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## Arbaeen of Imam Husayn

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*What follows in this piece is a brief look at the “Arba’een” [the commemoration of 40 days after the tragic events of Karbala] of Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him. The article concludes with the Arabic text of Ziyarat Arba’een with full English translation and a brief exposition on certain passages of this powerful and moving visitation. Insha-Allah, a more comprehensive understanding of this ziyarat will be presented in the future.*

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There are very few mass gatherings in the world today which are entire peaceful and which do not result in the loss of life, and in fact, according to Wikipedia – “the Free Encyclopedia” – of the five gatherings globally seeing over 10 million people, four were in Karbala:

- 1. An estimated 21 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba’een on 14 January 2012.*
- 2. An estimated 15 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba’een in 2011.*
- 3. An estimated 15 million people attended the funeral of C. N. Annadurai in Tamil Nadu, India in 1969.*
- 4. An estimated 10 to 14 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba’een in 2010.*
- 5. An estimated 10 to 14 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba’een in 2009*

The screenshot shows the Wikipedia article titled "List of largest peaceful gatherings in history". The article is in English and is part of the "List of largest peaceful gatherings in history" series. The main text states: "This is a list of the largest historic peaceful gatherings of people in one place for a single event. For brevity, only gatherings in excess of 1 million are recorded." The article is divided into sections based on the number of participants:

- Over ten million**
  - Shrine of Hussein ibn Ali (AS)**
    - An estimated 17 to 18 million people visited the shrine of Hussein ibn Ali in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2013.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup>
    - An estimated 15 to 18 million people visited the shrine of Hussein ibn Ali in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2012.<sup>[4][5][6][7]</sup>
    - An estimated 15 million people visited the shrine of Hussein ibn Ali in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2011.<sup>[8]</sup>
    - An estimated 10 to 14 million people visited the shrine of Hussein ibn Ali in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2010.<sup>[9][10][11][12][13]</sup>
    - An estimated 10 to 14 million people visited the shrine of Hussein ibn Ali in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2009.<sup>[14]</sup>
  - Kumbh Mela**
    - An estimated 12 million people visited the Maha Kumbh Mela at Allahabad (Prayag) in India, on 10 February 2013 and an estimated 100 million have been expected to visit the place during the festival spread over 55 days.<sup>[15]</sup> According to estimates, around 70 million people participated in the 45-day Ardh Kumbh Mela at Prayag in 2007.<sup>[16]</sup> The Purna Kumbh Mela held in 2001 in Prayag was estimated to have attracted between 30 and 70 million people.<sup>[17]</sup>
  - Funeral of Annadurai**
    - An estimated 15 million people attended the funeral of C. N. Annadurai in Tamil Nadu, India in 1969.<sup>[18]</sup>
- Over five million**
  - An estimated 10 million people gathered in medaram jatara, India in February 14
  - An estimated 5 million to 7 million people gathered for the funeral of Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran in 1989.<sup>[19]</sup>
  - An estimated 5 million people gathered in Sabarimala, India on 14 January 2007.<sup>[20]</sup>
  - Over 5 million people attended a rally for World Youth Day 1995 in Manila, Philippines, to see Pope John Paul II.<sup>[21]</sup>
- Two to five million**
  - An estimated 5 million people attended the funeral of Egyptian President Gamel Abdel Nasser on 1 October 1970 in Cairo, Egypt.<sup>[22][23]</sup>
  - An estimated 4.2 million people attended a concert given by Rod Stewart in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 12/31/96.<sup>[24]</sup>

Why is there such a fervent desire for millions to flock to what would have been an otherwise unknown land and for millions to journey there by foot from all parts of the world? This brief article will touch upon the spiritual significance of *Arba'een* as seen in the Noble Qur'an and Islamic narratives as well as a short commentary on the *Ziyarat* of *Arba'een*.

The sayings of the Infallibles, peace be upon them all, have emphatically guided the believers to be present in Karbala to mark the 40th day after the tragedy of Karbala and in fact, the 11th successor to the Noble Prophet of Islam, Imam Hasan al-Askari, peace be upon him, has actually considered this act as being one of the clear and apparent signs of a true believer when he said:

علامات المؤمن خمس: صلاة إحدى وخمسين، وزيارة الأربعين، والتَّخْتَمُ باليمين، وتعفير الجبين و جهر بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم.

The signs of a true believer are five:

**1. 51 rak'at of Salat (per day – 17 of which are the obligatory prayers and 34 which are the recommended daily prayers)**

2. *Ziyarat Arba'een*;

3. *Wearing a ring on the right hand (an Aqeeq ring)*;

4. *Placing the head on the earth (during sajad in the Salat)*;

5. *Openly pronouncing “بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ” (Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem) when reciting the two surahs in the Salat.*

The *Ziyarat Arba'een* which we recite in Karbala (and indeed from our homes if we are not fortunate enough to be in Karbala on the 20th of Safar) has been narrated from a companion named Safwan al-Jammaal from Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq, peace be upon him, in which the Imam told him to visit Imam Husayn and to recite a specific visitation formula on the afternoon of the *Arba'een*.

Although there are differences of opinion concerning the date of the *Arba'een-e-Husyani* – was it in the year 61 AH after the massacre in Karbala, or was it the following year? Whatever the opinion is, the fact remains that the visitation of the blessed grave of Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, and his noble family and friends on the day of *Arba'een* is extremely important and is something which each and every true believer will try and perform during his lifetime.

The first such visitation took form when Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari paid his respects to Imam Husayn, peace be upon him. Jabir was a well-known companion of the Prophet whom all Muslims love and respect; and he had witnessed many wars and battles alongside the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his family, and he has narrated many *ahadith* and in fact, he was so loved by the Messenger that the Prophet would often go and visit him personally!

On one such meeting, Jabir asked his wife that when the Prophet comes that she should not ask him any questions. She narrates that when the Prophet came to their house, she did as she was asked and when Jabir met him, he said: “O Messenger of Allah! Prayers from myself and my wife are upon you!” The Prophet replied, “Prayers of Allah be upon you and your wife!”

Indeed Jabir had heard numerous sayings from the Prophet in relation to the status of Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him and he indeed fully understood the lofty status of both grandsons of the Prophet – namely Imam al-Hasan and al-Husayn as carried by the blessed heart of al-Mustafa, and therefore it is of no amazement that he was the first companion, despite his old age, who made the journey to Karbala after he heard of what had happened to the beloved grandson of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family.

Al-A'mash narrates from 'Atiyyah al-'Awfi, who said: “I left with Jabir ibn 'Abdillah al-Ansari, may Allah have mercy on him, to visit the grave of al-Husayn bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib peace be upon him; and when we entered Karbala, Jabir came near the bank of River Euphrates, performed the major ablution (*ghusl*) and wore his clothes; then he opened his purse which contained *su'd* [a plant with sweet fragrance]. He

spread the perfume over his body; thereafter he did not take a step save in the remembrance of Allah, until he neared the grave [of al-Husayn, peace be upon him].”

[Then] he said to me: “Make me touch the grave, and I made him do so. Thereupon he fell over the grave unconscious.”

I sprinkled some water on him, and he gained consciousness.

Then he cried three times:

يا حُسين، يا حُسين، يا حُسين....

*Ya Husayn ... Ya Husayn ... Ya Husayn*

Addressing al-Husayn, peace be upon him, he said: “Why is the beloved not responding to the call of the lover? But how can you respond, while your veins have been severed, and your body has been separated from your head?

I bear witness that you are the offspring of the Prophets, and the son of the master of believers, and the offspring of the companion of piety, and the offspring of guidance, and the fifth member of the people of the cloak, and the son of the master of the chiefs, and the son of Fatimah, the mistress of the women; how can you not be so, while the hand of the Leader of the Apostles, peace be upon him and his family, fed you, and you were breast-fed from the breast of belief, and trained in the bosoms of pious people, your weaning accompanied the state of utter submission.

Hence you enjoyed a pleasant state both during your life time and after your death; however, the hearts of the believers are sorrowful due to your separation, and do not doubt about your great position. So upon you be Allah’s Peace and Approval. And I bear witness that you faced what your brother [Prophet] Yahya, peace be upon him, had faced.”

Thereafter Jabir felt the presence around the grave and said: “Peace be upon you and the spirits that have descended in the neighbourhood of al-Husayn, peace be upon him ... I bear witness that you were steadfast in your prayers and gave the *zakat* and you commanded the good and prohibited the forbidden and struggled against the deniers of religion and you worshipped Allah until conviction came to you. I swear by the One Who sent Muhammad as a Prophet with truth; surely we participated with you in what you encountered.”

‘Atiyyah (not understanding this powerful statement made by Jabir) says: I asked Jabir: “How can that be possible, while we did not descend on any valley, nor did we climb any mountainous area, nor did we fight with the sword, whereas the heads of the group of al-Husayn, peace be upon him, have been separated from their bodies, their children were made orphans and their women were made widows?”

Jabir said: “O ‘Atiyyah, I heard from my beloved, the Apostle of Allah, peace be upon him and his family, say: ‘Whosoever loves a nation, will be resurrected with them, and whosoever loves the deed of a nation, will be considered one who has participated in that deed (with them). I swear by the One Who Sent Muhammad as a Prophet in truth, surely my intention and the intention of my companions is according to the intention of al-Husayn and his companions.”

[Then Jabir said to ‘Atiyyah]: “Take me towards the houses of Kufa.”

‘Atiyyah says: “When we reached a certain point on the way, Jabir said to me: ‘O ‘Atiyyah, may I advise you, for I do not think that I will meet you after this short journey? Love the lover of Aale Muhammad as long as that person loves them, and have aversion for one who has aversion for Aale Muhammad as long as that person has aversion for them; for if a person was to fast and stand in prayer frequently and befriend the lover of Aale Muhammad, then surely if one of their feet was to slip due to excess of sin, the other foot would be firm due to love of Aale Muhammad, for verily the lover of Aale Muhammad would return to Paradise and the one who has aversion for them will return to the Hell Fire.”

## Does the number 40 have any significance?

It is very much possible that the visitation of Jabir on the 20th of Safar was “by chance” or a “coincidence” and that the 40th has/had no significance and because he reached there on the 20th of Safar that we now too mark this day – or it could be that this day actually does have some mystical and spiritual importance?

In fact, there is spiritual significance to some numbers and this is seen in the Qur’an and the traditions such that the number 40 is repeated in many places of the Qur’an:

﴿وَإِذْ وَاَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَاَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُوْنَ﴾

**“And when We appointed a time of forty nights with Musa, then you took the calf (for a god) after him and you were unjust.” (Suratul Baqarah, 2: 51)**

﴿قَالَ فَاِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً يَتِيهُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ﴾

**“He said: So it shall surely be forbidden to them for forty years, they shall wander about in the land, therefore do not grieve for the nation of transgressors.” (Suratul Maidah, 5:26)**

﴿وَاَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلٰثِيْنَ لَيْلَةً وَاَتَمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فِتْمٍ مِّمَقَاتٍ رَبِّهِ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِاَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَاَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ﴾

***“And We appointed with Musa a time of thirty nights and completed them with ten (more), so the appointed time of his Lord was complete forty nights, and Musa said to his brother Haroun: Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers.”***  
(Suratul A’raaf, 7: 142)

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ ﴿١٢٧﴾  
وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ  
﴿١٢٨﴾ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنَّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

***“And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents; with trouble did his mother bear him and with trouble did she bring him forth; and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months; until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years, he says: My Lord! grant me that I may give thanks for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases Thee and do good to me in respect of my offspring; surely I turn to Thee, and surely I am of those who submit.”*** (Suratul Ahqaf, 46: 15)

In addition, there are numerous traditions which mention the number “40” such as the following:

عن رسول الله (صلى الله عليه و آله و سلام): إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَتَبْكِي عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his family, has said: *“Indeed the Earth laments over the death of a true believer for the period of 40 days.”*

عن الإمام محمد الباقر (عليه السلام) أَنَّهُ قَالَ: إِنَّ السَّمَاءَ بَكَتْ عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, peace be upon him, has said: *“Indeed the sky lamented over the death of al-Husayn for a period of 40 days.”*

عن الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام) أَنَّهُ قَالَ: إِنَّ السَّمَاءَ بَكَتْ عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا بِالدَّمِّ، وَالْأَرْضُ بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا بِالسَّوَادِ، وَالشَّمْسُ بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا بِالْكُسُوفِ وَالْحُمْرَةِ، وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا، وَمَا اخْتَضَبَتْ امْرَأَةٌ مَنًا وَلَا ادَّهَنْتْ وَلَا اِكْتَحَلَتْ وَلَا رَجَلَتْ حَتَّىٰ أَتَانَا رَأْسُ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ وَمَا زَلْنَا فِي عِبْرَةٍ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said: *“The heavens cried for forty days with blood (weeping) over Imam Husayn; the earth cried for forty days by being covered with darkness; the sun cried for forty days by being in eclipse and turning red; the mountains were torn apart and dispersed; the seas gushed out and the angles cried for forty days over him. After Imam Husayn’s martyrdom, all of our women*

*stopped colouring their hair, using kohl, applying oil, and styling their hair until the head of Ubaydullah ibn Ziyaad was sent to us; and even after that we (all) continued to weep over him.”*

In summary, this all points to the reality that there is “something” contained in the visitation to Karbala 40 days after the tragic massacre of Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him and his family, as the “40th” is not marked for any other Imam nor is it marked for any other Prophet – and perhaps if we are given the Divine Providence (tawfeeq) to be in Karbala on the 20th of Safar to pay our respects and condolences to the Prophet and the noble family on the supreme sacrifice offered on the 10th of Muharram 61 ah, then we may be able to benefit from the spiritual bounties contained in this spiritual journey to reach our Beloved.

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