

Lady Fatima al-Masuma

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The beginning of the Islamic month of Dhil Qa'ada marks the birth anniversary of Lady Fatima al-Masooma (peace be upon her). She was born on 1 Dhil Qa'ada, 174 AH in the holy city of Medina. Her father was Imam Musa al-Kadhim (peace be upon him), and her mother was Lady Najmah. Not long after her birth, her father was martyred in the dungeons of Harun the Abbasid tyrant. After that, her brother Imam Ali ar-Ridha (peace be upon him) became her guardian.

However, in the year 200 AH, Ma'moon Abbasi summoned Imam Ridha to Marv. Once again, Fatima al-Masooma was separated from her caretaker. Imam Ridha left Medina without any of his family members. One year later, Lady Masooma, along with some of her brothers and nephews, left Medina for Marv to visit her brother, the Imam. Along the way, she was greeted by many admirers of the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon them). Whenever she entered a town, she was received by large groups of people. Like Zaynab (peace be upon her) before her, Lady Masooma informed the people of every town and city she stopped in about the oppressed state of her brother. This did not sit well with the backers and servants of the Abbasid regime. They attacked her caravan in the city of Saveh in present day Iran and killed all of her brothers and nephews. And according to some accounts, they poisoned her.

She became very ill due to the poison or the extreme grief of seeing her loved ones slaughtered before her eyes. It was no longer possible to travel to Marv, so she inquired about the distance of Qum. She chose to go to Qum because she said, "I have heard from my father that Qom is the center of our followers (Shias)." The people informed her of the exact distance, and she went to Qum instead of Marv. When the leaders and people of Qum heard about her intentions to come there, they became ecstatic. She reached Qum on 23 Rabi al-Awwal, 201 AH, and was greeted by large crowds of people. She spent 17 days in Qum worshipping God. After .seventeen days, she died from her illness and was buried where her shrines rests today

The Holy City of Qum

Throughout Islamic history, Qum has always played a significant role, especially as a city of the followers of Ahlul Bayt. It continues to play this role today and is presently considered to be the largest and top center of learning in Shia theology. Students from all over the world go there to undertake Islamic studies. The top Shia clerics and scholars live there. And most of the Shia

world's leading academics have studied there one time or another. Qum has also been mentioned favorably in Islamic narrations. Qadhi Nurullah has narrated from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him): "God has a sanctuary, which is Mecca. The Holy Prophet has a sanctuary, which is Medina. There is a sanctuary for the Leader of the Believers Ali in Kufa (Najaf). Indeed, Qum is the smaller Kufa, and three gates from the eight gates of paradise are there. A woman from my offspring, whose name is Fatima, daughter of Musa, will die there, and because of her intercession, all of the Shia will enter paradise."

Affaan Al-Basri stated that Imam Sadiq asked me, "Do you know why Qum has been named Qum?" I said, "God, His Messenger, and you know better." The Imam replied, "Qum has been named Qum because its people will join the one who will rise (Al-Qaim) from the Household of Muhammad, they will stand (Yaqoomoona) with him, they will stay loyal to him (Yastaqeemoona), and assist him." (Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 60, p. 216)

For those who do not read or understand Arabic, we have placed the transliteration of some words from this tradition. You will find the root letters Q and M (Qaaf and Meem in Arabic) in each one of them. These letters are also the root letters in the world Qum.

We read in another tradition from the same book, vol. 60, p. 213, from Imam Sadiq: "Soon Kufa will become empty of the believers, and knowledge will leave it like a snake leaves its hole. Then knowledge will appear in a land called Qum. It will become the center of knowledge and virtue so that there will not remain an unaware person in his religion, not even the woman who stays at home. This will happen close to the time of the reappearance of our Qa'im (Imam Mahdi).

Her Titles

Her most famous title is al-Masooma. It means the "infallible female". This title was given to her by her brother Imam Ridha. The book Naasikh Al-Tawaareekh, vol. 3, p. 68, has narrated that he said: "Whoever visits al-Masooma in Qum, it is as if (s)he has visited me." This title shows her lofty place before the Imams. An infallible Imam has given her the title of infallible.

It also shows her high level of piety and self-control before sins. Another of her titles is Kareema Ahlul Bayt ("the noble woman of the Prophet's household"). History narrates that Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmood Mar'ashi, father of the famous Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Shahab Al-Deen Mar'ashi Najafi, had a great deal of love for his grandmother Fatima Zahra (peace be upon her). He was very interested in finding out where she is buried. So he decided to complete the Holy Qur'an for forty days. On the fortieth day after completing the Qur'an and prayer, he went to sleep. He saw either Imam Baqir or Imam Sadiq (peace be upon them) in a dream. The Imam told him, "I advise you to hold on fast to Kareema Ahlul

Bayt.”

He thought that the Imam’s intent was Lady Fatima Zahra. He said to the Imam, “May I be sacrificed for you, I have taken up this task of completing the Holy Qur’an [for forty nights] so that I may find out the exact place of her grave and be honored by visiting it.” The Imam said, “My intent is the holy grave of Masooma.” Then he added, “Based on His wisdom, God wants the burial place of Zahra to be hidden. Therefore, He has made the shrine of Ma’sooma the glorification place of the noble burying place of Zahra. If her grave was to be manifested, and a beautiful and magnificent shrine was to be built for her, God has given that magnificence to the pure shrine of Masooma.” In other words, Fatima al-Masooma’s shrine is as magnificent and holy as Lady Fatima Zahra’s would have been if her grave was known. When the late Mar’ashi awoke, he decided to travel to Iran to visit the shrine of Lady Masooma. He immediately prepared for the journey and, along with his family, left Najaf and moved to .”Qum. From then on, Lady Fatima al-Masooma has also been known as “Kareema Ahlul Bayt

The Rewards for Visiting Her Shrine

Most Muslims are aware that visiting the shrines and burial places of godly people is highly recommended in Islam. The reason for it is that these holy grounds are highly spiritual places which can have a profound spiritual affect on the visitor. All Muslims visit and honor the holy shrine of the Prophet of Islam. And he has advised us to visit the graves of his Ahlul Bayt. And the Ahlul Bayt have encouraged us to visit the shrine of Lady Masooma. The book Thawaab al-A’mal relates from Sa’ad that he asked Imam Ridha about Fatima, daughter of Musa. The Imam said: “Whoever visits her, for him/her is paradise.” And it has been related in Kaamil al-Ziyaara that Imam Jawad (peace be upon him) has said: “Whoever visits my paternal aunt’s grave in Qum will have paradise.” Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 60, p. 216, relates that Imam Sadiq said, “Verily, my sanctuary and the sanctuary of my children after me is Qum.”

It must not go unmentioned here that the lofty rewards that come for visiting the shrine of Lady Masooma are not for those who neglect the teachings and ethics of Islam, then get a visa, buy a plane ticket and go to Qum, visit her holy shrine, and rest assured that they will go to paradise. Rather, these rewards are for those who take lesson from this visit. Visiting her shrine includes prayer, which turns one’s attention to the importance of prayer. Reciting the Ziyarat (salutations) includes verses of the Qur’an and Hadith, which turns our attention to the importance of the Qur’an and the sayings of our Prophet and Ahlul Bayt. Visiting her has its special etiquette, such as wearing nice clean clothes, taking a ritual bath, giving charity beforehand, treating her visitors with kindness and respect, and so on. Therefore, it turns our

attention towards vital Islamic etiquettes, such as remembering Allah, treating people kindly, etc. However, if we simply go and visit her shrine and neglect all of its right upon us, we should .not expect paradise in return for it

Her Teachings

Among the important lessons that Lady Masooma taught was complete submission to God's will and complete obedience to the Imam of her time. In her journey from Medina to Qum, she spoke the whole way against oppression and assisted the oppressed. In that was another great lesson for Muslims and humanity.

She also narrated traditions from the Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt. From among them, she has related from Lady Fatima Zahra who has related from her father, the Messenger of God: "Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad dies a martyr."

What is interesting is that among the words that are carved out in beautiful Arabic writing in the dome of her shrine is the following: "Zamakhshari has related in his commentary [of the Qur'an] called Al-Kashshaaf and Tha'labi in his commentary Kashf al-Bayan from the Messenger of God: 'Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad dies a martyr. Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad dies while all his sins are forgiven. Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad dies as a complete believer. Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad will be given the good news of paradise by the angels of death, Nakeer and Munkar (the two angels who question the soul in the graves). Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad will be raised to paradise. Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad, God will open two gates towards paradise for him in his grave. Know that whoever dies with the love of Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad, God will make his grave the pilgrimage place of the angels of mercy.

"Know that whoever dies with hatred for Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad will come on Judgment Day while it is written in between his eyes "hopeless of God's mercy". Know that whoever dies with hatred for Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad dies as an infidel. Know that whoever dies with hatred for Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad will not smell the scent of paradise."

We know that the scent of paradise can be smelled from a distance of 500 years' journey. Such a person will be so far from paradise that he will not even be able to smell it, let alone see .it

Conclusion: Taking Lessons from Her Life and Burial Place

There are numerous traditions related from Lady Masooma and numerous chapters of the Qur'an and Islamic traditions are written in and around her holy shrine. The aforementioned were just a few examples. Those who visit her shrine and study her life can take lessons from all of these. Just one verse or tradition written in her shrine or one tradition related from her is enough to change a person's life for the better, but with the condition that one opens his/her eyes to its message.

In any case, that which has been mentioned in the aforesaid tradition written in the dome of the shrine about dying with the love of Muhammad and his Household and its rewards is not simply for just saying that one loves Muhammad and his Ahlul Bayt. The Holy Qur'an states, "Say: if you love God, then follow and obey me, and God will love you and forgive your sins." (3:31)

Therefore, true love for God is when one follows and obeys His Messenger. So when we claim to love Muhammad and his Ahlul Bayt, we must follow and obey them, or else our love is .nothing more than mere lip service

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