Atonement called Yom Kippur, is celebrated on the tenth of Tishri (Lev. xvi. 29, xxiii. 27). The name is an Aramaic form of the Hebrew word "'Asor" (the tenth). Yom Kippur amongst Jews requires them to fast for 24 hours uninterrupted. This is the most significant event in Judaism, is celebrated nationally by the Government and the peoples of Israel and there is a paid public holiday in Israel.</p>
3	<p>Prophet Moses (pbuh b.1391BC-d.1271BC). Moses is defined in the Qur'an as both prophet (<i>Nabi</i>) and messenger (<i>Rasul</i>), the latter term indicating that he was one of those prophets who brought a scripture and law to his people: The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Jews owe to Prophet Moses their liberation out of Israel as the Exodus.</p> <p>The date of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt at the time of Moses has been a subject of uncertainty and controversy for centuries. The Bible indicates that it was about 1400-1500 BC but many modern scholars have placed it about 1200 BC based on records from Egyptian chronology, regarding the death by drowning of their Pharaoh, Ramesses II. Thus, even the exact century in which it occurred has been uncertain. However, from Egyptian records, the dates of the Pharaoh Ramesses II were as follows: Born 1303BC, reigned 1279-1213BC and died in 1213BC. He died by drowning in the Red Sea at age of around 90-91. Notwithstanding these Egyptian records, Ashura of the Jews (called Yom Kippur) was definitely before Ashura of the Muslims.</p>
4	<p>Ashura in the Muslim system is a solemn day of mourning the martyrdom of Hussein (grandson of Prophet Muhammad, from his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali) in 680 AD, in the battle of Karbala, in Iraq. It must be emphasised that Ashura is not mentioned whatsoever in the Holy Qur'an, because the martyrdom of Hussein happened after the completion of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and after the death of Prophet Muhammad. The event of Ashura is marked with mourning rituals and passion plays re-enacting the martyrdom. This is not seen as a festival of celebration but a day of deep sadness. Ashura is observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar system. This event of rituals and re-enacting as street-plays of the martyrdom is governed by philosophies only for divisions within the Shia Muslims (Shiites).</p>
5	<p>The Holy Qur'an was completed in year 632AD. Muslims believe that the Holy Quran was verbally revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel (Jibril), gradually over a period of approximately 23 years, beginning in 609 AD, when Prophet Muhammad was aged 40, and concluding in 632 AD, the year of his death. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh b.570 Mecca -d.632 Medina) lived and died soon after completion of the total revelation of the Holy Qur'an. Hussein was martyred in year 680AD, after the Holy Qur'an was sealed off as completed. Hussein ibn Ali (b.626 Medina-d.680 Karbala in Iraq), was grandson of Prophet Muhammad from his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali.</p>
6	<p>Shia followers (called Shiites) constitute around 15% of the world's population of all Muslims. The rest of the world's Muslims are Sunni. There are only two sects in Islam and they are Sunni and Shia and between them there are 72 religious movement groups.</p>