

# **!Every day is Ashura and every land is Kerbala**

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Once more Muharram has come, and the hearts of free men incline toward Hussain (PBUH), the son of Ali (PBUH), and their eyes are fixed upon Ashura, the event which took place more than 1300 years ago. Even after such a long passage of time, not only Shiite Muslims are attracted to this event, but all Muslims and other free believers. Why the remembrance of Imam Hussain (PBUH) is tied so much to Muharram? Why hasn't Ashura faded from history after a passage of 13 centuries? Why do Muslims gather every year to mourn for Hussain (PBUH) and his companions? And why hasn't this event faded into history like thousands of other events that have long been forgotten? These are some of the questions that might come up while one is thinking about this event. In this article we want to briefly investigate the concept of the eternal message of Imam Hussain's (PBUH) uprising (Qiam). After 13 centuries, should we maintain the remembrance of Ashura, or was it an event that belonged only to a specific period of history? Is the reviewing and renewal of such an event only a sensational and illogical act?

Since a long passage of time has not caused Ashura to be forgotten, is it possible that this event will be forgotten by the next generations?

The first thing that comes to mind while studying and considering the event of Ashura, is its non-material motive. Hussain the son of Ali (PBUT) was not only aware that he would be defeated, but he had also been informed that he would be martyred and that his family would be captured. Both the Great Prophet (PBUH&HP) and Imam Ali (PBUH), who had a special knowledge of certain future events, had made such predictions. Many people tried to stop him, but he saw it as his divine duty to keep the religion and the Prophet's (PBUH&HP) Sunnah alive. Now is it reasonable to say that the motive of his uprising was to gain a powerful position and governorship? An uprising, which from its beginning coincided with great hardships and eventually resulted in the martyrdom of all its participants?

On the contrary! The divine motive of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and his companions is observed in each moment of the event of Ashura: While each companion tried to precede the other in becoming martyred, while his six-month-old infant son passes away, while Imam Hussain (PBUH) devotes all his existence to Allah (SWT), and while in the last moments of his life he says: "O! My Lord I am content with what You have destined; I have submitted to Your will; There is no one worthy of worship other than You."

Consider these verses of the Holy Quran: "Everyone on it (the earth), is destined to perish – And there remains the Face of your Lord, which is full of glory and honor." (55: 26, 27) These verses are saying that when everything else has been destroyed, Allah (SWT) remains and bestows eternity to the people who join Him. The believers, who all of their aspects of life have connected with Allah (SWT), are considered to be eternal like their unique Creator. It is obvious that such an event would never fade or be forgotten, because in each moment of the event, it has tied and joined with Allah (SWT), Who is the only one who will not perish.

The divine motive of Ashura was the pure motive of obtaining closeness to Allah (SWT). Thus the goals of this uprising were in accordance with and consistent with the unchangeable nature of the human. So it would be impossible for man to one day forget that he wants to be free from every cruelty. It is impossible that one day man would forget to love his Creator. Therefore, we can conclude that man's nature would not let him/her forget this event, even after 13 centuries. Man will remember this event until the end of his life.

The extent of the influences of this uprising is so vast, not only Imam Hussain's (PBUH) followers were influenced by it, but all the free men of the world. As far as the deep and vast influence of such an event exists, the remembrance of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and his companions is alive.

From what was briefly mentioned, we obviously deduce that forgetting such an event is impossible. Now the question is this: Do we really need to study this event today? What can this event mean for the man living in the 21st century? What results would it have for modern-day life?

Since the early days Islam's main objective was to give freedom to mankind from tyranny and oppression. Therefore, those who saw their interests in danger with the rise of Islam, started to oppose Islam in any possible way. However, through the strong leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HP) and his divine assistance, the religion was protected against dangers posed by infidels and polytheists. Because of Islam, Muslims were able to identify the polytheists as the real enemy of their religion and never compromised in defending their religion.

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HP) passed away, the enemies changed their technique. They gradually changed the religion and introduced superstitions. Many who were really enemies of Islam professed to be Muslims, but they were really hypocrites. The hypocrisy of enemies worked well for them. They succeeded in reaching key positions in government, but this time they carried religious titles. They were able to do things that they could not do when the Prophet was alive. As time passed, they were able to make more changes to Islam. The

situation was getting worse until the fiftieth year after Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH&HP) demise. At that time a character named "Yazid" declared himself as "Amir al-Mu'minin" (Master of the believers) – the successor to the Holy Prophet (PBUH&HP) and to Allah (SWT). After that Yazid took control of the Muslims and demanded that his orders be followed as a part of the religion. In other words, he thought of himself as a God-like man. One of his orders, to fire on the Ka'ba with a catapult, had to be followed without question. At such a period of time, Imam Hussain (PBUH) came to the scene to rejuvenate the true Islam with his clear insight. He came to purge the religion from superstitions and whatever the hypocrites had added to it. This is why it is said: "Imam Hussain's sacrifices kept Islam alive." The Great

Prophet of Islam once said of his grandson: "Hussain is of me and I am of Hussain." However, the uprising of Imam Hussain (PBUH) is not limited to a one day battle between a minority of pious men and a majority of wrong believers and oppressors. This uprising has an everlasting divine message for humanity that can be used at all times. The utilization of this message leads to freedom for all mankind from oppression and tyranny and eventually getting closer to Allah (SWT).

The enemies of Islam are continuously attacking it in this century as well. They know very well that the only way to defeat Islam is to alter the core principles. Hence, we truly need to understand the message which Imam Hussain's (PBUH) uprising bears with it. The message can help to protect the true Islam which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HP) brought for the whole world. We need to protect our beliefs from fake concepts and forged information and provide the elements of the "justice-for-all" government of al-Mahdi (PBUH) which is promised to us in Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH&HP) tradition. In fact, the uprising of Imam Hussain (PBUH) draws the border between right and wrong and rejuvenates the spiritual nature of mankind which has died in our era as a result of materialism. Therefore, the need for this message with such results has increased.

Moreover, an Infallible Imam completes the religion of Allah (SWT). Whether he fights or makes peace, accepts or denies an issue, all are done in accordance to the rules of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HP). Islam is not just limited to a certain period of time. The concepts of Islam can be found in the Holy Quran, the Prophet's traditions and the teaching and actions of the Imams (PBUH). The concepts of Islam are practical for every Muslim during his lifetime. It is important to understand the true human needs at every period of time and find appropriate solutions by applying religion in our lives. According to the narration of al-Thaqalayn from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HP): "Imam and Quran are alike." The Holy Quran contains deep meanings, and the more one thinks about

them, the more he can benefit. The character and deeds of the Imam are like verses of the Holy Quran; the more one deliberates, the more he understands.

The event of Ashura also supports this statement. It was a decision of Imam Hussain (PBUH), and he acted upon it. The culture of Ashura has remained a basis and principle for the culture of Shiism. A clear revision of this culture can bear a new message and a new insight. Therefore, if the event of Ashura were not a link in the chain of Islam, this chain would have been broken in two, and its followers would have fallen into a deep hole of ignorance and superstitions prevalent at the time. The rise of Imam Hussain (PBUH) has removed ignorance from Islam during the past and for the future; otherwise, Islam would have been altered many times during history.

As it was mentioned earlier, the uprising of Imam Hussain (PBUH) has not only affected the Shiite Islamic societies, but also people of other faiths. We will review some of the important social and individual effects of this movement in the following paragraphs.

#### I – Social Effects

The uprising of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and his companions caused a significant effect on the Islamic community of that time as well as those of later centuries. Some of the social effects are:

##### Removal of Ignorance:

In many narrations and scripts for pilgrimages (Ziarat), the most important social message of this movement is considered to be "fighting against ignorance in the society and people's unawareness." The tyrants of that time had done everything to diminish the limits between right and wrong, and Imam Hussain (PBUH) intended to redefine that for the society. This movement not only caused a general awareness in Islamic communities, but also enlightened the non-Muslim communities as well. For instance, some of the representatives of non-Muslim counties in Yazid's palace and some of the monks were deeply affected and eventually were guided on the right path. Indeed, the guidance which is a result of this uprising is still in place and leads many free men to the right path. Further, the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and his companions proves the trueness of Islam. The first goal of the movement of Ashura is to bring about awareness in people of reasonable thoughts and behaviors. Obviously if this movement were based exclusively on emotions and taking advantage of people's emotions, then it would not encourage people to refer to their intellect, and it would not lead to general awareness in society.

##### A General Uprising:

There were a number of uprisings after the movement of Ashura (both in that period of time

and in later years) against oppression and tyranny of governments. Among them, the uprising of the people of Medina was one of the most important ones. Those who started the movement were not thinking about victory, but they decided to stand against tyranny as a social duty. There were other Islamic and non-Islamic movements in later years which had the teachings of Karbala in mind. Moreover, there were many religious and non-religious uprisings throughout history which had set their goal to fight against oppression. But most of them had affected their own period of time and not further; or they had taken advantage of people's emotions and were later forgotten. On the contrary, the event of Ashura was not limited to a few years after its taking place; it affected societies from the first day until the present time. Further, the motivation of this movement was divine, unlike other uprisings, and therefore, it calls upon people to rise up against oppression based on divine values and human principles.

#### An Uprising Only for the Sake of Allah Almighty (SWT) :

Obviously, the most important and ultimate effect of Imam Hussain's (PBUH) uprising, whether socially or individually, is only to act for the sake of Allah Almighty (SWT). Imam Hussain (PBUH) sacrificed all he had for Allah (SWT). He did not even consider victory at the battlefield as a condition to rise up against the oppressive government. He told his companions and family on the night before the battle (the night of Ashura) that: "These people have animosity only for me; you can take advantage of the dark and leave. Know that whosoever stays here will be killed tomorrow." Furthermore, in the hardest condition of the day of Ashura, Imam Hussain (PBUH) said: "This is easy for me because Allah is watching me."

#### II – Individual Effects

The uprising of Imam Hussain (PBUH) affects every individual and constructs a practical path for social improvements. Some of the most important individual improvements are:

To practice the commands of Allah (SWT) and to abandon sin:

Whoever benefits from the event of Ashura in any way will receive a sensation of obedience toward Allah (SWT) and a unique pleasure in submission to His command. Furthermore, even the act of committing a sin will appear ugly and unpleasant to that individual. However, the extent to which an individual leaves his sinful behavior depends upon his individual capacity for understanding the event of Ashura and Imam Hussain's (PBUH) movement. This fact can be seen through individual experiences.

Freedom:

After so many years, one of the quotes of Hussain (PBUH) is still remembered – "If you do not believe in religion, at least be free in your world." This saying invites the whole world to practice

freedom. The message of Hussain (PBUH) continues, and his followers reject submission to oppression. Freedom from enslavement by tyrants or any one except Allah (SWT) is one of the points of Imam Hussain's (PBUH) revolution that can be used to realize the true values of Islam in this day and time. Hence, those who are in love with Hussain (PBUH), no matter what religion they have, will try to free themselves from misfortune and obedience to any one except Allah (SWT) by following Hussain's (PBUH) path.

Patience and strength:

Shiite Muslims and others who think about the events of Ashura have learned from the patience of Imam Hussain (PBUH) such that in the most difficult situations of their lives, they remember their beloved leader. Therefore, they remain steadfast and patient in difficulties by remembering the difficulties Hussain (PBUH) faced:

- Surrounded in the hot desert without any water, and the river blocked for three consecutive days by the enemy.
- The killing of his six-month old infant son with an arrow.
- The killing and subsequent mutilation of his young son, who was the most similar in looks and moralities to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HP).

Hussain (PBUH) never complained and did not stop thanking and remembering Allah (SWT).

This was the only way his broken heart could be healed.

Human demands for the teachings of Ashura are not only still on the rise after many centuries, but they are increasing at a fast pace due to the age of technology. One reason is that as humans quickly satisfy their materialistic needs, they feel the need to improve their spiritual capabilities as well. Such development can help them in their lives and take them closer to the goal and purpose of life, that is, perfection and becoming closer to Allah (SWT). The event of Ashura, nowadays, has such a critical responsibility. If the people of 1300 years ago could not fully understand what Hussain Ibn Ali (PBUT) had accomplished at that time, mankind today has more capability of understanding what Hussain's (PBUH) movement was all about. They have more to ponder over at their own level of concentration. By comprehending the philosophy of his movement, humans may be able to do something about the present spiritual problems, such as their routine life and apathy toward their Creator and the Resurrection Day. Furthermore, one could contemplate the ceremonies held for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and Ahl al-Bayt (PBUT) (the household of the Prophet (PBUH&HP)) by Shiite communities from a different point of view.

The human body is totally dependent upon its soul. Unlike the materialistic part of the body, the soul is everlasting. That is why the spiritual connection is deeper and more sophisticated than

the physical or materialistic connection. But when does a spiritual connection happen between two distinct individuals? The answer is when they have the same spiritual/divine values. The connection between Shiite Muslims and the household of the Prophet (PBUH&HP) is a spiritual relationship, which is much deeper and stronger than any materialistic relationship. Therefore, the sad the tragic ceremonies that Shiite communities hold are absolutely logical, since their spiritual relationship continues to exist, even though the souls of those martyrs are not in this world. Allah (SWT) says: "Do not think of those who are killed in the Way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive with their Lord and receive sustenance from Him." (The Holy Quran, 3:169). Thus Shiites have a spiritual connection with their Imams (PBUH) even centuries after their martyrdom, since they are alive and a spiritual relationship is independent of time and place.

For the same reason Shiites cry and commemorate the martyrdom of their beloved Imams (PBUT). There is an advantage to their tears. Crying is a good means for increasing the love and care for a beloved one. So, crying and weeping is a result of love and improves that love in its nature. This way the people who sincerely love Allah (SWT) and Ahl al-Bayt (PBUT) can escalate their spiritual level and get closer to perfection. It is true that weeping is not the only way to improve spirituality, but there lies a hidden point in weeping. The presentation of real love and the proof of a claim of a lover is demonstrated when the lover forgets every other one but his beloved. Indeed weeping fulfills this mission in its best way; it also clears one's mirror of heart and prepares the heart for being influenced by the best humans in all of creation. Finally, the remembrance of Ashura and Imam Hussain's (PBUH) movement should be undertaken with logic and wisdom at all times. There are many ideological and moral needs, which can be satisfied by understanding his movement, which can lead to improvement of the .spiritual life of the human being, as well as avoid any possible superstitions