

## 'Ashura

*"I see death as nothing but happiness, while living with the oppressors is nothing but annoyance."* – Abu 'Abdullah, al-Husayn ('a)

Had 'Ashura Day only known  
What calamity in it went on.  
Its aura would not have dawned,  
Its light would not have shown,  
Its sun would not have been bright,  
Its grief stole from the days their light.  
And so every month, and so every day.  
O Allah! What a momentous day!  
It removed my patience, out did it my sleep wear,  
Everyone from the family of Ayat al-Tathir  
Was either slain or in the dust rubbed;  
That Day the life of every *hafiz* was robbed,  
And the creed in grief almost passed way.  
That very Day...  
The foes' eyes slept  
As the faithful's eyes wept.  
Woe upon me and many a woe  
How under the hooves the ribs were low,  
And atop every spear  
A severed head did appear.  
And on the plains the corpses did scatter:  
Grieving women coming out of the chamber  
Wailing, crying, frightened by the danger,  
And a suckling woman lolling at her babe, crying:  
On the sands lying, moaning, panting, dying,

And women taken captive on she-camels bare  
Their veils taken away, agonized, wearing a stare;  
Their protectors from them did depart,  
Killed by every fiend having no heart.  
The concern of the people whom Allah did hail  
Was only to mourn, to weep, and to wail,  
On a day deep grief is to be upheld at least,  
Whereas the Turks eat, drink, laugh and feast...[1](#)

That day was spent by the family of Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him and his progeny, by continuous weeping and wailing. Its pain penetrated the hearts, incinerating them. The eyes were filled with bloody tears. You could hear nothing except the cries of those who suffered the loss of a dear one and hear the sighs of those deeply depressed. You could see only those whose hair stood up and who demonstrated their exhaustion because of the tragedy. There were those who kept covering their heads with the dust as a sign of grief, those who beat their chests in agony, those who beat their forehead and were struggling to stay alive while putting one hand on the chest and another to beat it.

People looked as though they were intoxicated, but they were not; the horror of the painful tragedy made them look like that.

Had you been able to hear how those in the Higher Plane were wailing, you would have realized the cry of the cosmos and the wailing of the *huris* in the chambers of Paradise as they moaned and groaned, cried, sighed and lamented. All the Imams of Guidance were likewise tearful, wailing and weeping.

There is no exaggeration here at all. The Martyr had in him the fragrance of the Message, the glow of the caliphate, and the wreath of the Imamate.

He is none other than the grandson of the Chosen Prophet (S), the son of Fatima al-Zahra' ('a), the chosen *wasī*, and the brother of the other grandson of the Prophet (S), the Hujjah against the creation. Yes, he is the treasured Sign, the joined mercy, the safeguarded trust, and the gate wherewith people are tried.

His tragedy is no less worthy of such tears or condolences. Had the hearts been split into bits and pieces, and had those grieved died grieving over such a great calamity, it would still have been less than it deserves.

Do you see life being worthy of anything so long as the very essence of life is he himself, the living and the pure essence? What is the value of tears shed as long as Allah's "Vengeance on Earth" is thus bereaved? Should the eye be cooled as it sees the victims from Muhammad's family slaughtered on the ground, their parts cut off, their bodies cut to pieces by the swords, lances having feasted on them, and

arrows having pierced them?

They were spent thirsty on the bank of the flowing Euphrates wherein the dogs wade and from which wild beasts drink while the family of Muhammad (S) was prohibited from drinking of it.

The greatest calamity is that

Upon the chest of the Prophet's son al-Shimr sat.

May his hands be paralyzed:

How he with his sword severed his head!

What a youth Umayyah's steeds trampled upon

His corpse charging, racing, crushing, on and on!

So my heart for him does go

How the steeds' hooves drenched in his blood.<sup>2</sup>

What a true follower, who emulates the great Prophet (S), ought to do is to cry as this great Prophet (S) did for the mere mentioning of his name and the remembrance of his tragedy<sup>3</sup>, to hold mourning ceremonies commemorating the martyrdom of the Master of Martyrs, and to require everyone in his house to mourn him.

And let them console one another on account of what happened to al-Husayn ('a) just as Imam al-Baqir ('a) has said, "May Allah increase our rewards and yours for mourning al-Husayn ('a), and may He count us and your own selves among those who seek revenge for him in the company of His *wali*, al-Mahdi ('a), from the Progeny of Muhammad, peace be upon them."<sup>4</sup>

'Abdullah Ibn Sinan came once to visit Imam as-Sadiq ('a) on 'Ashura. He found the colour of his complexion to have changed. He was grief-stricken; tears were trickling down his cheeks like pearls.

He said to him, "Why are you weeping, O son of the Messenger of Allah?" He, peace be upon him, answered him by saying, "Are you oblivious to the fact that al-Husayn ('a) was martyred on this day?"

Then he ordered him to look like one who has just been afflicted by a great calamity, to unbutton his shirt, uncover his arms, to leave his head uncovered, and to fast for an entire day and to break his fast with water one hour after *'asr* time, since that was the time when Muhammad's Progeny became bereaved with that great loss.

Then he said to him, "Has the Messenger of Allah (S) been alive, he would be the one to console."<sup>5</sup>

Imam al-Ka'im ('a) was never seen smiling during the first ten days of Muharram. He looked very sad, and on the tenth day, such sadness reached its peak, so it was his day of grief and agony.

Imam al-Riḡā'a ('a) has said, "It is for people like al-Husayn ('a) that the mourners should weep. The memory of the day when al-Husayn ('a) was martyred surely causes our eyelids to swell. Our man of dignity was humiliated in the land of *karb* and *bala'*."

Saluting his gravesite, al-Hujjah from among Muhammad's Progeny, may Allah hasten his reappearance, says, "So I shall mourn you in the morning and in the eve, and with tears of blood shall I over you weep."

So, should we not abandon merriment and put on the robes of grief? Should we not cry? Should we not learn how to glorify Allah's Signs by mourning the martyr who died thirsty on the tenth of Muharram?

Today the foundations of the creed,  
Of guidance, crumbled down  
And the religion of the truth is now worn out.  
Today whoever seeks guidance is misled  
And whoever seeks hope is shunned.  
Today those who seek their hopes  
Are rubbed in the dust.  
Today calamity has marked their every face  
Today glory on him threw the attire.  
Today honours for him lowered their heights.  
Today glory's necklace refused its pearls.  
Today their sublimity is idled.  
Today Mudar's glory is in the dark.  
Today death descended upon its valley.  
Today al-Zahra' stood to wail.  
Today Asiya joined her to console.  
Today apostasy returned to the creed.  
Today Banu Hind achieved their desire.  
What apology will Hind's sinners on the Judgment Day have  
When their opponent is the Chosen One and their Judge is Allah?  
What is their excuse when his sons' blood  
Became on their feast the dye for their hands?[6](#)

[1.](#) This poem by the Islamic authority, Ayatullah Shaikh Hadi Al Kashif al-Ghiḡā'a', may Allah sanctify him, is recorded on p. 62 of Al-Maqala al-Husayniyya.

[2.](#) This poem was composed by Shaikh Ja'far al-Hilli as stated on p. 93 of Al-Durr al-Nadid.

[3.](#) al-Suyuti, Al-Khasa'is, Vol. 2, p. 125. al-Mawardi, l'lam al-Nubuwwa, p. 83.

[4.](#) Ibn Qawlawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 175. al-Tusi, Misbah al-Mutahajjid, p. 39.

[5.](#) Ibn al-Mashadi, Mazar. The author is one of the prominent figures of the sixth century A.H. (the twelfth century A.D.).

6. According to p. 540, Vol. 5, of Shu'ara' al-Hilla, this poem was composed by Shaikh Hadi al-Nahwi who died in 1225 A.H./1810 A.D.

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