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Chapter 9: O Aba 'Abdillah...

O Aba 'Abdillah, I swear by Allah, the loss is great; and the calamity on us and all the enthusiasts of Islam because of what befell you is great and severe. And the calamity that befell you is reckoned by all the inhabitants of the heavens in the heavens as great and severe.

Commentary

O utterly obedient servant of Allah...

Once again we *call* Imam al–Husayn (AS), although we realize that he can listen to us and behold our presence wherever we are. And why employ the vocative particle *ya* to call him? We said in the beginning that *ya* is used for a person who is quite far. The reason is that we would like to express our deep veneration for his exalted self.

This is because although he may ontologically be very close to us, his exalted spirit is utterly remote from our inferior level. The most important thing, however, is to be able to see his noble self when we address him. If we purify our souls and behold the realm beyond this world we may be able to vision what most of the people are deprived of due to their accumulation of sins.

The very fact that we *address* Imam al–Husayn (AS) presumes that the *mukhatab* (addressee) is present

before us. Otherwise why don't we employ the third person pronoun and invoke *salam* on his exalted being? And since the traditions of the Ahl al–Bayt (AS) teach the believers to always aspire for the best, whenever we recite this salutation we must crave to attain the station that can facilitate a direct communication with Aba 'Abdillah al–Husayn (AS). When such an encounter is made possible, the heart breaks and the rivers of tears flow and the believer melts down before *al–witr al–mawtur*.

O utterly obedient servant of Allah, by Allah, the loss is great.

Some commentators of this sacred *Ziyarat* say that the vocative particle *ya* is once again brought in this verse to renew the feelings of sorrow for what befell on Imam al–Husayn (AS). Al–Kashani supporting this view says, "*Juddida nida'uhu litajdid al–huzn…*"1 (calling the Imam was renewed due the renewal of sorrow…).

By Allah, the loss is great.

The letter 'lam' (اَلَ) in عَنْ laqad is employed for taking an oath. And since the particle عُنْ 'qad' here appears before a past tense verb 'azhumat (is great), it denotes emphasis. Hence laqad 'azhumat would mean 'By Allah, surely great has been...'. The origin of the word 'raziyya' (رَزِيْنَةُ) is the word razi'a (رَزِيْنَةُ with a hamza (ع) after the letter ya'. Some have merely translated it as a calamity. However, it denotes a specific kind of calamity: calamity due to loss. Al–Kashani in his commentary says that it specifically refers to the calamity of the loss of the dear and beloved ones2. However, it is also used for a calamity of loss in the general sense.

Before his departure from this mortal world, the Holy Prophet (S) in his state of illness sought a paper and pen to write something very important for the Muslim Umma. An ignorant man nearby said, "Indeed pain has overtaken the Messenger of Allah, and you have the Qur`an with you. The Book of Allah is sufficient for us".

This followed a difference of opinion among people near the Holy Prophet (S). On seeing this chaotic state of affairs, he told them to disperse from there. 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas in reference to the impediment that hampered the Holy Prophet (S) to write down the important direction, would employ the word *raziyya* and say:

Surely the calamity, a total calamity hindered the Messenger of Allah from writing for them that testament...3

The verb رَزَء raza'a or razi'a literally means 'he lessened' or 'he diminished'4. Al-Firuzabadi in his al-Qamus al-Muhit, giving an example of how this verb is used, says:

Ma razi'tuhu means I have not lessened5

Therefore lagad 'azhumat al-raziyya means 'By Allah, indeed the loss is great.'

This phrase talks about the greatness and intensity of the calamity that the believers faced by losing an Infallible Imam of the AhI al-Bayt (AS) who enjoyed a very exalted rank near Allah and represented Allah on earth. Only those who comprehend the greatness of such a Divine leader can tangibly feel the loss. Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (AS) says in a meaningful tradition:

...so, the greater the value of the envied entity the greater the calamity of its loss.

And since the sanctity of Imam al-Husayn (AS) is such that its essence is incomprehensible, the gravity of losing his personality is likewise incomprehensible. In addition, the difficult circumstances that Imam al-Husayn (AS) and his noble progeny faced and the manner in which their sanctity was violated leave such wounds in the hearts of his lovers that make them tearful forever. Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud narrates from Imam al-Ridha` (AS):

Surely the day of al-Husayn wounded our eyes and made our tears pour down and dishonored our venerated ones in the land of sorrow and tribulation, and thereby it **made** *us inherit sorrow and calamity until the final day*, and therefore the mourners must weep for the likes of al-Husayn, for surely weeping over him wipes out major sins ...6

Imam al-Mahdi (AS) in his well-known Ziyarat al-Nahiya addressing Imam al-Husayn (AS) cries:

But as I have been hindered by the course of time and as (Allah's) decree has prevented me from helping you, and as I could not fight those who fought you, and was not able to show hostility to those who showed hostility to you, I will, therefore, lament you morning and evening, and will weep blood in place of tears, out of my anguish for you and my sorrow for all that befell you, until I meet death from the pain of the catastrophe and the choking grief.7

By Allah, the loss is great.

Before one tries to swear and say that the loss is great, one must have knowledge about the same. Although we cannot even imagine the magnitude of the loss that the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) encountered in the plains of Karbala, it is important for us to search for authentic information about the same, so that we may naturally express our sorrow as we recite this particular phrase.

An Unparalleled Incident

One of the reasons that make this calamity outstanding and unique is that those who joined al-Husayn (AS) knew very well what awaited them. Despite that, they chose with complete volition on their side, to undertake this sacred journey and meet the calamities with open arms. Imam al-Husayn (AS) made it very clear to them when he resolved to embark on his journey to 'Iraq that martyrdom is what awaits him:

مَنْ كَانَ فِيْنَا بَاذِلاً مُهْجَتَهُ، مُوَطنًا عَلى لِقَاءِ اللهِ نَفْسَهُ فَلْيَرْحَلْ مَعَنَا فَإِنّيْ رَاحِلٌ مُصنبحًا إِنْ شَاءَ اللهُ تَعَالى...

Whosoever is ready to sacrifice his soul for us, and has stationed himself for meeting Allah, he must leave with us, for surely I will leave tomorrow morning Insha Allah...8

It is such a move in complete awareness of the horrendous massacre that singles out the tragedy of Karbala. The late eminent scholar 'Allama Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari in response to a question asked as to why the Karbala event is the most sorrowful of all events in history, said:

The important factor in the story of al-Husayn (AS) which cannot be compared to any other event whatsoever is that it was out of complete awareness and choice. At no moment did they lose their free will. Furthermore, historical analysis shows that even at the very last moment if the Imam (AS) would say 'yes' [to Yazid], not only would the difficult situation be over, but he would be saved from that place, and perhaps the next era would be his era...9

...and the calamity on us and all the enthusiasts of Islam because of what befell on you is great and severe...

The past tense verb 'azluat' mentioned in the above phrase is commonly translated in the same way as the verb 'azhumat (is great). Some lexicographers however state that there is a fine difference between the two verbs: whereas 'azhumat can apply for both material as well as spiritual intensity, jallat is only correct for spiritual greatness 10. Therefore this phrase implies that the calamity on us is spiritually great. All that the Imam (AS) and his noble family members as well as sincere companions faced has enormously hurt our spirits and the spirit of every lover of Islam. In revealing the magnitude of the tragedy, Imam al–Hasan (AS) addressing his brother says:

There is no day like your Day O Aba 'Abdillah. 11

And Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (AS) in one of his sermons says:

... and this is a calamity the like of which there is no calamity. 12

And 'Abdullah bin al-Fadhl narrates from Imam al-Sadiq (AS):

Indeed the day of the martyrdom of al-Husayn is a day of greater calamity then all other days... 13

and on all the members of the enthusiasts of Islam

The genitive construction *Ahl al–Islam* denotes 'those who are intimate and attached to Islam'. The literal meaning of the word *ahl* according to some lexicographers is *uns* (intimacy) coupled with specific relationship and attachment 14. The word Ah al–Bayt refers to the people of a house, because they are intimate, attached, and have a specific relationship to the house.

Therefore when we say that the loss and calamity is great on all the Ahl al-Islam we mean that all those who really have intimacy, attachment and relationship with Islam suffer with great loss and calamity. This is where we must try to analyze ourselves and see whether we are from the Ahl al-Islam or not.

The main reason why the Ahl al-Islam must express sorrow is that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the epitome of Islam. Naturally therefore, all the lovers of Islam would tangibly feel sorrowful when any kind of calamity befalls him.

In one of his counsels to his contemporary, Imam al-Baqir (AS) describing the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), says:

And we are the places of the Divine Message, and we are the Religion... 15

And in another tradition, Imam al-Sadig (AS) informs his companion Dawud:

O Dawud, we are the prayer (*al-salat*) in the Book of Allah, the Invincible and Exalted, and we are the poor rate (*zakat*), and we are the fast (*al-siyam*), and we are the pilgrimage (*al-hajj*) and we are the sacred month (*al-shahr al-haram*) and we are the sacred city (*al-balad al-haram*) and we are the Ka'ba of Allah and we are the *qibla* of Allah...16

These traditions inform us that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) were epitomes of religion. Therefore love for religion in the true sense is love for them, and vice versa.

And the calamity that befell on you is reckoned by all the inhabitants of the heavens in the heavens as severe and great.

In this phrase we confess that not only was the calamity great for the earth and its inhabitants, the heavens and their inhabitants likewise were overtaken by sorrow and grief for what transpired on a representative of Allah on earth.

Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Ridha (AS) addressing to Ibn Shabib says:

Certainly, the seven heavens and earths cried because of his martyrdom (i.e. of al-Husayn (AS)).

And Imam al-Sadiq (AS) is reported to have said:

Indeed when Aba 'Abdillah al-Husayn bin 'Ali (AS) left this world, the seven heavens and the seven earths and whatever is in and between them, and whososever moves in Paradise and Hell Fire from the

creation of our Lord and what can be seen and what cannot be seen wept for him. 17

It should be known that it has been established in its own place that every existential entity has a share in comprehension (*shu'ur*), glorification (*tasbih*), laudation (*hamd*), love (*'ishq*), and lamentation (*buka'*). Those, however, who have not contemplated on the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Ahl al–Bayt (AS) well, may consider this as far fetched. In order to grasp this reality intellectually, they should refer to works on the Transcendent Philosophy (*al–hikmat al–muta'aliya*) propounded by leading philosophers such as Mulla Sadra and Mulla Hadi Sabzawari (may Allah elevate their noble spirits).

Following is a verse of the Holy Qur'an that clearly informs us about the possibility of the sky weeping:

So neither the sky wept for them, nor the earth; nor were they granted any respite. (44:29)

Commenting on this verse, Imam al-Sadiq (AS) is reported to have said:

The sky did not cry over anyone ever since Yahya bin Zakariyya was slain, until al-Husayn (AS) was slain, whereupon it cried over him. 18

And Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) is reported to have said the following about the abovementioned verse:

The sky did not cry for anyone after Yahya bin Zakariyya save on al-Husayn bin 'Ali (AS), for surely it cried over him for forty days. 19

The verse as well as the comments of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) clearly reveal to us that the sky manifests sorrow and expresses its lamentation as well.

And the calamity that befell on you is reckoned by all the inhabitants of the heavens in the heavens as severe and great.

The article *al* that precedes *al-samawat* (السماوات) confers the meaning that all the heavens are taken into consideration.

And heavens and skies should not transport us to their material extensions. Scholars of authority opine that they refer to the higher levels of the universe of contingent existence.

The phrase *ahl al-samawat* can refer to the angels who inhabit the heavens and all the exalted departed souls who witnessed or came to know about the tragedy of Karbala.

Consider the following traditions:

Imam al-Ridha (AS) tells Ibn Shabib:

Four thousand angels descended on earth to aid him, but (when they were allowed to reach there) they found him martyred. So they remained at his grave, dishevelled and covered with dust, and will remain there until the rising of al-Qa'im (Imam al-Mahdi A, whereupon they will aid him. Their slogan will be, 'Vengeance for the blood of al-Husayn (AS)!'

Imam al-Sadig (AS) tells a companion called Fudhayl:

What is the matter with you that you do not visit him [the grave of Imam al-Husayn (AS)]? Surely four thousand angels constantly weep near his grave, [and will do so] until the Judgment Day.20

As for the departed souls, one of the traditions that break the hearts and make us realize how grave is the matter of al-Husayn (AS) is the following conversation between Imam al-Sadiq (AS) and Abu Basir, his loyal companion, who had lost his physical eyesight, but was endowed with spiritual effulgence:

يَا أَبَا بَصِيرٍ إِذَا نَظَرْتُ إِلَى وُلْدِ الْحُسَيْنِ أَتَانِي مَا لاَ أَمْلِكُهُ بِمَا أَتَى إِلَى أَبِيهِمْ وَآلِهِمْ يَا أَبَا بَصِيرٍ إِنَّ فَاطَمَةَ لَتَبْكِيهِ وَتَشْهَقُ...فَلاَ تَزَالُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ مُشْفِقِينَ يَبْكُونَ لِبُكَائِهَا وَيَدْعُونَ اللَّهُ وَيَتَضَرَّعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ قُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ إِنَّ هَذَا الأَمْرَ عَظِيمٌ قَالَ غَيْرُهُ أَعْظَمُ مِنْهُ مَا لَمْ تَسْمَعْهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا بَا بَصِيرٍ أَ مَا تُحِبُّ أَنْ تَكُونَ فِيمَنْ يُسْعِدُ فَاطَمَةَ فَبَكَيْتُ حِينَ قَالَهَا فَمَا قَدَرْتُ عَلَى الْمَنْطَقِ وَمَا قَدَرْتُ عَلَى كَلاَمِي مِنَ الْبُكَاءِ.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: O Aba Basir, when I look at the progeny of al-Husayn (AS), I am overcome due to what happened to their father and his family; O Aba Basir, Indeed Fatima (AS) constantly weeps for him (al-Husayn (AS)) and sighs [out of deep sorrow]....So the angels constantly sympathize and weep due to her weeping and pray to Allah and express their humility to Him.... Abu Basir said: May I be made your ransom. Indeed the matter is great. Thereupon the Imam (AS) said: What you have not heard other than this is even greater. Thereafter the Imam (AS) said: O Aba Basir: Don't you want to be among those who assist Fatima (AS)? Abu Basir says: When he said this, I started weeping and could not utter a word, nor could I speak due to my weeping...21

This tradition clearly hints to us that whatever we have heard and known about Imam al-Husayn (AS) cannot be compared to that which we do not know.

- 1. Mawla HabibulLah Kashani, Sharhu Ziyarat 'Ashura', p. 53
- 2. Ibid.
- 3. Al-Tabari, Al-Mustarshid, p. 682
- 4. E.W. Lane, E.W. Lane Arabic-English Lexicon, under the root word raza'a
- 5. Al-Firuzabadi, Al-Qamus al-Muhit, v. 1, p. 122
- 6. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin al-Tawus, Iqbal al-A'mal, v.3, p. 28
- 7. Muhammad bin al-Mashhadi, Al-Mazar, p. 500
- 8. Al-Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Bahrani, al-'Awalim (al-Imam al-Husayn ('a)), p. 216
- 9. Muhammad Ridha Jawadi & 'Ali Ja'fari, Dar Mahzar-e- Hakim 'Allameye Ja'fari, p. 18
- 10. Al-Mustafawi, Al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur`an al-Karim, v. 2, p. 102
- 11. Al-Bahrani, al-'Awalim (al-Imam al-Husayn 1), p. 154
- 12. Ibid.,, p. 448
- 13. Ibid.,,p. 516
- 14. Al-Mustafawi, Al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur`an al-Karim, v. 1, p. 169
- 15. Al-Daylami, Irshad al-Qulub, v.2, p. 418
- 16. 'Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.24, p. 303
- 17. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.4, p. 575
- 18. Al-Bahrani, Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v. 3, p. 701.
- 19. Ibid.
- 20. 'Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 45, p. 222
- 21. Shaykh al-Nuri, Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v. 10, p. 314

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