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The Sacred Effusion Volume 1

Reflections On Ziyarat ‘Ashura Of Sayyid Al-Shuhada Al-Husayn B. ‘Ali (as)

Inicie sesión [1] o regístrese [2] para comentar

A unique and original piece of research on the sacred supplication of Ziyarat Ashura of Imam Husayn (as). The reader will come to appreciate the core reality of the ziyarah being: "to deflect from other than the visited one". The reflections in this publication centre around this theme: if we truly intend Imam al-Husayn (as) then we must realize that he is the very epitome of Islam. The more we revive Islamic values individually and socially, the closer we come to Imam al-Husayn (as) and therefore our ziyarat gains true meaning.

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Foreword

By Dr. Hasnain Walji
In the Name of Allah, the
Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Ziyarat ‘Ashura: A Potent Antidote to Reawaken Our Hearts

This is an age where the very purpose of our existence has been obscured by the glut of materialism. We seem to be engulfed in a quagmire that deflects our energy away from his divinely intended purpose. Our true fulfillment can only come through inner light, when the heart is awakened to seek its divinely intended purpose.

This seminal work on Ziyarat ‘Ashura, aptly named *The Sacred Effusion*, by Shaykh Muhammad Khalfan, is a beacon for the seeker to seek the Sacred and the Divine. With his characteristic insight, the venerable Shaykh guides us to understand how Ziyarat ‘Ashura can be a potent antidote to reawaken our hearts to the real purpose of our existence and not remain a mere habitual or ritual recitation.

As one reads the words so passionately penned by the author, one cannot help but visualize and ponder upon the origin of the very word *Ziyarat*, which originates from the word *zawr,* which means to deflect or turn away. The context becomes all the more evident when we read that the Arabic word *zur* refers to a lie - because it deflects from the path of truth. This sets the scene for the reader to contextualize the very essence of the spiritual and moral aspects of the Ziyarat - that when visiting the shrines of the Ma’sumin, or reciting the Ziyarat we momentarily ‘turn away’ from our worldly existence and gravitate towards an inner state of seeking none other than Allah. The essence of the Ziyarat, as elucidated by the author is that the *zair* who recites the *Ziyarat* must imbibe the spirit and attain the cognizance of the sublimity of Ziyarat ‘Ashura to enable him to align himself with the spirit of the visited one.

The author eloquently elucidates that the crux of the Ziyarat ‘Ashura are the concepts of al-Tawalli and al-Tabarri. He writes:

Besides its ample merits, it is a program of revolution for the sleeping masses. The crux of the Ziyarat is al-tabarri` and al-tawalli, which can correctly be translated as ‘fleeing from imperfection’ and ‘seeking perfection’, or in beautiful words of every Muslim: La ilahaillallah - Besides Allah - the Only Beloved, there is no other ilah (beloved).

The name Allah exemplifies all the perfect attributes of the Divine Essence, which the human being has been molded to appreciate and naturally seek. The Holy Qur`an says:

‘...the innate nature of Allah, upon which the human beings were molded.’ (30:30).

Therefore the Ziyarat in reality is a call to the unsullied innate disposition (fitra) of the human being.

The oft-repeated salutation of *Assalamu ‘Alayka Ya Aba ‘Abdillah*, assumes an everlasting impression upon our minds when we read how we must manifest our intentions to unite with his lofty ideals, and in cursing his opponents how we must demonstrate our revulsion at the worldly desires of his enemies. If we truly make that salutation with that understanding, it helps us align ourselves with the spirit of Imam al-Husayn (AS) and we have fulfilled and are true to the words we recite in the *Ziyarat:*

So I ask Allah, who ennobled me by knowing you and knowing your friends, and enabled me

to seek remoteness from your enemies, to place me in your company in this world and the Hereafter.

This allows us to seek nearness to Allah through the Ziyarat rather than to be only motivated to gain personal benefits. Unquestionably, many traditions of the A`imma promise us that by the recitation of Ziyarat ‘Ashura our needs would be fulfilled. For example Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (AS) guided Safwan thus:

When you are confronted with some adversity, then seek redress of your grievances from Imam al-Husayn (AS) with this Ziyarat and Allah never reneges on His word.

However, the real question that we are encouraged to ponder upon is *“What is our real need that we should ask for?*” It helps us create an awareness of our own selves so that we can assess the true value of our neediness. Cited is an inspiring example of asking for one’s real need is of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karim Hairi, the founder of the Hawza of Qum. It is said that during the Ziyarat at the Haram of Imam al-Husayn (A) he was seen weeping and telling the Imam (AS): *“O dear master, I have become a mujtahid but I want to become a human being.”*

Thus the *Ziyarat*, must go beyond the seeking of mundane material benefits and rise to the lofty sublimities of cognition and self-awareness to awaken us from the sluggishness caused by the excesses of hubbe-duniya. To do so is to realize the ultimate purpose of Ziyarat. After all who can be a better symbol than Imam al-Husayn (AS) whose supreme sacrifice on the day of ‘Ashura, symbolized the highest manifestation of Tawheed - that Besides *Allah- the Only Beloved, there is no other ilah (beloved).*

Hasnain Walji
Plano Texas, March 2009

Preface

By Shaykh Muhammad M Khalfan

All praises belong exclusively to Allah, and may His peace and benedictions be on Muhammad, the most perfect epitome of Divine Attributes and his infallible progeny, the Ahl al-Bayt, who are rightfully known as the ships of salvation, whosoever boards their ship, earns eternal felicity, and whosoever lags behind and is indifferent drowns and attains eternal damnation.

Al-Qanduzi, the Hanafite narrator of traditions, in his radiant collection *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (lit. Fountains of Constant Love) narrates a tradition from Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S):

إِنّ مَثَلَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ مَثَلُ سَفِيْنَةِ نُوْح، مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا وَمَنْ تَخَلّفَ عَنْهَا هَلَكَ

The similitude of my progeny among you is that of the ship of Noah A; whosoever boards it is saved, and whosoever lags behind would perish[1]

The ship of al-Husayn (AS), however, according to another tradition is more rapid: Once a companion of Imam al-Sadiq (AS) asked him about the prophetic tradition “Surely al-Husayn is the lamp of guidance and the ship of salvation” saying: “Aren’t you [the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)] ships of salvation [too]?” The Imam (AS) replied:

كُلُّنَا سُفُنُ النّجَاةِ إلاّ أنّ سَفِيْنَةَ الْحُسَيْنِ أَوَسَعُ وَأَسْرَعُ

All of us are ships of salvation, save that the ship of al-Husayn (AS) is **more spacious and faster**.[2]

This tradition is also endorsed by great mystic scholars who can appreciate the sublime secrets of religion. The late mystic-scholar Ayatullah Mirza Tabrizi in his monumental prayer manual *al-Muraqabat* says:

It should be known that the door of al-Husayn (AS) is the door of comprehensive mercy, rapid response and approval. And he [the Imam] would say during his life time: ‘The similitude of doing good is rain water which covers both the virtuous as well as the sinful.’[3]

Sayyid Haddad al-Musawi a great Shi’ite saint and a contemporary of ‘Allamah al-Tabataba`i, is reported to have quoted their mentor in practical gnosis, Ayatullah Qadhi al-Tabataba`i as having said:

My teacher, Marhum Qadhi (may his spirit be sanctified) said to me that it is impossible for a human being to attain the station of *tawhid* [proximity to God] without the path of Sayyid al-Shuhada’.[4]

And ‘Allama al-Tabataba`i is reported to have said:
That Hadhrat [i.e. Imam al-Husayn (AS)] has great attention towards the wayfarers of the path of God in removing the veil and impediments of the ‘path of God’.[5]

One of the excellent ways of establishing contact with Imam al-Husayn (AS) is through offering salutations to his exalted personality (*Ziyarat)*. This can be achieved either in front of his radiant tomb in Karbala, or in the environs of one’s house observing some specific etiquettes.

The secret however is that the *za’ir*, one who performs the *Ziyarat*, must yearn to the attain the apex of the meaning of what he recites and unite with the spirit of the *mazur* (the visited one). The grand Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli in his masterpiece ‘*Adabe Finaye Muqarraban*’ says:

Ziyarat is the mystical presence of the fervent lover (*‘ashiq*) in the dwelling of the Beloved; it is the visitor’s passionate encounter of the abode of the visited one; it is the lover’s expression of intense love and consideration for the beloved; it is when the enamored one sincerely gives his heart in the alley of the possessor of the heart...[6]

The present commentary tries to examine and reflect on one of the well-known *ziyarat* that

many of the Muslims recite with great zeal and devotion. Most of the Shi'a Muslims express their veneration and sorrow when they recite this sublime *Ziyarat* on the day of 'Ashura`. However, the Infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) have taught us to recite it very often. Besides its ample merits, it is a program of revolution for the sleeping masses.

The crux of the *Ziyarat* is *al-tabarri'* and *al-tawalli*, which can correctly be translated as 'fleeing from imperfection' and 'seeking perfection', or in the beautiful words of every Muslim *La ilaha illa Allah* -Besides Allah- the Only Beloved, there is no other *ilah* (beloved). The Name Allah exemplifies all the perfect attributes of the Divine Essence, which the human being has been molded to appreciate and naturally seek. The Holy Qur`an says:

***'...the innate nature of Allah, upon which the human beings were molded...'*(30:30).**

Therefore the *Ziyarat* in reality is a call to the unsullied innate disposition (*fitra*) of the human being.

In expressing veneration and seeking the higher levels of peace for Imam al-Husayn (AS) we are trying to unite with his ideas, thoughts and towering volition, and in cursing his opponents, who overtly declared themselves to be Muslims and believers, but were extensions of the hypocrites, we are trying to flee from all their ideas, thoughts and actions. Hence this recital trains the reciter to overhaul himself and unite with the spirit of the sacred Imam (AS). In fact, as we shall come to observe in this *Ziyarat* later, one of the beautiful supplications taught to us when expressing our greetings to the Imam is to seek spiritual harmony with the Imam (AS) in both this world as well as the Hereafter. We say later in this *Ziyarat:*

فَأَسْأَلُ اللهَ الّذِي أَكْرَمَنِي بِمَعْرِفَتِكُمْ وَمَعْرِفَةِ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ وَرَزَقَنِي الْبَرَاءَةَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِكُمْ أَنْ يَجْعَلَنِي مَعَكُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ

So I ask Allah, who ennobled me by knowing you and knowing your friends, and enabled me to seek remoteness from your enemies, to place me in your company in this world and the Hereafter.

Understanding the aforementioned obliges every high-spirited seeker of truth to aim for the achievement of the crux of the *Ziyarat* rather than be selfishly motivated to gain personal benefits. The rewards of the *Ziyarat* which are both sacred and sublime should not be the only factor to lead us to recite it. It is the natural love for the Imam (AS) who exemplifies the Divine Attributes in himself that should transport us to recite this humble presentation. In fact some traditions, as we shall soon consider, clearly state that whosoever visits Imam al-Husayn (AS) in Karbala is as if he has visited Allah at His Throne.[7]

Another very important point to bear in mind is that because the reciter of this *Ziyarat* has been guaranteed by the Imams (AS) that his needs would be fulfilled, he must be very careful in distinguishing 'that which is really a need' from 'that which is not really a need'. The great saint Ayatullah Haddad al-Musawi, a contemporary of 'Allama al-Tabataba`i, would see people clinging onto the radiant enclosure where Imam al-Husayn (AS) is buried, and instead of seeking their real needs, asking for those things that would increase the

burden that they had already accumulated. He is reported to have said:

إنّ أكْثَرَ النّاس حِيْنَمَا يَذْهَبُوْنَ إلى زِيَارَةِ العَتَبَاتِ الْمُقَدّسَةِ يَقِفُوْنَ مَاسِكِي الضّرِيْحِ فَيَتَوَسّلُوْنَ بِالإمَامِ لِحَوَائِجِهِمْ الْمَادِّيّةِ فَيَحْمِلُوْنَ ثِقْلاً عَلى ثِقْلِهِمْ وَلَمْ يَسْئَلُوا الإمَامَ بِأنْ يّأْخُذَ مِنْهُمْ ثِقْلَهُمْ وَهُوَ التّعَلّقُ بِالدّنْيَا،بَلْ يَسْئَلُوْنَهُ بِانْ يُعْطِيَهُمْ بَيْتاً اَوْ وَلَداً اَوْ زَوْجاً اَوْ سَيّارَةً، وَمَا سَمِعْنَا عَنْ اَحَدٍ دَخَلَ بِخِدْمَتِهِ وَقَالَ لَهُ خُذْ مِنِّيْ كَذَا وَكَذَا

When most of the people visit the holy shrines, they stand holding fast onto the enclosures of the graves and ask the Imam (AS) to mediate on their behalf, so that their material needs are fulfilled. Consequently, they add a burden over their burden. They do not ask the Imam (AS) to remove their burden which is ‘attachment to the world’; rather they ask for a house, an off spring, a wife or a car; and never have we heard from anyone who entered in his service, and asked him: ‘Relieve me from such and such a thing.’8

In one of his lessons on practical ethics (*akhlaq*), Ayatullah Mujtahidi (may Allah elevate his status) narrates the following incident:

حاج شیخ عبدالکریم حائری (ره) را در حرم امام دیدند که گریه می‌کند و به امام می‌گوید: آقا جان من مجتهد شده‌ام، ولی می‌خواهم آدم بشوم.

Haj Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karim Ha`iri [the founder of the Islamic Seminary of Qum] was seen in the haram of Imam al-Husayn (AS) weeping and telling the Imam (AS): O dear master, I have become a juristconsult *(mujtahid)*, but I want to become a [perfect] human being.9

Some traditions clearly teach us about the ultimate purpose of *Ziyarat*. Observe the following:

1. Safwan bin Mihran is reported to have said:

عَنْ اَبِيْ عَبْدِ اللهِ َ قَالَ: مَنْ زَارَ قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْنَ وَهُوَ يُرِيْدُ اللهَ عَزّ وَجَلّ شَيّعَهُ جَبْرَئِيْلُ وَمِيْكائِيْلُ وَاِسْرَافِيْلُ حَتّى يَرِدَ إلى مَنْزِلِهِ.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: ‘Whosoever visits the grave of al-Husayn (AS) while ***he seeks***

Allah, the Invincible and Exalted, Jibra`il, Mika`il, and Israfil accompany him until he returns back to his house.’10

2. Mu`ammar is reported to have said: I heard Zayd bin ‘Ali (AS) saying:

مَنْ زَارَ قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ لاَ يُرِيْدُ بِهِ اِلاّ اللهَ تَعَالى غُفِرَ لَهُ جَمِيعُ ذُنُوْبِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَتْ مِثْلُ زَبَدِ الْبَحْرِ، فَاسْتَكْثِرُوْا مِنْ زِيَارَتِهِ يَغْفِرُ اللهُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ.

Whosoever visits the grave of al-Husayn bin ‘Ali (AS) while he ***does not seek thereby save Allah****, Allah* would forgive all his sins even if they be like the foam of the ocean; therefore, visit him often, and Allah would forgive your sins.11

Seeking ‘Allah’ as mentioned in the abovementioned narrations refers to yearning for Allah’s proximity, which in reality is perfecting oneself to attain the attributes of Almighty Allah. If this is the purpose behind *Ziyarat*, the visitor would naturally struggle for a complete unity with religion and divine values.

Before we begin the commentary of this radiant *Ziyarat*, which is also reckoned to be among the sacred traditions12 *(ahadith qudsiyya)*, and understand both its particular as well as its universal import, it is imperative to generally know the significance of *Ziyarat*, and its exalted purpose.

Meaning of Ziyarat

The word *‘Ziyarat’* is derived from the word “*zawr*” which means to deflect or draw away from something. A lie is called *zur* because it deflects from the path of truth. The *za’ir* is known to be so, because he deflects from other than “the one he intends to visit”. That is why some lexicographers translate “*Ziyarat*” to mean intention *(qasd)*, for the one who deflects from other than a certain entity intends the entity. Al-Fayumi, a well-known lexicographer in his authoritative lexicon *al-Misbah al-Munir* says:

و(الزِّيَارَةُ) فِي الْعُرْفِ قَصْدُ الْمَزُوْر اِكْرَامًا لَهُ وَاسْتِئْنَاسًا بِهِ

The conventional meaning of *al-Ziyarat* is to intend the one to be visited, for his veneration and intimacy.13

And it is said that the reason why *Ziyarat* is referred to as visiting the saintly human beings, is because it is to deflect from the material routine and draw away from the corporeal world and incline towards the world of spirit, while one is present in the corporeal environment and maintains one’s bodily form.14

Sometimes *Ziyarat* is translated as *‘ittihad al-za`ir bi-al mazur’* (the unity of the visitor with the visited one). In simpler words: ‘to color oneself with the attributes of the visited one’.

This definition does not contradict the former definitions, for ‘seeking and uniting with the attributes of the *mazur* (visited one)’ is nothing but ‘deflecting and drawing away from attributes contrary to the *mazur*’. In a subtler expression, we can say ‘*Ziyarat* is to flee from imperfection while struggling for perfection’.15

Allusions of this reality can also be gotten from the Qur`anic verse:

***‘And flee towards Allah’* (51:50).**

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) is reported16 to have commented on this verse saying “*ay hujju*” (It means ‘perform *hajj’*). And the literal meaning of *hajj* is *qasd* (intention). In a conversation he had with his son Zayd bin ‘Ali, Imam Zayn al-’Abidin (AS) says:

وَمَعْنَى قَوْلِهِ عَزّوَجَلّ: فَفِرُّوْا إِلى اللهِ يَعْنِي حُجُّوْا إِلى بَيْتِ اللهِ، يَا بُنَيّ إِنّ الْكَعْبَةَ بَيْتُ اللهِ فَمَنْ حَجّ بَيْتَ اللهِ فَقَدْ قَصَدَ إِلى اللهِ...

And the meaning of Allah’s speech “*And flee to Allah...*” is *Hujju ila baytillah* (Intend the house of Allah); O my dear young son, surely the Ka’ba is the house of Allah; therefore, whosoever intends the house of Allah, has surely intended Allah...17

Therefore *hajj*, as it is correctly conveyed, is not only ‘*hajju bayt Allah al-Haram’* (intending the sacred House of Allah), but *hajj Allah* (intending Allah) as the verse explicitly conveys: *fa firru ila Allah* (so escape towards Allah). And escaping towards Allah is seeking His noble attributes and fleeing from the contrary. And *hajj* if perfomed with its proper etiquettes, as the experts of the kernel of Islamic law mention, enables one to attain such noble attributes.

Some narrations explicitly say that doing *Ziyarat* of the Holy Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams (AS) is like doing the *Ziyarat* of Allah. Consider the following traditions:

عَنْ زَيْد الشّحّامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لاَبِي عَبْدِ اللهِ: مَا لِمَنْ زَارَ رَسُوْلَ اللهِ ؟ قَالَ: كمَنْ زَارَ اللهَ عَزّوَجَلّ فَوْقَ عَرْشِهِ...

Zayd al-Shahham is reported to have said: I asked Abu ‘Abdilah (al-Sadiq (AS)): What is the reward for one who visits the Messenger of Allah? The Imam (AS) said: ‘It is like one who has visited Allah at His throne (*‘arsh*).’18

عَنْ زَيْد الشّحّام،عَنْ اَبِيْ عَبْدِ اللهِ قَالَ: مَنْ زَارَ قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْن بن عَلِيّ عَارِفًا بِحَقِّه كانَ كمَنْ زَارَ اللهَ فِيْ عَرْشِه...

Zayd al-Shahham is reported to have said: Abu ‘Abdillah (al-Sadiq (AS)) said: Whosoever visits the grave of al-Husayn (AS) with the knowledge of his status is like one who visits Allah at His Throne.19

عَنْ جَابِر اَلْجُعْفِي، قَالَ: دَخَلْتُ عَلى جَعْفَر بن مُحَمّد فِيْ يَوْمِ عَاشُوْرَآء،فَقَالَ لِيْ: هَؤُلاءِ زُوّارُ اللهِ وَحَقٌّ عَلى الْمَزُوْر اَنْ يُكْرِمَ الزّائِرَ...

Jabir al-Ju’fi is reported to have said: I came to Ja’far bin Muhammad (al-Sadiq (AS)) on the day of ‘Ashura`, and he said to me: ‘These people are the visitors of Allah (*zuwwar Allah*), and it is the right of the *mazur* to honor the *za’ir*...20

The above traditons confer the implication that because the Imams (AS) are manifestations of Allah’s sublime names,21 visiting them and seeking their proximity is the same as seeking the proximity of Almighty Allah. Proximity here, we should understand, does not refer to any kind of physical closeness.

Rather, it refers to spiritual proximity. In other words, as the *za’ir* (one who deflects from other than the attributes of the *mazur*) draws spiritually closer to the Imam (AS) he in reality embellishes himself with the attributes of Almighty Allah which the Imam (AS) exemplifies according to his *limitations*. The Imams (AS), however, are sheer manifestations (*mazhahir*) of Allah’s names and thus no attribute independently belongs to other than Allah. The Holy Qur`an says:

اَللهُ لا إِلَهَ إِلاّ هُو لَهُ الأَسْمآء الحُسْنى

Allah, other than Him there is no God; and to Him alone belong the Beautiful Names...(20:8)

Notice here that instead of Allah saying ‘The Beautiful Names belong to Allah’ He says ‘To Him alone belong the Beautiful Names’. In grammatical terminology, the predicate is brought before the subject. And whenever this happens, it signifies restriction. In other words ‘To Him alone [and no one else] belong the Beautiful Names’.

Those who are able to appreciate the secrets of prayer tangibly comprehend this reality in the state of *ruku’* when they vision that no one other than Almighty Allah has any perfection whatsoever. Imam Khumayni in his Etiquettes of Prayer says:

اِعْلَمْ اَنّ عُمْدَةَ اَحْوَال الصّلاةِ ثَلاثَةٌ،وَسَائِرُ الاعْمَال وَالاَفْعَال مُقَدِّمَاتُهَا وَمُهَيّئَاتٌ لَهَا، الاوّلُ: اَلْقِيَامُ.وَالثّانِيْ: اَلرُّكُوْع.

َالثّالِثُ:السُّجُوْدُ.وَاَهْلُ الْمَعْرفَةِ يَرَوْنَ هَذِهِ الثَلاثَة إِشَارَةً إِلى التّوْحِيْدَاتِ الثّلاثَة...وَفِي الرُّكُوْعِ تَرْكٌ لِرُؤْيَةِ النّفْسِ عَلى حَسَبِ مَقَامِ الصّفَاتِ وَالاَسْمَاءِ وَرُؤْيَة لِمَقَامِ اَسْمَاءِ الْحَقّ وَصِفَاتِهِ

Beware that the main states of prayer are three, and the rest of the acts serve as introductory and preparatory phases: (1) *qiyam*, (2) *ruku'*, and (3) *sujud*. And the men of gnosis reckon these three acts as the three kinds of unity...and in the state of *ruku'* one cannot behold himself in terms of attributes and names, and beholds God's exclusive station of Names and Attributes. [In other words, he sees that every kind of attribute or name belongs only to God].22

Ziyarat of Believers

Islam highly encourages one to visit one's Muslim brother or sister. However, it does not emphasize on any kind of *Ziyarat* whatsoever. It encourages meaningful *Ziyarat* - *Ziyarat* with a purpose and aim. Observe the following traditions:
Imam al-Sadiq (AS) is reported to have said:

قَالَ تَزَاوَرُوا فَإِنّ فِي زِيَارَتِكُمْ إِحْيَاءً لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَذِكْراً لأحَادِيثِنَا وَأَحَادِيثُنَا تُعَطفُ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَإِنْ أَخَذْتُمْ بِهَا رَشَدْتُمْ وَنَجَوْتُمْ وَإِنْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا ضَلَلْتُمْ وَهَلَكْتُمْ فَخُذُوا بِهَا وَأَنَا بِنَجَاتِكُمْ زَعِيمٌ

Visit one another, for verily in your visitation is the revival of your hearts, and a remembrance of our speeches; our speeches make you harbor affection for one another; and if you act according to them, you would be guided and saved, and if you shun them, you would go astray and perish; therefore follow them while I guarantee your salvation.23

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

تَزَاوَرُوا فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ فَإِنّ ذَلِكَ حَيَاةٌ لاَمْرِنَا رَحِمَ اللهَ عَبْداً أَحْيَا أَمْرَنَا

Visit one another in your homes for surely in that is the revival of our affair; may Allah's Mercy be upon one who revives our affair.24

It should be noted that the revival of the affair discussed in the above traditions is nothing but the revival of Islamic values, for the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are protectors of Islamic values

and to remember them and their teachings is to elevate the human spirit in reality. One should not conjecture that there is any personal gain that these infallible leaders of truth derive from such gatherings. Rather it is their followers who benefit.

Another important point to bear in mind is that ‘the revival of their affair’ cannot be merely achieved by thoughts and words. We must sow the seeds of resolution in our visitations in order to reap the fruits of applying the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

So far *Ziyarat* has been reduced to visitation in the earthly abode. The Islamic worldview, however, due its sharp and accurate cognition of reality, as taught by the Holy Qur`an, the Holy Prophet (S) and his infallible successors, does not limit *Ziyarat* to the corporeal world. It rather believes that human beings can communicate with those who have transcended this limited world of matter and can listen to them as well. In our daily prayer, we address the Holy Prophet (S) as follows:

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكاتُهُ

Peace be unto you O Prophet and may Allah’s mercy and blessings be on you.25

This statement presumes the presence of the *mukhatab* (the addressee). And therefore we believe that the Prophet (S) is present and can behold our presence too.

One of the important etiquettes of entering the shrine of the Holy Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is to read the well-known *idhn al-dukhul* (recital of permission to enter). The *za’ir* (visitor) adopts a very humble attitude, and appreciating the presence of the Holy Prophet (S) seeks his permission to enter his sanctuary. In this well-known recital, we say:

...وأعْلَمُ أنّ رَسُولَكَ وَخُلَفَائكَ أحْياء عندك يُرزَقون، يَرونَ مَقَامِي وَيَسْمَعُوْنَ كلامِي، وَيَرُدّوْنَ سَلامِي...

...and I know that Your Apostle and vicegerents (upon whom be peace) are alive, receiving sustenance in Your proximity, they see where I stand presently, and hear my speech and respond to my salutation...26

Unlike those who consider the human being as an entity which perishes after the worldly death, Islam teaches mankind that death is a purgatory and bridge to the realm beyond. In fact, to be more accurate, death is “tearing of some veils” from the higher reality of everything. Great people like Imam ‘Ali (AS), due to their intense purity, could boldly claim that they can behold the ultimate form of the reality of this world while they still exist in this earthly abode. In one of his famous dictums, Imam ‘Ali A is reported to have said:

لَوْ كُشِفَ الغطاء مَا ازْدَدْتُ يقينًا

If the curtains were unveiled nothing would be added to my conviction.27

The tearing of veils, however, should not be considered as being limited to the Prophets (SA) and infallible Imams (AS). Those human beings who are entirely submissive to the laws of Almighty Allah and have purified their hearts can also relatively enjoy such exalted positions. In fact, Almighty Allah calls the human beings to appreciate the kernel of this world in the following verse:

أَ وَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّماواتِ وَالارْضِ

And do they not look into the kernel of the heavens and the earth? (7:185)

Hence there is an invitation to tear the veils that we have created for ourselves by sinning. In another interesting dictum of the Holy Prophet (S) we are told:

لَوْلا أَنَّ الشَّيَاطينَ يَحُومُونَ عَلَى قُلُوبِ بَنِي آدَمَ لَنَظَرُوا إِلَى مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَات

Was it not for the Satans circling around the hearts of the off-spring of Adam, they surely would have beheld the kernel of the heavens.28

Therefore, the more purity we enjoy, the better we can communicate with those exalted spirits who have left this material world, are alive in the real sense of the word, and due to their exalted station of existential mediation (about which we shall soon discuss in detail) can influence the world of contingent existence and even benefit us in different ways. There have been ample narratives indicating how people visited the shrines of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and solved very great problems in their lives.

Our aim of *Ziyarat*, however, must transcend seeking personal benefits. It is therefore important to first decipher the purpose of *Ziyarat*, and the reason why our holy Imams (AS) would teach us particular recitals for visiting the tomb of their grandfather Imam al-Husayn (AS). Of course this does not mean that one should not seek personal benefits from the great personalities, but one must at least have realized the ultimate purpose of *Ziyarat*.

It is through such realization, dear readers, that rain falls from the hearts and embraces every human being, rather every creature beyond time and place. Such realizations tear the veils of the past and future, and release the human being into the world of perpetual bliss and ecstasy. Soon the reader shall understand the words of this nondescript, for the world of Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is a world yet unknown. Their followers have no share save appreciating the tip of the iceberg:

Imam ‘Ali (AS) is reported to have said to Abu Dharr:

اعْلَمْ يَا أَبَا ذَرّ أَنَا عَبْدُ اللّهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ وَخَلِيفَتُهُ عَلى عِبَادِهِ لا تَجْعَلُونَا أَرْبَاباً وَقُولُوا فِي فَضْلِنَا مَا شِئْتُمْ فَإِنّكُمْ لا تَبْلُغُونَ كُنْهَ مَا فِينَا وَلا نِهَايَتَهُ

Know O Abu Dharr that I am [only] a slave of Allah and His vicegerent over His servants; do not consider us as lords and you may say whatever you want about our merits, for you cannot appreciate the essence of our perfection, nor its zenith...29

And in another tradition he (AS) is reported to have said:

لا يُقَاسُ بِآل مُحَمّدٍ مِنْ هَذِهِ الأمّةِ أَحَدٌ

...None from this *umma* can be compared with the progeny of Muhammad (upon whom be peace)...30

The Purpose of Ziyarat

One of the fundamental requisites of understanding the purpose of *Ziyarat* is to have a correct worldview. If we realize the purpose of human creation, and submit our volition to our intellectual decision, our deeds would be directed towards our eternal salvation. The purpose of human creation according to Qur`an and Sunna is to worship Almighty Allah:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنّ وَالإِنْسَ إِلاّ لِيَعْبُدُوْن

And I have not created the jinn and the men save that they worship me alone. (51:56)

And worship without knowledge carries no meaning. This is because worship is not a mere exercise without any sense of devotion. *'Ibadah* in the literal sense is defined as:

العِبَادَةُ هِيَ نَصبُ الْعَبْدِ نَفْسَهُ فِي مَقَامِ المْمْلُوكِيّة لِرَبّهِ

'Ibada is when the servant places himself in the position of being a bondsman of his Lord.31

And this cannot transpire without the knowledge of the Creator. It is by appreciating His real ownership32 of the entire world of creation, His knowledge over all things, His omnipotence and omnipresence that the human being is overtaken and humbles himself down before Allah. He also realizes that the true Lord and Master is none but his Creator,

and thus he places himself in the station of being an obedient slave of Almighty Allah. Imam al-Husayn (AS), underlining the clear link between knowledge and worship is reported to have said:

إِنّ اللّهَ جَلّ ذِكْرُهُ مَا خَلَقَ الْعِبَادَ إِلاّ لِيَعْرِفُوهُ فَإِذَا عَرَفُوهُ عَبَدُوهُ فَإِذَا عَبَدُوهُ اسْتَغْنَوْا بِعِبَادَتِهِ عَنْ عِبَادَةِ مَا سِوَاهُ...

Surely Allah (SwT) did not Create His servants except for knowing Him, and when they know him, they would worship Him, and when they worship Him, it would suffice them from worshipping other than Him...33

The worship that results from prior knowledge reaps knowledge itself. Knowledge before worship, however, is mostly intellectual (*'aqli*) and conceptual (*tasawwuri*). It is the result of rationally establishing the existence of God and His attributes as well as the utter poverty and dependence of the entire creation on His infinite existence. Having realized this the impartial servant worships with veneration and awe. If such worship was out of sincerity, then he is availed with a higher form of knowledge, which is beyond the realm of intellect. It is known in the language of traditions as '*yaqin* (conviction)' and 'the vision of the heart' which is knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-hudhuri*). Perhaps the following verse of the Qur`an alludes to the close link between worship and conviction:

وَاعْبُدْ رَبّكَ حَتّى يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ

And worship your Lord so that conviction comes to you34

In some of the *ziyarat* taught to us by the infallible Imams (AS) we are taught to address the Imams declaring that they had attained the exalted station of *yaqin* through sincere worship. Consider the following examples:

1. In one of the *ziyarat* of the Holy Prophet (S) we are taught by Imam 'Ali (AS) to address his noble being as follows:

...وَأَشْهَدُ أَنّكَ قَدْ نَصَحْتَ لِأُمّتِكَ، وَجَاهَدْتَ في سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ، وَعَبَدْتَهُ حَتّى أَتَاكَ الْيَقِيْنُ...

...And I bear witness that you gave counsel to your nation and struggled in the way of your Lord, and worshipped Him until conviction (*al-yaqin*) came to you...35

2. In another *Ziyarat* we address Imam al-Husayn (AS) as follows:

...يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ أَشْهَدُ أَنّكَ قَدْ بَلّغْتَ عَنِ اللهِ عَزّوَجَلّ مَا اُمِرْتَ بِهِ وَلَمْ تَخْشَ أَحَدًا غَيْرَهُ وَجَاهَدْتَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهِ وَعَبَدْتَهُ صَادِقًا حَتّى أَتَاكَ الْيَقِيْنُ...

...O Aba ‘Abdillah, I bear witness that surely you conveyed what you were ordered by Allah (the Invincible and Majestic) and other than Him you never feared anyone, and you struggled in His way, and worshipped Him truthfully until conviction (*al-yaqin*) came to you...36

3. In one of the *ziyarat* of Imam al-Ridha (AS) we are taught to address him as follows:

...اَشْهَدُ اَنّكَ قَدْ اَقَمْتَ الصّلاَةَ وَآتَيْتَ الزّكاةَ وَاَمَرْتَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَيْتَ عَنِ الْمُنْكرِ وَعَبَدْتَ اللهَ مُخْلِصًا حَتّى اَتَاكَ الْيَقِيْنُ، السّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ...

...I bear witness that you kept prayer upright and gave the poor tax and invited to what was good and forbade the evil and worshipped Allah sincerely until conviction (*al-yaqin*) came to you; peace be upon you O Aba al-Hasan...37

There are stages of *yaqin.* The *yaqin* spoken about in the above traditions is beyond the comprehension of the likes of me and you. Obviously it is a level of knowledge by presence, but beyond our description.

Having realized the fundamental role of sincere worship, our *ziyarat,* which also rank among acts of worship*,* should serve as catalysts to earn the exalted station of appreciating the truth by the vision of the heart. Such a state is only possible for a person who is utterly submissive to Allah.

The *Ziyarat* therefore should teach the *za’ir* the lesson of utter submisssion to Allah. In other words, the *Ziyarat* should be a means of uniting the *za’ir* with Abu ‘Abdillah (an appellation depicting Imam al-Husayn (AS)’s utter submission to Allah). And this can easily be attained after we understand the meaning of the *Ziyarat* and exemplify its teachings in ourselves.

If we read the *Ziyarat* for our lower ambitions in life, there would be no difference between us and the laity who have busied themselves with the world of matter. Therefore we should bear an exalted aspiration and aim for a great transformation in order to unite with the spirit of al-Husayn (AS).

Readers do appreciate that the reason why the allies of contemporary formalists hamper us from expressing our sorrow near the graves of the infallible leaders, is because they have realized the revolution it can create in the hearts.

Imam al-Husayn (AS) is a symbol of uprising against falsehood even at the cost of the

sacrifice of every possession. Our *Ziyarat* which is an endeavor of unity and harmony with his noble spirit, therefore, should be a declaration of readiness rather than a mere transaction or habitual recitation.

1. Al-Qanduzi, Yanabi' al-Mawadda, v.2, p.90
2. Sayyid 'Adil al-'Alawi, Risalat Islamiyya, v.6 p. 183
3. Ayatullah al-Tabrizi, al-Muraqibat, p.286
4. Sayyid 'Ali al-Musawi al-Haddad,'Arifun fi al-Rihab al-Qudsiyya, p.47
5. Hadi Hashimiyan, Daryaye 'Irfan, p.97
6. Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli, Adab-e-Finaye Muqarriban, v.1, p. 17
7. Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 147
8. Sayyid Ali al-Musawi al-Haddad,'Arifun fi al-Rihab al-Qudsiyyah, p. 146
9. See the following website: http://www.tebyan.net/Religion_Thoughts/TheLearned/Contemporary/2008/1/2... [8]
10. Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 274
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p.333
13. Ahmad al-Fayumi, al-Misbah al-Munir, p. 136
14. Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli, Adabe Finaye Muqarriban, v.1, p. 23
15. It is important to note that fleeing from imperfection is the same as fleeing towards perfection.
16. 'Allama al-Tabrasi, Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, v.9, p. 268
17. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.3, p. 321
18. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.4, p. 585. It should be noted here that 'throne' does not refer to the material throne for Almighty Allah is greater than such limitations.
19. Ibn Qulwayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 324
20. Ibid.
21. A reference to the tradition of Imam al-Sadiq □: Nahnu al-Asma' al-Husna' We are the Most Beautiful Names of Allah.'
22. Imam Khumayni, al-Adab al-Ma'nawiyya li al-Salat, p. 523
23. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 17, p. 258
24. Ibid., v. 17, p. 352
25. Ayatullah al-Sistani, Minhaj al-Salihin, v.1, p. 226
26. Shaykh 'Abbas Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, new ed., p. 380
27. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 40, p. 153
28. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 6, p. 332
29. Ibid., v. 62, p. 7
30. Ibid., v. 32, p.11 7
31. 'Allama al-Tabataba`i, Tafsir Al-Mizan, v.1, p.24
32. Readers must differentiate between real ownership in which the existence and subsistence of an entity is entirely dependent on the owner, and legal ownership in which the existence and subsistence of a property is independent of the owner.
33. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.23, p.83
34. Holy Qur`an, 15:99
35. al-Himyari al-Qummi, Qurb al-Isnad, p. 382
36. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.4, p. 573
37. Shaykh al-Saduq, 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha □, v.1, p. 302

Introduction

By Shaykh Abbas M H Ismail

Ziyarat: External Proof

The Holy Qur`an is clear in its explication of the reason for which the jinns and humans were created: to worship Allah[1] (SwT) which can only be done with any real quality after we come to know Him.[2] Our fundamental aim is thus inextricably linked to gaining gnosis of Him. This task is by no means a simple one as the Qur`an clearly states that He is incomparable to anything we may already know, and therefore unknowable in His entirety.[3]

But far from being an oppressive ruler over His subjects and setting them a task doomed to failure, Allah (SwT) desires that humans fulfil their potential and attain salvation by achieving closeness to Him. He has therefore, through His undiminishing mercy, granted His servants access to numerous avenues to be able to reach at least some level of gnosis:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِى سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who believe! Be mindful (of your duty) to Allah and seek means of nearness to Him, and struggle in His way, so that you may be successful.[4]

Of these avenues and means, the most effective is to seek the intercession and guidance of the Fourteen Infallibles and to obey them.[5] The Qur`an mentions that by obeying the Messenger, one would have thereby followed Allah (SwT).[6] The same applies when considering the family of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), whose obedience may also be included in the category of being a valid act of servitude to Allah (SwT).[7]

By this argument, the seemingly difficult duty upon the shoulders of humans at first consideration, i.e. the worship of Allah (SwT) through His gnosis, is made somewhat manageable by the adherence of humans to the obedience and love of the Prophet (S) and his holy family, the Ahl al-Bayt AS); by loving and obeying the Prophet and his family, humans are fulfilling both a Qur`anic injunction of seeking a means to the nearness of Allah (SwT), as well as correctly identifying this means as being none other than the Fourteen Infallibles.

Ziyarat: An Internal Inclination

Allah (SwT) has created the human with an innately ordained disposition towards goodness,[8] known as *fitrah* in Arabic.[9] This *fitrah*, even whilst confined to the realm of the corporeal world, continuously yearns and seeks goodness and is instinctively attracted and naturally inclined to honouring and respecting those instances of goodness it perceives, whether the acts are current and live, or have happened in the past and belong to legends of history, such as members of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS).[10]

Therefore, through both external instruction via the Qur`an and the lives of the Infallibles, and through the internal proof, the *fitrah,* the connection with the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is a fundamental part of human existence and assists to fulfil an inherent metaphysical need within us of seeking closeness to Allah through noble characteristics perceived in extra-ordinary personalities.

Ziyarat And A Link To Hajj

When describing the Islamic forms of worship two terms are often used: *'Ibadah* and *Dhiyafah.* The term *'Ibadah* generally relates to the outer, jurisprudential nature of our acts of worship whilst *Dhiyafah* can often refer to the inner, spiritual dimensions.11 As an example, our Ramadhan supplications, (our *'Ibadah)* seek for Allah (SwT) to grant us the chance to perform the Hajj pilgrimage, *"… In this year and every year …"*12 The Hajj, which is the resulting *Dhiyafah* at Allah (SwT)'s house in Makkah*,* actually takes place three months later in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah.

A close consideration of this will demonstrate that Allah (SwT)'s initial pleasure was for us to ask of Him in Ramadhan to grant us Hajj. In prescribing to us what our supplications should be in Ramadhan through set prayers, Allah (SwT) enables His to become aware of what his Master has to offer. The Wise Lord, in commanding His subjects to ask of Him, is able to show us the magnanimity of His banquet and the lofty aspirations we may have of Him. Thus, every subsequent supplication of the servant will improve as he is now aware of what the Host of hosts can grant to him and these two elements become inseparable – i.e. each instance of seeking is accompanied by a higher level of giving, and thus the circle continues between Master and slave. This may be the true meaning behind this excerpt of Du'a al-Iftita:

وَ لاَ يزيده كثرة العطاء إلاّ جوداً وَ كرماً

And His excessive giving does not increase in Him, except (from the point of view of) generosity and kindness.13

When considering the *Ziyarat* of the Infallibles, a similar conclusion seems to hold true. The Infallibles, through their positions as intermediaries and avenues between Allah (SwT) and His subjects, are able to encourage the elevation of people's wants and desires beyond mere material wishes. Just as Allah (SwT) has a banquet He wishes to share, so too the Infallibles; their banquet is to assist humans to reach levels of divine proximity.

The importance and weight of this is adequately portrayed in some of the legal opinions expressed by eminent Muslim jurists of previous generations. Both 'Allamah Hilli and Sheikh Tusi have been cited as having declared it to be compulsory for Hajj pilgrims to perform the *Ziyarat* of the Holy Prophet in Medina, and have even permitted the Islamic ruler to force people to do so if they do not perform the *Ziyarat* of their own volition.14 The Holy Prophet has declared:

من أتى مكة حاجاً و لم يزرني إلى المدينة جفانى

Whoseover comes to Makkah as a Hajj pilgrim and does not visit me in Medina has shunned me.15

Such is the importance placed upon *Ziyarat* that even after performing the rites of Hajj and after seeking proximity to Allah (SwT) in Makkah, ‘Arafah, Muzdalifa and Mina, the pilgrim is still expected to pay respects to the Holy Prophet. This is a view common in both Shi’a and Sunni sources.16

Walayah and Ziyarat

Al-Kulayni reports in al-Kafi from Imam al-Baqir (AS):

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَر قَالَ بُنِيَ الإِسْلامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ عَلَى الصّلاةِ وَ الزّكاةِ وَ الصّوْمِ وَ الْحَجِّ وَ الْوَلايَةِ وَ لَمْ يُنَادَ بِشَيْءٍ كَمَا نُودِيَ بِالْوَلايَةِ

Islam has been founded upon five: Prayers, Alms-giving, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Walayah. And nothing has been emphasised the way emphasis has been placed on Walayah.17

The cited hadith suggests that of all the acts of worship, it is the *Walayah* of Allah (SwT), and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), that is the most important. Hence one of the most important etiquettes of the act of *Ziyarat* is to establish a firm connection with the visited one. It is at this juncture that our acts may transform from mere *‘Ibadah* to something similar to *Dhiyafah.*

Whilst recognising the host and his kindness it would be foolish not to be cautious of other false hosts and adversaries of the Infallibles. By distancing ourselves from these people, we engage in *Tabarri,* a pre-requisite to *Tawalli* – seeking closeness to the Infallibles. *Tabarri* is a key theme among the reliable *ziyarat* supplications. Ziyarat al-’Ashura` is emphatic upon this point, and urges the reader to seek distance from not only the direct adversaries of the Infallibles that confronted the Infallibles in their lifetimes, but even all previous usurpers and oppressors, spanning generations, and their supporters and partisans.18 This demonstrates that for our visitation to truely carry the colour of *Walayah,* the *Walayah* we profess must be comprehensive and absolute.

The folly of not adhering to this is eloquently portrayed by the Master of eloquence, Amir al-Mu`minin, ‘Ali. Al-Majlisi quotes in Bihar al-Anwar:

إنّ رجلاً قدم على اميرالمؤمنين فقال: يا اميرالمؤمنين! إنّي اُحبّك و اُحبّ فلاناً – و يسمى بعض أعدائه – فقال عليه السلام: أما الآن فأنت أعور فإما أن تعمى و إما أن تبصر

Indeed a man approached Amir al-Mu`minin (AS) and said: “Verily I have love for you and I also love so and so” – and he named one of his (the Imam’s) adversaries – he (Imam) replied: “At this moment you are as though you possess one eye (and your vision is incomplete). So either you should choose blindness or complete vision.”19

In the Imam’s words, such a person is incomplete and must address his course of action lest he were to become completely attached to falsehood, thereby becoming utterly lost.

Sincerity and Ziyarat

Islamic ethical discourse stresses the importance of one’s intention and sincerity as a defining factor in the classification of the quality of any action. The purer the intention of the actor in performing the act, the more reward and benefit will be gained from that action. In this regard, people are of different grades and qualities.

Whilst the outer action may actually seem identical and uniform, the inner realities and benefits may be tremendously different due to the difference in the purity and sincerity of the intention. It is only in the non-corporeal realm where such realities exist in their truest form. The hadith reports that comment upon this reality are manifold. We cite one such report to grant light to our discussion:

عن البزنطي قال: قرأت كتاب أبي الحسن الرضا: أبلغ شيعتي أنّ زيارتي تعدل عندالله عزّ و جلّ ألف حجّة. قال: فقلت لأبي جعفر : ألف حجّة؟ قال: إي والله ألف ألف حجّة لمن زاره عارفاً بحقه

Al-Bazanti narrates, “I read in the letter of Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha (AS): Tell my Shi’as that verily the rewards of my Ziyarat, according to Allah the Mighty and Glorious, is equal to one thousand Hajj pilgrimages. So I said to Abu Ja’far (Imam al-Jawad) (AS): A thousand Hajj pilgrimages? He (AS) said to me: Yes, by Allah! A thousand thousand (a million) Hajj pilgrimages for he who performs his Ziyarat whilst understanding his rights.”20

An Intellectual Spark

The truly balanced servant must however realise the potential granted him by Allah (SwT) in being able to utilise all the divine bounties and be wary of satanic traps. It may be all too easy for one to assume that sincerity is sufficient; however, if one is simply unaware of the inner realities of wayfaring and its etiquette, then it is possible the intellect is under-utilised and mere sincerity, whilst praiseworthy, will lead to a lesser outcome.

The Qur`an, when describing the Messenger’s mission, speaks of both *Tazkiya* (purification) as well as *Ta’lim* (education).21 Such accuracy in one’s intake of education will result in the realisation that each one of the noble acts, *Salat, Sawm, Zakat, Hajj, Walayah,* has no outer, worldly existence, but rather these entities exist in their truest and most radiant form in the non-corporeal realm. If each of these were to be understood, considered and treated as living entities (albeit in the non-material realm), capable of speech, form and interaction,

one’s approach to them would surely be of a particularly focused, respectful and determined nature.22

Together with these realities, the true realities of the visited ones, i.e. the Infallibles that are the intermediaries for initial receipt and subsequent channeling of divine grace, can not err nor do they suffer any imperfection; and although they exist in their most majestic form as light-ordained celestial beings in another sphere, they are able to influence matters in the physical world through their specially ordained mastership granted by Allah (SwT) and dependent upon His permission.

Following these principles, a wayfarer can coach and train himself to be mindful and intensely aware of such truths and when he is able to do so he will witness an active manifestation of the Qur`anic injunction:

وَلِلّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمّ وَجْهُ اللهِ إِنّ اللهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

To Allah belongs the east and the west, so whithersoever way you turn there will be the face of Allah…23

Such an outlook will be truly appreciative of the divine at all times and places.

There is a possibility for the opposite to also become true. The Qur`an offers a stark warning:

بَلَى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Indeed whoever does evil and his sins surround him on every side, such shall be the inmates of the fire, and they shall remain therein forever.24

Such a person will no longer be able to perceive the divine and the ‘face of Allah’, rather his outlook will be satanic and evil: whithersoever this person may turn he would perceive the face of Shaytan; evil would envelop him and he would descend into a spiral of negativity, blocked senses, narrow mindedness and a skewed sense of reality. It may be that he is accepting of all things he perceives as utmost truth, or even worse, he may deny all true things as utter falsehood.25

Thus, the individual wayfarer, in seeking a companion, a means, and an avenue to the Absolute Truth, must be conscious of the choice of whom he visits and must approach the visitation with a true gnosis and recognition of the visited one, as well as a heart of sincerity, and thereby be completely balanced and guided.

Marhum Tustari declares:

وتفاوتت التأثيرات بتفاوت المعرفة بحق الامام الحسين فقد ورد في الروايات التقييد بكونه عارفا بحق الامام الحسين صلوات الله تعالى عليه

And the difference in the benefits (of the *Ziyarat*) is due to the difference in the levels of recognition (in the people reciting the *Ziyarat*) of the rights of Imam al-Husayn (AS), as the narration mentions the condition (for benefiting from the *Ziyarat)* is to be aware of the rights of Imam al-Husayn, blessings of Allah, the High, upon him.26

A Mystical Firebrand

Having now realized the intrinsic beneficial nature and the importance of ziyarah it befits the wayfarer and the slave of the visited one to reflect upon the inner meanings of the act of *Ziyarat*. The etymology of the word stems from زور , originally meaning 'to move away' from a thing. Ahmad Ibn Faris comments that the term is used to refer to the act of *Ziyarat* because when a person visits another, he has effectively moved his attention away from everyone and everything else to concentrate upon the visited one. Fayumi adds that Ziyarat involves honouring the visited one and making a bond with them.27 Ayatullah Jawadi Amoli suggests that the turning away may also be from the material world of bodies and quiddity towards the celestial realm of souls and spirits.28

The *Ziyarat* should therefore transport us into a higher level of consciousness and spiritual being. Freedom from the world of matter is essential if we are to reach the heights of our potential. An interesting narration quoted by Marhum Tustari encapsulates this:

إنّ من زاره كان كمن زار الله تعالى في عرشه

Surely one who visits him (Imam al-Husayn) is like one who visits Allah at His throne.29

Tustari's own relfection on this hadith is to conclude that 'visiting Allah' is an allusion to the intense proximity with Allah (SwT), in this instance achieved through the *Ziyarat*.

Whereas proximity to Allah (SwT) can only come about through a polished level of faith and cleanliness of the heart. Hence, the *Ziyarat* of the Martyr of Kerbala assists and facilitates to complete one's level of faith, and cleanse the heart, resulting ultimately in the intense closeness with Allah (SwT).

پیروی رسول حق، دوستی حق آورد

پیروی رسول کن، دوستی خدا طلب

شرع، سفینۀ نجات، آل رسول، ناخداست

ساکن این سفینه شو دامن ناخدا طلب

Following the Prophet of Truth, brings about the friendship of Truth;
So follow the Prophet, thereby seek the friendship of Truth.
The Shari'ah, is the ship of salvation, the Family of the Prophet, is its captain;
Abide aboard the ship and seek to hold tight to the captain.30

Through our closeness with the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), we are also able to benefit from some of the grace which they are granted. In Sura al-Ahzab, in one of the most well-known and oft-recited verses of the Qur`an, Allah (SwT) declares:

إنّ اللهَ وَمَلاَئِکـتَهُ یُصَلّونَ عَلَی النّبِیّ یاأَیُّهَا الّذِینَ آمَنُوا صَلّواْ عَلَیْهِ وَسَلِّمُواْ تَسْلِیما

Indeed Allah and Angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe! Invoke blessings upon him and and invoke salutations upon him with a worthy salutation.31

Perhaps we miss too easily our own potential in reaching such a stage, where Allah (SwT) and His angels can bless us:

یاأَیُّهَا الّذِینَ آمَنُوا اذْکُرُوا اللهَ ذِکْراً کثِیراً وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُکْرَةً وَأَصِیلاً هُوَ الّذِی یُصَلِّی عَلَیْکُمْ وَمَلاَئِکَتُهُ لِیُخْرِجَکُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَی النّور وَکانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِینَ رَحِیماً تَحِیّتُهُمْ یَوْمَ یَلْقَوْنَهُ سَلاَمٌ وَأَعَدّ لَهُمْ أَجْراً کریماً

O you who believe! Remember Allah with frequent remembrance, and glorify Him morning and evening. It is He who sends His blessings to you and so do His angels, that He may bring you out of the darkness into light, and He is Most Merciful to the believers. The day they encounter Him their greeting will be 'Peace', and He holds in store for them a noble

reward.32

Thus Allah (SwT) and His angels also bless certain fallible beings – those that have inculcated within themselves a plentiful remembrance. The result of this blessing is that Allah (SwT) is able to empower them to come forth from darkness into light. As we have seen, the very same effect is true when visiting the Infallibles, who assist in our spiritual migration towards Allah (SwT) and away from the material world. Because their source is ultimate purity, the Absolute Truth, in calling upon them to provide us with our spiritual guidance we are confident of the veracity and accuracy of the offerings we can obtain from them. Again this points towards *Tabarri and Tawalli:* ensuring that our hosts are true hosts and truly able to offer us munificence:

﴿فَلْيَنْظُرِ الإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ﴾

So let man consider his food.33

Regarding the verse above, Imam al-Sadiq (AS) has declared that the allegorical meaning of the word food is ‘knowledge’. He states:

عِلْمُهُ الّذِي يَأْخُذُهُ عَمّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ

It is his knowledge that he acquires – from whom does he acquire it?34

By ensuring our source of information and spiritual nourishment is pure, we will be able to avoid spiritual stagnation and prove to be a true instance of leaving the darkness and entering the light.

Ziyarat: The Return Journey from Truth (Al-Haqq) to Creation (Al-Khalq)

According to the commandments from the Holy Threshold (الناحية المقدّسة) of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), once this enlightenment is achieved, the journey of the new possessors of light continues onwards towards their fellow human beings. As a recipient and now a guardian of this light, the true servant of the Holy Threshold discharges the duties placed upon him by helping others to emerge from darkness. He becomes the true manifestation as described in Sura al-An’am:

أَوَ مَنْ كَانَ مَيْتاً فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُوراً يَمْشِى بِهِ فِى النّاسِ كَمَن مّثَلُهُ فِى الظّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا

Is he who was lifeless, then we granted him life, and granted him a light by which he walks among people, like one whose likeness is that of one who dwells in manifold darkness which he cannot escape?35

Hence the truly enlightened one seeks to offer the light and bounties he receives to others, to help them in their quest for enlightenment, and in this way may become worthy of the epithet of being a servant at the courtyard of the Holy Threshold.

Ziyarat: At The Master's Service

Thus far we have indulged ourselves in seeking from the Infallibles of the Holy Family. There is however a level of servitude and obligation expected of us, which demonstrates the comprehensiveness of Islam – a religion of faith, belief, spirituality **and** action. The Master of the believers describes this relationship in sermon 34 of the Nahj al-Balagha. He begins by outlining the rights that we enjoy over him which include:

1. He should advise us with sincerity
2. He should collect the monies for the public treasury and spend them according to our needs
3. He should ensure our education so we do not remain ignorant
4. He should nurture us into truly scholarly people

The Imam then mentions the rights he enjoys over us:

1. Loyalty to his allegiance
2. To do *Nasihah* to him in both his presence and absence
3. To answer his call when he calls us
4. To be obedient to his command

The second item in this list is worthy of some deeper contemplation. The word *Nasihah* in this context should not be confused with the common usage of the word which translates to 'advice'. In this instance we are considering the choicest Imam and the truest leader, an Infallible, and the epitome of perfection; so how could advice be given from us to he who is guided by Allah (SwT), himself being the Straight Path of salvation?

A closer consideration of the term *al-Nasihah* will reveal that its true meaning is the opposite meaning of ,غِشّ a term used to denote any type of dilutedness or taintedness. For example milk that has been mixed with water is referred to as *Maghshush ,(□□□□□)* from the same root as .غشّ According to this analysis, this would render the meaning of *Nasihah* in this context to its root: freedom from any type of dilutedness or taintedness. This meaning has also been used in the Qur`an where Allah (SwT) commands the believers to repent with sincerity. The word used, *Nusuhan,* stems from the same root as *Nasihah:*

يَا أَيُّهَا الّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلى اللهِ تَوبَتاً نَصُوحاً

O you who believe! Repent to Allah with sincere repentance!36

The scholars of ethics have also elaborated the meaning of *Nasihah* to be the opposite of jealousy *(Hasad)*. This would add a further dimension to the meaning of *Nasihah* to be that

someone who truly possesses the trait of *Nasihah* will wish a bounty for his brother believer that will be in his brother's benefit and something that he would wish for himself; and naturally such an act would also need to be free from any form of taintedness.37 Therefore, offering sincere advice that is open, honest and in the benefit of the one being advised, is only one manifestation of the trait of *Nasihah* and not the entire meaning of the term.

Thus the Imam in this context, by using the word *Nasihah,* regards one of his rights over us as complete sincerity without any form of taintedness. This will apply both in his presence, and equally in his absence. Our conduct in thought, belief and action, should be such that the master whom we are visiting attains confidence that we are truly his, sincerely for him, and utterly devoted to his cause. The following narration may clarify this further:

قال رسول الله : من يضمن لي خمساً أضمن له الجنّة ... النصيحة لله عز و جل والنصيحة لرسوله والنصيحة لكتاب الله والنصيحة لدين الله والنصيحة لجماعة المسلمين

The Holy Prophet (S) has said, "He who can guarantee me five things, I will guarantee for him Paradise … *Nasihah* for Allah The Mighty and The Glorious, and *Nasihah* for His Prophet, and *Nasihah* for the book of Allah, and *Nasihah* for the religion of Allah, and *Nasihah* to the Muslim nation."38

In the words of the Prophet, Paradise may be earned by someone who is pure, sincere and untainted in his conduct towards Allah (SwT), His Prophet, His Book, His Religion and to the Muslim Ummah.

Ziyarat: A Structured Approach To The Meeting Place At The Two Seas

Ziyarat: A Structured Approach to the Meeting Place at the Two Seas39

Marhum Tustari40 has elaborated on a series of special timings at which the benefits and rewards of the *Ziyarat* of Imam al-Husayn (AS) is particularly enhanced:

1. Every Friday
2. Every Month41
3. Twice per year in person for those able to afford
4. Thrice per year, to guarantee freedom from poverty
5. On the happy occasions of Nowruz, Mab'ath, Ghadir and others
6. In Rajab:

a. On the night preceding the first day of Rajab

b. On the first day of Rajab

c. On the night preceding the fifteenth day of Rajab

d. On the fifteenth day of Rajab

7. In Sha’ban:
a. On the third day of Sha’ban

b. On the night preceding the fifteenth day of Sha’ban

c. On the fifteenth day of Sha’ban

8. In Ramadhan:
a. At any time

b. On the night preceding the first day of Ramadhan

c. On the night preceding the fifteenth day of Ramadhan

d. On the last night of Ramadhan

e. On each of the nights of Qadr and the subsequent days

9. In Dhu al-Hijjah:
a. On the night preceding the day of ‘Arafa

b. On the day of ‘Arafa

c. On the night preceding ‘Eid al-Adha

d. On the day of ‘Eid al-Adha

e. On the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth days of Dhu al-Hijjah

f. On the day of ‘Eid al-Ghadir

10. In Muharram:
a. On the night preceding ‘Ashura and on the day of ‘Ashura

b. On the thirteenth day of Muharram

11. In Safar:
a. On the twentieth day of Safar

These are some of the meritorious times mentioned for the *Ziyarat* of Imam al-Husayn (AS). However, such an action is praiseworthy and would yield benefits to an attentive and sincere heart at any time.
We beseech the master of martyrs to allow us his visitation and remembrance as long as Allah (SwT) grants us life and as long as time subsists.

Abbas Mohamed Husein Ismail
London
3 December 2008
4 Dhu al-Hijjah 1429

1. Holy Qur`an, 51:56
2. Al-Saduq, ‘Ilal al-Shara’i
3. Holy Qur`an, 42:11
4. Ibid. 5:35

5. M. Tahriri, Simaye Mukhbitin, Mishkat, Tehran, 2000, pp.13-14
6. Holy Qur`an, 4:80
7. Ibid. 42:23, 33:33
8. J. Amoli, Adab e Finaye Muqarraban, Isra, Qum, 2002, p.55
9. Holy Qur`an, 30:30
10. J. Amoli, Adab e Finaye Muqarraban, Isra, Qum, 2002, p.18
11. J. Amoli, Sahbaye Safa, Mashar, 2001, p.26
12. A. Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan
13. Ibid.
14. J. Amoli, Adab e Finaye Muqarraban, Isra, Qum, 2002, p.32
15. M. Najafi, Jawahir al-Kalam, volume 20
16. See A. Amini, al-Ghadir, volume 5
17. M. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi
18. J. Amoli, Adab e Finaye Muqarraban, Isra, Qum, 2002, p.62
19. M. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, volume 27
20. M. Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, volume 99
21. J. Amoli, Sahbaye Safa, Mashar, 2001, p.29
22. Ibid. p.30
23. Holy Qur`an, 2:115
24. Ibid. 2:81
25. J. Amoli, Sahbaye Safa, Mashar, 2001, p.31
26. J. Tustari, al-Khasais al-Husayniyyah, p.164
27. J. Amoli, Adab e Finaye Muqarraban, Isra, Qum, 2002, p.23
28. Ibid.
29. J. Tustari, al-Khasais al-Husayniyyah, p.165
30. M. F. Kashani, Diwan e Fayz Kashani, p.32. The word ‘daman’ in Farsi has not been translated literally but rather its contextual meaning (au)
31. Holy Qur`an, 33:56
32. Ibid. 33:41-44
33. Ibid. 80:24
34. J. Amoli, Sahbaye Safa, Mashar, 2001, p.230 quoted from Safinah al-Bihar
35. Holy Qur`an, 6:122
36. Ibid. 66:8
37. J. Amoli, Adab e Finaye Muqarraban, Isra, Qum, 2002, p.52
38. M. Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, volume 2
39. An allusion to Holy Qur’an, 18:60
40. J. Tustari, al-Khasais al-Husayniyyah, pp.166-168
41. Tustari quotes Imam al-Sadiq , “Whosoever performs his Ziyarah (at least) one time per month, will earn the reward of one hundred thousand martyrs like those slain in Badr.”

The Source of Ziyarat ‘Ashura` and its Authenticity

Ziyarat ‘Ashura` is a sacred tradition (hadith qudsi) which is authentic and veracious. Its main references are two fundamental works of authority:

1. Misbah al-Mutahajjid by Shaykh al-Tusi

2. Kamil al-Ziyarat by Ibn Qulawayh

All the traditions that narrate this ziyara are proven by scholars of hadith to be sound and veracious. In order to establish their authenticity, they have discussed all the chains of narration at length and proven the reliability of every narrator. Those interested in understanding the intricacies of the traditions may refer to works written in this regard.1

The contemporary venerated jurisconsult, Ayatullah Sayyid al-Shubayri al-Zanjani (may Allah protect his noble spirit) was asked about the authenticity of Ziyarat ‘Ashura` and he responded saying:

بغض النظر عن التأييدات الغيبية الواردة بطرق معتبرة حول زيارة عاشوراء والتي برأسها دليل على اعتبار هذه الزيارة الشريفة، فإنّ السند المذكور في مصباح المتهجد في ذيل هذه الزيارة سند صحيح.

Disregarding what has been narrated from reliable sources about its endorsement from the unseen realm (*al-ta’yidat al-ghaybiyya*), which in itself suffices as a proof of the authenticity of this sacred *Ziyarat*, the chain of narration mentioned in *Misbah al-Mutahajjid* after this *Ziyarat* is veracious.2

Other Ways of Establishing Authenticity

Apart from the aforesaid, the authenticity of this radiant *Ziyarat* can be established through other methods considered in the science of *hadith*. For example, there are many other *ziyarat* where expressions similar to those contained in Ziyarat ‘Ashura` appear. This indirectly endorses the veracity of the *Ziyarat*.

Furthermore, much of the information contained in the *Ziyarat* has come in so many of our traditions, some of which are copiously narrated and even rank among the traditions that are successively narrated (*mutawatir*) in terms of meaning at least.

Shaykh Muhammad al-Sanad, one of the contemporary Shi’a scholars, when asked about the veracity of the different supplications and *ziyarat*, including Ziyarat ‘Ashura`, says:

ان مضأمين الزيارات والأدعية المدرجة في السؤال لا يقتصر ورود مضمونها على تلك الزيارات والأدعية فهناك العديد من الزيارات الأخرى والأدعية الأخرى بأسانيد أُخرى قريبة المضمون معنىً ولفظاً لقطعات من الأُولى، كما أن هذه الزيارات والأدعية قد ورد كثير من مضامينها في الروايات

الواردة في المعارف، وهي في كثير من طوائفها مستفيضة بل بعضها متواتر معنوي أو إجمالي، وعلى هذا فالدغدغة في أسانيد هذه الزيارة أو تلك أو هذا الدعاء وذاك تنطوي على عدم المام بهذه الحقيقة العلمية المرتبطة بعلم الحديث والرواية

Indeed the contents of the ziyarat and supplications under question do not only appear in their respective places, but there are a number of other ziyarat and supplications with other chains of narration, that have similar contents both in word and meaning. Furthermore most of their contents have been narrated in other traditions on Divine Teachings, many of which have been copiously narrated.

Rather some of them are also successively narrated (mutawatir) in their meaning and gist. Therefore being worried about the chains of narration of this Ziyarat or that or this supplication or that, is because of disregarding this intellectual reality that pertains to the science of traditions and narrations.3

Those, therefore, who persist in doubting the authenticity of the *Ziyarat* overlook the other factors that strongly endorse the *Ziyarat*. The great Shi'a scholars have always lived with this *Ziyarat* and many of them incessantly recite it with great zeal and humility.

Some ignorant people, due to the expression of imprecation contained in the *Ziyarat* try to doubt its authenticity. Such people feel that Islam is a religion of peace and hence such words must not be uttered. In response to them, we say that curse is not any kind of abusive expression. Its reality, as we shall come to learn in the commentary of the *Ziyarat* is to seek the remoteness of the accursed.

Such prayer for remoteness, considering its Qur`anic origin, is nothing but harmony with Allah's Volition. We shall also learn that cursing those who established the foundation of oppression and evil is also a kind of expression of one's stance against evil. If one tries to reflect carefully, one would understand that the spirit of cursing evil and its epitomes it to flee from imperfection. It is important for us therefore to tear off the veils of the periphery of the *Ziyarat* and touch the center and appreciate the universal message that it confers.

La'n and invoking curse is not merely an emotional state of anger that is evanescent. It is a translation of the reality. Therefore whether we invoke curse on them, or not they will always be distanced from the mercy of Allah (SwT), due to the seeds of mischief that they had sown in this world.

Seeking the kernel of the curses, we would come to realize that we have parables of Yazid and Mu'awiya in our time and age too. If we cursed the Yazid of a thousand years ago, it was not because of himself per se, but his ideology and actions. The Yazid of today must be repelled the same way. This is the message of curse.

May the Almighty enable us understand the spirit of the *Ziyarat*, so that we avoid discussing trivial issues that distance us from a sacred effusion that rains down perpetually and requires receptive containers.
The Holy Qur`an says:

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّماءِ ماءً فَسالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِها

He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to [the extent of] their capacity…(13:17)

All Praises Belong to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds

1. The contemporary scholar Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani has written a separate treatise on establishing the veracity of Ziyarat 'Ashura`
[http://www.Imamsadeq.org/book/sub3/rasaeel-va-maghalat-j3/] [9]
2. http://www.alhodacenter.com/ashora/details.php?id=2996 [10]
3. http://www.rafed.net/research/05/06.html [11]

Chapter 1: Peace be on you, O entirely obedient servant of Allah

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

Peace be on You, O entirely obedient servant of Allah

Commentary

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

Peace be unto You

Salam is an infinitive noun commonly translated as "peace". Its literal import, however, is:

التَّعَرِّي مِنَ الآفَاتِ الظَّاهِرَةِ وَالْبَاطِنَةِ

"to be free from calamities, whether apparent or hidden."1

Therefore by saying "*Al-salamu 'alayka*" in its invocative sense, we are seeking the state of freedom from every kind of calamity, whether apparent or hidden, for Imam al-Husayn (AS).

It is clear that the Imam (AS) already enjoys the state of *salam* and is in fact one of the manifestations of Allah's attribute *al-Salam.* In one of the *ziyarat* when addressing him we say:

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتَ وَيَوْمَ تَمُوْتُ وَيَوْمَ تُبْعَثُ حَيّا، اَشْهَدُ اَنّكَ حَيّ شَهيْدٌ تُرْزَقُ عِنْدَ رَبّكَ...

You were at peace the day you were born, and will be at peace the day you die, and the day you will be raised alive. Surely I bear witness that you are a living martyr receiving sustenance near Your Lord...2

Here the phrase '*Al-salamu 'alayka*' is taken as a declarative statement, and thus the difference of translation. Therefore we bear witness that Imam al-Husayn (AS) was and will always remain in the state of *salam*.

In a tradition about the nocturnal ascent (*al-mi'raj*) of the Holy Prophet (S) it is reported that when the Holy Prophet (S) encountered a group of Angels, Divine Apostles and Prophets, it was said to him:

يَا مُحَمّدُ سَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِمْ

O Muhammad, convey your salutations to them.

So he (S) said:

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّهِ وَبَرَكاتُهُ

May the peace of Allah, His mercy and His blessings be upon you

Thereupon Allah revealed unto him:

أَلسّلامُ وَالتّحِيّةُ وَالرّحْمَةُ وَالْبَرَكاتُ أَنْتَ وَذُرّيّتُكَ

"Peace, benedictions, mercy and blessings, are you and your progeny.3

Here the Holy Prophet (S) and his progeny (*dhurriyya*) are introduced as *"al-salam"*. Hence, seeking *salam* for Imam al-Husayn (AS), would mean seeking higher degrees of the state of *salam* for him, since the levels of *salam* in the plane of contingent existence have no end.

The level of *salam* in which there is no kind of imperfection whatsoever is that of *al-Salam al-Mutlaq (the Absolute Peace)*, which solely belongs to Almighty Allah. The Holy Qur`an says:

هُوَ اللّهُ الّذِي لا إِلهَ إِلا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدّوسُ السّلامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ...

He is Allah, other than Whom there is no God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Peace [Free from every kind of imperfection], the Securer, the Guardian...(59:23)

Commenting on the Divine Name *al-Salam*, ‘Allama al-Tabataba`i in his *Tafsir al-Mizan* says:

وَالسّلامُ مِنْ أَسْمَائِهِ تَعَالى لأَنّ ذَاتَهُ الْمُتَعَالِيَةَ نَفْسُ الْخَيْر الّذِيْ لا شَرّ فِيْهِ...

And *al-Salam* is among His Names, for His Exalted Essence is sheer goodness wherein there is no evil...4

And in a tradition, Hadhrat Fatima al-Zahra’ (AS) referring to this kind of *salam* says:

إنّ اللهَ هُوَ السّلامُ، وَمِنْهُ السّلامُ، وَإِلَيْهِ السّلام .

Surely only Allah is *the Absolute Peace* and from Him alone comes peace and unto Him alone returns peace5

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have once informed Hadhrat Khadija (AS) that Gabriel was nearby and he sent his *salams* to her. Thereupon she said:

اَللهُ السّلامُ وَلِلّهِ السّلامُ وَعَلىَ جِبْرَائِيل السّلامُ .

Allah is the Absolute Peace, and to Him alone belongs peace and upon Gabriel be peace.6

And since the Absolute Peace loves us, He always invites us to His abode of peace:

وَاللّهُ يَدْعُو إلى دار السّلام

And Allah invites to the abode of peace...(10:24)

The indefinite verb *yad'u* in the above verse confers the sense of continuity, which means that Allah constantly invites us towards His abode of peace, which is Paradise. Some commentators however confer a subtler interpretation, and say that Allah is *al-Salam*, which means that He is free from every kind of imperfection whatsoever. And when He invites us to *Dar al-Salam*, He calls us to the state of freedom from every kind of imperfection whatsoever. His call will remain constant, for the stages of *salam* have no end. In his commentary on the above verse, *al-Bahrani* narrates the following tradition:

عَنِ الْعَلاء ا بْن عَبْدِ الْكريْم، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرِيَقُوْلُ فِيْ قَوْل اللهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ: وَاللّهُ يَدْعُوا إلىَ دار السّلام، فَقَالَ: إنّ السّلامَ، هُوَ اللهُ عَز وَجَلّ، وَدَارُهُ الّتِي خَلقَهَا لأَوْلِيَائِهِ اَلْجَنّةُ.

Al-'Ala` bin 'Abd al-Karim reports: I heard Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (AS) saying about the verse 'And Allah calls towards the abode of peace': Indeed *al-Salam* is Allah, the Invincible and Magnificent, and His abode that He created for His near ones is Paradise.7

Al-janna in the above tradition is prefixed with the definite article *'al'* which also confers the connotation of a specific kind of paradise. And since Allah (SwT) principally always calls towards the best, for his grace pours out infinitely, the loftiest paradise one can ever achieve is *jannat al-liqa'* (the paradise of meeting Allah). Here the aspirant of paradise yearns for nothing but the proximity and vision of the All-Beloved. And scholars of insight have said that the journey to perfection never ends. Therefore it is very apt to constantly call every one to the abode of the Absolute Peace.

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ

Peace be unto You

The definite article *'al'* in the abovementioned phrase conveys different meanings. It can be taken to allude to something known both to the adressor as well as his addressee.8 And because it is clear to all that no kind of perfection comes from anyone save Allah, for He alone is the Principal Cause of the universe, we are only permitted to seek perfection from Him in the independent sense. Therefore if we employ the phrase *al-salamu 'alayka* in the invocative sense, we can translate it as '*the peace from Allah be upon you*'. This is when we take the article *al* to refer to the specific peace that comes from Allah, which is a Divine bestowal and creation.

However if we translate *al-salam* in the phrase *al-salamu 'alayka* as "the specific peace that

Allah possesses”, then we are seeking Absolute Peace for Imam al-Husayn (AS). In other words, we are seeking the ultimate state for the Imam (AS). Seeking such kind of peace is not unprecedented. In the well-known supplication of *al-Sahar* of the Holy month of Ramadhan we seek the Divine Names in their perfect form. In fact the innate nature of every human being has been faishioned to aspire for the Infinite.

أَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

You are at peace from my side

If the *za’ir* however were to consider *‘al’* to refer to himself, the above phrase can be taken as declarative. In other words, he is trying to say: سلاَمِيْ عَلَيْكَ *Salami ‘alayka* (You are at peace from my side)9. Consequently, the *za’ir* is trying to assure the *mazur* (the visited one) that he is at peace with him and he would not do anything that would cause harm or disturb him. Instead, he would manifest in himself things that would be geared to seek the *mazur’s* protective physical as well as spiritual life. This is one of the very important stations of the *za’ir*, since he is in fact reasserting his covenant with Almighty Allah, by informing his beloved Imam (AS) that besides avoiding anything that would cause harm to him (AS), he would do those things that would manifest the spirit of peace as well.

One of the things that does not concur with the spirit of *salam* is to sin. If one utters the above statement and then engages in sin, he will not have maintained the spirit of the *salam* that he uttered. This is because the fourteen infallibles (AS) have the ability to witness the actions of their followers. And when they find them sinning, they get disturbed.

Following are narrations that establish the infallible Imam’s ability to vision the deeds of his followers:

1. We humbly express in the well-known *Ziyarat al-Jami’a al-Kabira*:

أَنْتُمُ الصِّرَاط الاَقْوَمُ وَشُهَدَاءُ دَار الْفَنَاءِ

...You are the upright path and **the witnesses of the abode of extinction** [i.e. the world...]10

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

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ فِي قَوْلِهِ وَقُل اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ هَاهُنَا الاَئِمّةُ الطاهِرَةُ

Believers referred to in the verse “And say, go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and

His ***Apostle and the believers [as well]" (9:105)*** are the Immaculate Imams (AS).11

Hence the Imams (AS) can behold our mistakes and wrong deeds, and when they do so, they get upset:

1. Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni narrates the following tradition in his al-Kafi:

عَنْ سَمَاعَةَ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ مَا لَكُمْ تَسُوءُونَ رَسُولَ اللّهِ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ كَيْفَ نَسُوؤُهُ فَقَالَ أَمَا تَعْلَمُونَ أَنّ أَعْمَالَكُمْ تُعْرَضُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِذَا رَأَى فِيهَا مَعْصِيَةً سَاءَهُ ذَلِكَ فَلاَ تَسُوءُوا رَسُولَ اللّهِ وَ سُرُّوهُ

Suma'a reports: I heard him (i.e. Imam al-Sadiq (AS)) say: What is the matter with you? Why do you displease the Messenger of Allah (S)? Thereupon a man asked him: And how do we displease him? The Imam (AS) said: Don't you know that your actions are presented before him; and when he finds a sin in them, he is displeased; therefore do not displease the Messenger of Allah (S) but (rather) make him happy.12

2. Al-Kulayni also narrates the following tradition:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللّهِ بْنِ أَبَانٍ الزّيّاتِ وَكانَ مَكِيناً عِنْدَ الرّضَا قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِلرّضَا: ادْعُ اللّهَ لِي وَلِلأَهْلِ بَيْتِي فَقَالَ أَ وَلَسْتُ أَفْعَلُ وَاللّهِ إِنّ أَعْمَالَكُمْ لَتُعْرَضُ عَلَيّ فِي كُلّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ قَالَ فَاسْتَعْظَمْتُ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ لِي أَ مَا تَقْرَأُ كِتَابَ اللّهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ وَ قُلِ اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ قَالَ هُوَ وَاللّهِ عَلِيٌّ بْنُ أَبِي طالِبٍ

'Abdullah bin Aban al-Zayyat, a distinguished personality near Imam al-Ridha (AS), reports: I said to al-Ridha (AS): Pray to Allah for me and my family, and he said: Don't I do that? I swear by Allah surely your actions are presented to me every day and night. "I was extremely amazed at that," says al-Zayyat. Then the Imam (AS) said: Do you not read the Book of Allah, the Invincible and Exalted, who says: ***(And say, Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well])? (9:105)*** I swear by Allah '*the faithful*' mentioned in this verse is 'Ali bin Abi Talib.13

Hence engaging in sin, and being inconsistent with the spirit of *salam,* makes us violate our covenant with the Imam (AS). Those, therefore who recite their *ziyarat* without considering this vital point, are either hypocrites or weaklings who like to utter lies in front of the Imam (AS).

There is a group of sinful reciters, however, whom the self that excessively invites one to evil (*al-nafs al-ammara*) has weakened, but are nevertheless hopeful for change. Whenever such people recite the *Ziyarat*, they should experience utter humiliation, and always seek change. They must realize that in order for one to prosper and change, one should perpetually seek Divine Succor and make a firm resolve to leave all those things that are forbidden, however minute they may seem to appear.

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

May peace from Allah be upon you

Sometimes the article *'al'* is employed as a substitute for the second particle (*mudhafun ilayhi*) of a genetive construction. For example, when referring to a book whose owner is known to be a certain Zayd, we can say *al-kitabu* (the book) instead of saying كِتَابُ زَيْدٍ *kitabu Zaydin* (Book of Zayd). Here the article '*al*' is a substitute for Zayd. Likewise '*al*' in '*al-salamu*' can be a substitute for a particular person. And bearing in mind that there is no perfection whatsoever but that it originates from Allah, and that the preposition عَلى*'ala*' indicates that the origin of s*alam* is from a higher plane of existence and we know that there is no Absolutely High save Allah, '*al*' can be said to refer to Allah. In this case the statement *al-salamu 'alayka* either means peace from Allah be upon you, or 'peace of Allah' be upon you.

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

I surrender all my affairs to you

Another meaning of *salam* documented by lexicographers is '*al-taslim*' (to surrender). Therefore the statement '*Al-salamu 'alayka*' would mean 'I surrender myself to you'. In other words, we are trying to tell Imam al-Husayn (AS) that "I am your slave. Whatever you say, I shall obey. Your desire is mine. If you want me to reform myself and others, I shall do so." If we look at the matter from an ontological (*takwini*) point of view, we come to realize that whether we declare our slavehood or not, the Imam's light, which according to different traditions, is an intermediary of grace (*wasitat al-faydh*), dominates us. Nevertheless the Divine law has facilitated volitional action, and thus nothing is forced on anyone. When surrending ourself to the Imam (AS) let us secretly ask the Imam (AS) to assist us and make us serious and keep us steadfast in our commitment.

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

Peace be unto You

Sometimes, the article *'al'* in *al-salam* conveys either of the following meanings: (1) All

kinds of peace, (2) The most perfect kind of peace, or (3) The absolute peace. This is when the definite article *‘al’* denotes ‘genus’ (*al-jins*) or ‘species’. Grammatically, whenever the definite article *‘al’* is taken to denote genus, one of the following three implications can be gotten:

• All the extensions (*masadiq*) of the genus (*jins*) are taken into consideration. For example, in chapter *al-’Asr* we say: *Inna al-insana lafi khusr*, we mean ‘**every human being** is in loss’ (103:2) because *al* in ‘*al-insan*’ denotes genus and all the extensions of genus are taken into consideration. In our case, when we say *‘al-salamu ‘alayka’* in the invocative sense, we mean “*all kinds of peace be upon you*”

• All the extensions of the perfect attributes of the genus are taken into consideration. For example, when we say *hadha huwa al-rajul*, we mean, ‘*this is a perfect man*’ because ‘*al-rajul*’ denotes ‘*the man who has all the perfections of a man*’. In our case, when we say *al-salamu ‘alayka* in the invocative sense, we mean ‘*perfect peace be upon you*’.

• The genus (*jins*) in its absolute sense. In other words no limitation is attributed to the genus. It denotes an *absolute form.* Therefore when we say*: al-salamu ‘alayka*, we can mean *Absolute Peace without any limitations, be upon you.* In this case, therefore, we are seeking the highest level of peace for Imam al-Husayn (AS)*.*

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

May peace from Allah **envelop You**

A grammatical intricacy worthy of consideration is that the preposition عَلَى *‘ala* in اَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ *Al-salamu ‘alayka* denotes the sense of envelopment[14]. In other words we are asking Almighty Allah to envelop and cover Imam al-Husayn (AS) with the state of peace and freedom from every apparent and hidden calamity that is according to his noble essence. Therefore *al-salamu ‘alayka* would mean: “May Allah **envelop** you with the state of peace.”

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

Peace from Allah envelop **you**

Another important point to bear in mind is that the second person masculine pronoun كَ ‘*ka*’ in عَلَيْكَ*’alayka* presupposes the presence of the *za’ir’s* addressee, and this obliges him to attain receptivity to comprehend and appreciate the same. We do not use the third person pronoun '*hu’* to indicate that our invocation of *salam* is for an absent *mazur* (the visited one).

Some of the great saints, due to their spiritual struggle, would attain levels of receptivity that would enable them to see the Imam (AS) or listen to the response that our Imam (AS) would give. It is narrated that the late Rajab ‘Ali al-Khayyat, who was a tailor by occupation, due to his strict observation of Islamic laws and harmony with the teachings of the Ahl al-

Bayt (AS), was endowed with a penetrating vision and could appreciate what others cannot. Shaykh Muhammadi Rayshahri in his collection of the memoirs of this late saint narrates the following interesting account about him:

One of Shaykh Rajab ‘Ali Khayyat’s devotees said that the Shaykh had once held a session in the house of one of his friends. Before starting his talk, he felt somehow weak due to hunger and asked for some bread. Half a loaf of bread was brought for him to eat, and thereafter he began the meeting. The following night he said: “Last night I made salutations to the holy Imams (AS) but I did not see them. I pleaded to find the reason. I was told intuitively: ‘You had half of that food and the hunger alleviated. Why then did you eat the other half?! Having some food that is enough for the body’s need is all right, but extra to that would cause veil and darkness.’”15

Another interesting account is narrated by Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Bahjat, a well-known contemporary saint, who is quoted by one of his disciples to have said:

One day Shaykh Bahjat (may Allah elevate his status) said to us: In the past people would travel to the city of Mashhad on camels and mules. Once some farmers of Jasib, a region of Qum, travelled to Mashhad for the *Ziyarat* of Imam al-Ridha (AS). On their return they saw a man from their village carrying a lot of fodder. So they reproved him saying: ‘O Shaykh, leave struggle for the world, for that would not benefit you and go to Mashhad at least once, and they started reproving and reprehending him. The old man said to them: ‘Surely you went to the *ziyara* of the Imam (AS), but did the Imam (AS) respond to your salutation (*salam*)? They said: What is this that you are saying?

Is it possible for an Imam who has died to respond to a salutation? The old man said: what do you mean by saying alive or dead? Indeed the Imam (AS) sees us and listens to our speech, and what is the benefit of *Ziyarat* if it is one sided? They said: Is it possible for you to enable this to happen? He said: Yes; then he stood facing Mashhad and said: *“Al-salamu ‘alayka ayyuha al-Imam al-Thamin”* (Peace be unto you, O the Eight Leader of Guidance), and he heard a call that said: *‘Wa ‘alaika al-Salam..’* (And upon you [too] be peace...’). Hearing this the farmers regretted about what they had said to the old man and felt ashamed of themselves.16

Dear readers, these were occasions encountered by men who are not reported to have apparently immersed themselves in intellectual occupations throughout the day as is the case with Islamic scholars. But yet we see that they were able to attain receptivity that would qualify them to see or listen to the call of the Imam (AS). Our endeavor therefore should be to eradicate the darkness that we have accumulated in our hearts and lift the veils, so that when we convey our humble salutations, we are privileged to listen to the sacred response of our Imam (AS).

أَلسَّلامُ عَلَيْكَ

May Allah always envelop you with peace

Another important allusion worthy of consideration is hidden in the kind of sentence we employ when seeking peace for the Imam (AS) or declaring the same. Observe that the above sentence is a nominal sentence (*jumla ismiyya*). It starts with a noun and not a verb.

Therefore it signifies continuity and permanence. Hence we can either translate it as "*May Allah always envelop you with peace*" or "*You will always be enveloped with peace from my side*"17.

أَلسَّلامُ عَلَيْكَ

I am at peace with you

Some authoritative lexicographers define s*alam* as extreme coherence (*al-muwafaqa al-shadida*).18 Considering this definition, if we take the phrase '*Al-salamu 'alayka* as declarative then we are expressing our extreme harmony and unity with Imam al-Husayn (AS). It is the fear of such state of *salam* expressed by the revolutionary *za'ir* that led tyrants like the the *Abbasid al-Mansur al-Dawaniqi*, *Harun al-Rashid* and *al-Mutawakkil* among other oppressors to hamper and even kill anyone who visited the shrine of Imam al-Husayn (AS).

In his *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin*, Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani says:

Al-Mutawakkil was very hostile towards the descendants of Abu Talib, cruel towards their group and suspicious of their activities...It occurred to him that 'Ubayd Allah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan, his vizier, also used to think badly of them and the denunciation of their activity seemed good to him. He carried out actions against them that none of the 'Abbasids before him had carried out. Among these, he ploughed up the grave of al-Husayn (AS) and removed all trace of it. He put armed garrisons on the rest of the roads. Anyone they found making a pilgrimage to it, they brought to him. He killed or punished them severely.19

Despite all these threats, the aspirants of al-Husayn (AS) flocked like love birds yearning to express their love before their beloved whose love had soaked their hearts and gave them no respite. Abu al-Faraj narrates:

Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Ashnani reported to me: My promise to perform the pilgrimage seemed impossible in those days because of the terror. Then I decided to risk my life to do it. A perfume merchant helped me to do that. We set out to perform the pilgrimage, hiding by day and travelling by night until we came to the area of al-Ghadhiriyyah. From there we departed in the middle of the night and went into between two garrisons so that we came to the grave of al-Husayn (AS). It was hidden from us. We began to sniff for signs of it and search for some aspect of it until we came upon it.

The structure, which had been around it, had been torn down and burnt. Water had been made to flow over it and the place where bricks had been sunk down so that it had become like a ditch. We performed the rituals of the pilgrimage to him. We threw ourselves down on the ground and smelled a fragrance from it which I have never smelled anything like. It was like some kind of perfume. I asked the perfume merchant, who was with me, 'What fragrance is this?' 'By God, I have never smelled any kind of perfume like it,' he replied. We made our farewells and put marks around the grave in a number of places. When al-Mutawakkil was killed, we gathered with a group of the descendants of Abu Talib and the Shi'ah to go to the grave. We removed the marks and restored it to the state which it had been before.20

In their astute and accurate directions, the Imams (AS) would also encourage their followers to go to visit the shrine of Imam al-Husayn (AS) even at the cost of death and martyrdom. They would inform them that the more the fear of being attacked the more the reward for visiting al-Husayn (AS). ‘Allama Majlisi quotes Muhammad bin Muslim saying:

قَالَ لِيْ اَبُو جَعْفَرٍ مُحَمّدُ بْنِ عَلِيّ : هَلْ تَاْتِيْ قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ ؟ قُلْتُ: نَعَمْ عَلى خَوْفٍ وَوَجِلٍ. فَقَالَ لَهُ: مَا كانَ مِنْ هَذا اَشَدّ فَالثّوَابُ فِيْهِ عَلى قَدَرِ الْخَوْفِ وَمَنْ خَافَ فِيْ إِتْيَانِهِ آمَنَ اللهُ رُوْعَتَهُ يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ النّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ وَانْصَرَفَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ وَسَلّمَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْمَلآئِكةُ،وَزَارَهُ النّبِي وَدَعَا لَهُ...

Imam Abu Ja’far Muhammad bin ‘Ali (al-Baqir) (AS) said to me: Do you come to the grave of al-Husayn (AS)? I said: Yes, but in dread and fear. The Imam (AS) said: ‘If the situation is severe, its reward would be in proportion to the fear; and whosoever visits him in fear, Allah would protect his heart on the Day when the people would stand for the Lord of the Universe; and he would leave in the state of being forgiven, and the angels would send their salutations to him, and the Holy Prophet (S) would visit him and pray for him...21

The Imams (AS) likewise expressed their extreme attachment to Imam al-Husayn (AS). Rather they would encourage others to pray for them near the radiant dome of Imam al-Husayn (AS). Consider the following traditions:

1. ‘Allama Majlisi in vol. 101 of his *Bihar al-Anwar* quotes Ibn Abi Ya’fur to have said:

قُلْتُ لاَبِيْ عَبْدِ اللهِ : دَعَانِيْ الشّوْقُ إِلَيْكَ اَنْ تَجَشّمْتُ إِلَيْكَ عَلى مَشَقّةٍ فَقَالَ لِيْ: لا تَشْكُ رَبّكَ فَهَلاّ اَتَيْتَ مَنْ كانَ اَعْظَمُ حَقّا " عَلَيْكَ مِنّيْ؟ فَكَانَ مِنْ قَوْلِهِ: "فَهَلاّ اَتَيْتَ مَنْ كانَ اَعْظَمُ حَقّا عَلَيْكَ مِنّيْ اَشَدّ عَلَيّ مِنْ قَوْلِهِ " لا تَشْكُ رَبّكَ . " قُلْتُ: وَمَنْ اَعْظَمُ عَلَيّ حَقّا مِنْكَ ؟ قَالَ:اَلْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيّ اَلا اَتَيْتَ الْحُسَيْنَ فَدَعَوْتَ اللهَ عِنْدَهُ وَشَكَوْتَ إِلَيْهِ حَوَايِجَكَ؟

I said to Abu ‘Abdillah [al-Sadiq (AS)]: My fervent desire to meet you called me to bear the difficulties to come to you. The Imam (AS) said: ‘Do not complain to your Lord; and why didn’t you come to one who has a greater right over you than me?’ Ibn Abi Ya’fur says: His statement ‘Why didn’t you go to one who has a greater right over you than me?’ made me feel more uneasy than his statement “Do not complain to your Lord”. So I said: ‘And who has a greater right over me than yourself?” The Imam (AS) said: “Al-Husayn bin ‘Ali (AS); why didn’t you come to al-Husayn (AS) and pray to Allah near him, and raise your complaint

to Him about your needs?22

2. Ibn Qulawayh reports in his *Kamil al-Ziyarat* that Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari, one of the companions of Imam al-Hadi (AS) is reported to have said:

دَخَلْتُ عَلى اَبِي الْحَسَنِ عَلِيّ بْنِ مُحَمّد وَهُوَ مَحْمُوْمٌ عَلِيْلٌ، فَقَالَ لِيْ: يَا اَبَا هِاشَمِ اِبْعَثْ رَجُلاً مِنْ مَوَالِيْنَا اِلى الْحَائِرِ يَدْعُو اللهَ لِيْ، فَخَرَجْتُ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ، فَاسْتَقْبَلَنِيْ عَلِيّ بْنِ بِلاَل فَاَعْلَمْتُهُ مَا قَالَ لِيْ، وَسَاَلْتُهُ اَنْ يَكُوْنَ الرّجُلُ الّذِيْ يَخْرُجُ فَقَالَ: اَلسّمْعُ وَالطاعَةُ، وَلَكِنّنِيْ اَقُوْلُ: اِنّهُ اَفْضَل مِنَ الْحَائِرِ إِذْ كانَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ مَنْ فِي الْحَائِرِ، وَدُعَاؤُهُ لِنَفْسِهِ أَفْضَل مِنْ دُعَائِيْ لَهُ بِالْحَائِرِ، فَاَعْلَمْتُهُ مَا قَالَ، فَقَالَ لِيْ: قُلْ لَهُ: كانَ رَسُوْلُ اللهِ َ أَفْضَل مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَالْحَجَر، وَكانَ يَطوْفُ بِالْبَيْتِ وَيَسْتَلِمُ الْحَجَرَ، وَاِنّ اللهَ تَعَالى بِقَاعًا يُحِبٌّ اَنْ يُدْعى فِيْهَا فَيَسْتَجِيْبُ لِمَنْ دَعَاهُ، وَالْحَائِرُ مِنْهَا

I came to Abu al-Hasan (Imam 'Ali al-Naqi (AS)) while he had fever and was unwell. He said to me: 'O Aba Hisham, send one of our followers to the Ha'ir (the dome of Imam al-Husayn (AS)) to pray to Allah for me. So I left him and met 'Ali bin Bilal. I told him what the Imam (AS) had said and requested him to carry out the duty, and he was at his service. 'However,' said he, 'indeed the Imam (AS) is greater than the Ha'ir, for he equals the station of the one who is buried in the Ha'ir, and his supplication for himself is better than my supplication for him in the Ha'ir.' Abu Hisham says: I informed the Imam (AS) about what 'Ali bin Bilal said, whereupon he said: Tell him that the Apostle of Allah was better than the *Bayt al-Haram* and the *Hajar al-Aswad*, whereas he would circumambulate round the Ka'bah and touch the Hajar; and indeed Allah has places where He loves to be called, so that he may respond to the call of the caller, and the Ha'ir is one among them.23

أَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

Peace be unto You

Al-Salam, as we came to learn earlier, is one of the attributes of Almighty Allah, which some of his noble servants, like the infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), due to their utter submission exemplify. The path for others too is left open. Every human being is invited to the abode of peace, and therefore he must strive to attain the same. But a true beliver has an all-embracing heart, and thus yearns for the betterment of others too. Perhaps that is why we are encouraged to greet others with *al-salam*. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to

have said:

السّلامُ اِسْم مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ اللهِ تَعَالى فَافْشُوهُ بَيْنَكُمْ

Al-Salam is a name from among the names of Almighty Allah. Therefore, spread the same between yourselves...24

In fact the word *muslim* has originally been derived from Allah's Name *al-Salam*. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

تَسَمّى اللهُ بِاِسْمَين سَمّى بِهِمَا أُمّتِى هُوَ السّلامُ وَسَمّى أُمّتِي المُسْلِمِينَ، وَهُوَ الْمُؤْمِنُ وَسَمّى أُمّتِى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Allah named Himself with two names with which he [also] named my nation: He is *al-Salam* and He named my nation *muslims*, and He is *al-Mu'min* and He named my nation *mu'mins*.25

Perhaps due to this reason, scholars like Sayyid al-Shubbar in his *al-Anwar al-Lami'a* and 'Allama Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* believe that one of the meanings of *al-salamu 'alayka* is26:

اِسْمُ السّلامِ عَلَيْكَ

May Allah always envelop you with His Name *al-Salam.*

Therefore, Almighty Allah not only requires each of us to be at peace, but teaches us to ask for our Muslim brothers and sisters to be availed of the same. It should be understood however that the levels of peace are infinite. Therefore invoking peace for others while we greet them should never cease.

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ

I declare that Absolute Peace envelops you

Scholars of insight mention one of the meanings of the phrase *al-salamu 'alayka* as "the Divine Name *al-Salam* envelops you, and you are his manifestation". In this case the phrase is taken as declarative and *al-Salam* is taken to mean the Divine Name *al-Salam*. In his *Sharh al-Asma'*, Mulla Hadi Sabzaw³ari when discussing about the Divine Name *al-Salam*

says:

...أَحَدُ مَعَانِي قَوْلِنَا: سلام عليك، اَنّ السّلاَمَ الْمُؤْمِنَ الْمُهَيْمِنَ مُحِيْط عَلَيْكَ وَأَنْتَ مَظْهَرُهُ.

...one of the meanings of our statement '*salamun 'alayk*" is that the Peace, the Securer, the Guardian envelops you and you are His manifestation.27

أَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ

Peace be unto you

It is important to understand the remote distance between the sincerity of one who merely declares or verbally seeks peace for the *mazur* ('the visited one') and one who personifies peace in every dimension of his being and actively struggles to ensure the same for the *mazur*. In fact some of our traditions clearly emphasize the vital role of the practical application of *al-salam*. Look at the following traditions:

1. 'Allama Majlisi narrates the following in his *Bihar al-Anwar*:

جَاءَتْ جَارِيَةٌ لِلْحَسَنِ بِطاقِ رَيْحَانٍ فَقَالَ لَهَا أَنْتَ حُرٌّ لِوَجْهِ اللّهِ فَقِيلَ لَهُ فِي ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ أَدّبَنَا اللّهُ تَعَالى فَقَالَ إِذا حُيِّيتُمْ الْلآيَةَ وَكَانَ أَحْسَنُ مِنْهَاإِعْتَاقَهَا

One of the slave women of Imam al-Hasan (AS) came to him with a bouquet of aromatic plants, whereupon the Imam (AS) said to her: You are free for the sake of Allah. So the Imam (AS) was asked as to why did he free her, and he said: 'Almighty Allah trained us and said: '***And When you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better one than it, or return it... '(4:86).*** And to let her free is better return than her gift.28

Therefore the *tahiyya* (lit. seeking another's life & well-being (*talab al-hayat*)) referred to in the above verse conventionally translated as 'greeting' is not limited to a verbal expression of peace, but embraces other examples of its etymological definition too such as 'doing virtue to another'.

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

اَلْمُرَادُ بِالتّحِيّةِ فِيْ قَوْلِهِ تِعالى: وَإِذَا حُيّيْتُمْ بِتَحِيّةٍ السّلاَمُ وَغَيْرُهُ

مِنَ الْبِرّ وَالاِحْسَان.

Al-tahiyyah (greeting) in the verse ***'And when you are greeted with a greeting...'*** is to greet and perform other acts of virtue and good.29

These are traditions that show how practical s*alam* can be. Many of us do not realize this and conjecture that we have earned ample blessings and reward for our *salams* as the holy Qur`an and the sacred traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) and his infallible progeny clearly exemplify.

The Holy Qur`an says:

فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُم بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ تَحِيّةً مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ مُبَارَكَةً طيِّبَةً كذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّهُ لَكُمُ الْلآيَاتِ لَعَلّكُمْ تَعْقِلُون

So when you enter houses, greet yourselves with a salutation from God, blessed and pleasant. Thus does God clarify His signs for you so that you may apply reason. (24:61)

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إِذَا دَخَلَ اَحَدُكُمْ بَيْتَهُ فَلْيُسَلِّمْ، فَإِنّهُ يَنْزِلُهُ الْبَرَكَةُ، وَتَؤْنِسُهُ الْمَلآئِكَةُ

When one enters his house, he must say *salam*, for that makes blessings descend on the house and the angels become fond of it.30

Should we restrict these luminant words of guidance to the realm of speech or do they portray the loftier aspects of the reality of *al-salam*? In fact if there is no coherence between what the tongue utters and what the heart and mind feel and what the actions portray, then how can we claim the honesty of the *musallim* (greeter)?

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

O Aba 'Abdillah

The word '*ya*' is a vocative particle *(harfu nida'*) employed to call the *munada* (vocative). In simple terms it is a word used to *call* someone. However, grammarians hold that يَا'*ya*' is specifically employed for that vocative who is at a far distance31. For example, if we would

like to call ‘Ali who is at a far distance, we say يَاعَلِيّ *Ya ‘Ali!’*. The distance considered here was physical and spatial. Rhetoricians however employ the same when they would like to praise an exalted personality even if he was very near.

We address Almighty Allah, for example, who is closer to us than our jugular veins as يَاالله *Ya Allah*, because the Essence of Allah is Exalted. In the well-known verse of the Throne (*Ayat al-Kursi*) we declare this reality of Allah’s Exalted Essence as:

وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيْم

And He Alone is always the Extremely High & Great (2:255)[32]

In our present situation our vocative and addressee is Imam al-Husayn (AS) who due to his freedom from the limitations of the material world and comprehensive being is intensely close to us and can see and listen to us too. Hence the reason we employ the vocative particle *‘ya* and say ‘*Ya Aba ‘Abdillah’* is to express his exaltedness and confess our lowliness.

The people of heart, however, can well appreciate the implication manifested when the ‘the lover calls the beloved’. The implication is to get near to the Beloved. Hence when we call Aba ‘Abdillah (whose import, as we shall soon expound means ‘the utterly submissive slave of Allah’) we are seeking his closeness, or in other words ‘the attributes that personifies his exalted being’.

أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

O Father of ‘Abdullah

The words *Aba ‘Abdillah* literally mean ‘the father of the obedient slave of Allah’. Arabs honorify their fellow brothers by calling them with a teknonym (*kunya*) a name that mostly mentions the first or one of the offsprings of the ‘named one’. Hence if a person had a son named ‘Abdullah, he is called *Abu ‘Abdillah*, which means ‘father of ‘Abdullah’. One of the reasons behind the Imam (AS) being called Abu ‘Abdillah is that he had an offspring called ‘Abdullah, famously known as الرّضِيْعُ *al-radhi’* (one who is still breastfeeding).

He was mercilessly martyred by the enemies after Imam al-Husayn (AS) read *adhan* in his ear following his birth. In the well-known *Ziyarat al-Nahiya al-Muqaddasa* Imam al-Zaman (AS) addresses this new born as:

أَلسّلاَمُ عَلى عَبْدِ اللهِ بن الحُسَيْن الطفْل الرّضِيْع...

Perpetual peace be unto ‘Abdillah, the one who was still breastfeeding...[33]

أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

Obedient Slave of Allah

Sometimes however, someone is attributed with a teknonym (*kunya*) not because he is the father of so and so, but because he enjoys a certain quality. For example, one who is well known for his open-handedness and generosity is called Abu Jawad. In our case, a number of commentators of this exalted *Ziyarat*, opine that one of the reasons the holy Imam (AS) was given the *kunya* Abu ‘Abdillah was his extreme submissiveness to Allah. In other words, he was the true slave of Allah.

Traditions indicate that Imam al-Husayn (AS) was given the teknonym after his birth which subtly alludes to the submissive state of Imam (AS) ever since his childhood. In a tradition narrated in *Bihar al-Anwar*, Asma’ is quoted to have said:

فَلَمّا كانَ فِيْ يَوْمِ سَابِعِهِ جَاءَنِيْ النّبِيّ فَقَالَ: هَلُمِّي اِبْنِيْ فَاَتَيْتُ بِهِ... ثُمّ وَضَعَهُ فِيْ حِجْرِهِ ثُمّ قَالَ: يَا اَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيّ ثُمّ بَكى...

‘On the seventh day after his birth, the Prophet (S) came to me and said: ‘Bring me my son.’ So I brought Husayn to him...Then he kept him on his bossom and said: ‘**O Aba ‘Abdillah**, it is indeed difficult for me...then he burst into tears...’34

This tradition indicates that the Imam (AS) got the teknonym since his very early childhood and thus enjoyed an exalted status since then.

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

O Utterly Submissive Servant of Allah

It may be argued that if the *za’ir* himself, due to his submissiveness to Almighty Allah is also an *‘abd* of Allah, why should he still call the Imam with the vocative particle ‘*ya*’? The answer to this is very simple: *‘ubudiyya* and submissiveness are of different levels. The distance between the stage of *‘ubudiyya* that the infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) occupy and the stage their true followers enjoy is extremely vast. Consider the following narrations:

1. ‘Ibad bin Suhayb is reported to have said:

قُلْتُ لِلصّادِقِ جَعْفَر بْنِ مُحَمّد: اَخْبِرْنِيْ عَنْ اَبِيْ ذَرّ، اَهُوَ اَفْضَلُ

اَمْ اَنْتُمْ اَهْلُ الْبَيْت؟ فَقَالَ: يَا ابْنَ صُهَيْب كَمْ شُهُورُ السّنَة فَقُلْتُ: اِثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا، فَقَالَ: وَكَم الْحُرُم مِنْهَا؟ قُلْتُ: اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُر، قَالَ: فَشَهْرُ رَمَضَان مِنْهَا؟ قُلْتُ: لا، قَالَ: فَشَهْرُ رَمَضَان اَفْضَلُ اَمِ الاشْهُر الحُرُم؟ فَقُلْتُ: بَلْ شَهْرُ رَمَضَان، قَالَ: فَكذَلِكَ نَحْنُ اَهْلُ الْبَيْت لا يُقَاسُ بِنَا اَحَدٌ.

I asked al-Sadiq (AS), Ja'far bin Muhammad (upon whom be peace): Inform me whether Abu Dharr is better than you the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)? The Imam (AS) said: 'O son of Suhayb, how many months are there in one year'? I said: 'twelve months.' Thereupon he (AS) said: 'And how many among them are sacred (*hurum*)?' I said 'Four months.' He (AS) said: 'And is the month of Ramadhan among them?' I said: 'No.' He (AS) said: 'Then is the month of Ramadan greater or the four sacred months?' I said: 'Rather the Holy month of Ramadhan is greater.' The Imam (AS) then said: 'So is the case with us, the Ahl al-Bayt; none can be compared to us.'35

2. Jabir al-Ju'fi, a companion of Imam al-Baqir is reported to have narrated that Imam al-Baqir (AS) once said to him:

اِنّا مِنَ اللهِ بِمَكانٍ وَمَنْزلَةٍ رَفِيْعَةٍ ! فَلَوْلا نَحْنُ مَا خَلَقَ اللهُ تعَالى سَمَاءًا وَلا اَرْضًا، وَلاجَنّةً وَلانَارًا، وَلا شَمْسًا وَلاقَمَرًا، وَلاجِنِّيًّا وَلا إنْسِيًّا. يَا جَابِر، إنّا اَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ لا يُقَاسُ بِنَا اَحَدٌ، مَنْ قَاسَ بِنَا احدًا مِنَ الْبَشَر فَقَدْ كفَرَ . يَا جَابِرُ، بِنَا الله أنْقَذَكُمْ، وَبِنَا هَدَاكُمْ،وَنَحْنُ وَاللهِ دَلّلْنَاكُمْ عَلى رَبِّكُمْ...

Surely we have an exalted status near Allah! Were we not there, Allah would not have created any heaven nor earth, nor any Paradise nor Hell Fire, nor any sun or moon, or any Jinni or human being. O Jabir! **We are the Ahl al-Bayt; none can be compared to us; whosoever compares any human being with us, has disbelieved (or covered (the truth)).** O Jabir! Through us Allah emancipated you, and through us He guided you; and, I swear by Allah we have guided you to your Lord...36

3. Imam 'Ali (AS) is reported to have said to Abu Dharr:

اِعْلَمْ يَا اَبَاذَرّ اَنَا عَبْدُ اللهِ عَزّوَجَلّ وَخَلِيْفَتُهُ عَلى عِبَادِهِ لا تَجْعَلُوْنَا اَرْبَابًا وَقُوْلُوْا فِيْ فَضْلِنَا مَا شِئْتُمْ فَاِنّكُمْ لا تَبْلُغُوْنَ كُنْهَ مَا فِيْنَا وَلا نِهَايَتَهُ، فَاِنّ اللهَ عَزّوَجَلّ قَدْ اَعْطانَا اَكْبَرُ وَاَعْظَمُ مِمّا يَصِفُهُ

وَاصِفُكُمْ اَوْ يَخْطرُ عَلى قَلْبِ اَحَدِكُمْ فَإِذَا عَرَفْتُمُوْنَا هَكذَا فَاَنْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْن .

Know, O Abu Dharr, that I am an utterly submissive servant of Allah on the earth and His vicegerent over His other servants; do not consider us (the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)) to be Lords, and then say about our merits whatever you want, ***for certainly you would not comprehend the essence of our station, nor its zenith***, for verily Allah bestowed on us better and greater than what describers among you describe or what has penetrated in the imagination of anyone; so when you know us in this way, you surely are the believers.37

أَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

Peace be unto you O Aba ‘Abdillah

One of the areas where it is recommended for one to call his fellow Muslim brother with a teknonym is when he is present before him. In our case, therefore, because we know that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is present before us, and we address him using the second person pronoun “*kaf*’, it is apt to begin our address with his teknonym. Imam al-Ridha (AS) is reported to have said:

إِذَا ذَكَرْتَ الرّجُلَ وَهُوَ حَاضِرٌ فَكَنِّهِ وَإِذَا كانَ غائباً فسَمِّهِ

If you mention a man in his presence, then do so using his teknonym (*kunya*), and if he were to be absent, then call him by his name.38

أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

O father of ‘Abdullah

It is important to look at the root meaning of the word ‘*ab*’ in *Aba ‘Abdillah* which we normally translate as ‘father’. In the Arabic language the word اب ‘*ab*’ literally means:

هُوَ كُلّ مَنْ كانَ سَبَبًا فِى اِيْجَادِ شَيْءٍ اَوْ اِصْلاَحِهِ اَوْ ظُهُوْرِهِ

Whosoever is a cause in the existence of a thing or its reform or its manifestation is known

as ‘*ab*’.39

And since Imam al-Husayn (AS) converges with the Muhammadan Light (al-Nur al-Muhammadi) which is the intermediary of Divine Grace, he is a *sabab* (cause) in the existence, reform and manifestation of the caravan of human beings. Therefore he is Abu ‘Abdillah. Whatever grace any servant of Allah receives is through the Muhammadan Light.

أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

O father of ‘Abdullah

In a well-known tradition, we read:

إِنّمَا الآبَاءُ ثَلاثَة: اَبٌ ولّدكَ وَابٌ عَلّمَكَ وَابٌ زَوّجَكَ

Indeed there are only **three fathers**: the father who was the reason for your birth, the father who taught you, and the father who married you (to his daughter).40

And because Imam al-Husayn (AS) was from among the infallible Imams (AS) responsible to guide humanity and teach them the path of salvation, he is known as Abu ‘Abdillah meaning ‘father or tutor of a true servant of Allah’. In this case every human being enjoys from al-Husayn’s banquet of practical submission. The previous Prophets of Allah are no exception. Imam al-Husayn (AS) also serves as a father to the Prophets of Allah before the Seal of the Prophets (AS), since they drew inspiration from him even before his birth. Consider the following narratives from ‘Allama Majlisi’s *Bihar al-Anwar* and Bahrani’s *al-’Awalim*:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللهِ، قَالَ: إِنّ إِسْمَاعِيْلَ الّذِيْ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالى: وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيْلَ اِنّهُ كانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكانَ رَسُوْلاً نَبِيًا لَمْ يَكُنْ إِسْمَاعِيْلُ بْن اِبْرَاهِيْمَ بَلْ كانَ نَبِيّا مِنَ الاَنْبِيَاءِ، بَعَثَهُ اللهُ عَزّوَجَلّ إِلى قَوْمِهِ فَأَخَذُوْهُ فَسَلَخُوْا فَرْوَةَ رَأسِهِ وَوَجْهِهِ، فَاَتَاهُ مَلَكٌ، فَقَالَ: إِنّ اللهَ جَلّ جَلاَلُهُ بَعَثَنِيْ إِلَيْكَ فَمُرْنِي بِمَا شِئْتَ، فَقَالَ: لِيْ اُسْوَةٌ بِمَا يُصْنَعُ بِالْحُسَيْنِ...

It is reported from Abi ‘Abdillah (al-Sadiq (AS)) who said: ‘Indeed the Isma’il that Almighty Allah talks about in the verse ***‘And mention in the Book Isma’il. Indeed he was true to his promise, and an apostle and a prophet.’(19:54)*** was not Isma’il (AS) the son of Ibrahim (AS), but was a prophet among prophets whom Allah, the Invincible and Sublime,

sent to his people; and they killed him, and skinned his scalp and face; so an angel came to him, and said: ‘Surely Allah sent me to you; so order me to do what you want.’ He said: ‘I have model of emulation of what will happen to al-Husayn (upon whom be peace)...41

وَرُوِيَ انّ نُوْحًا لمّا رَكِبَ فِي السّفِيْنَةِ طافَتْ بِهِ جَمِيْعَ الدُّنْيَا، فَلَمّا مَرّتْ بِكرْبَلا اَخَذَتْهُ الاَرْضُ وَخَافَ نُوْح الْغَرْقَ، فَدَعَا رَبّهُ، وَقَالَ: إلهيْ طفْتُ جَمِيْعَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا اَصَابَنِيْ فَزَعٌ مِثْلَ مَا اَصَابَنِيْ فِيْ هَذِهِ الاَرْضِ، فَنَزَلَ جِبْرَئِيْلُ، وَقَالَ يَا نُوْحُ فِي هَذَا الْمَوْضِعِ يُقْتَلُ الْحُسَيْنُ سِبْط مُحَمّدٍ خَاتَم الاَنْبِيَاءِ، وَابْن خَاتَم الاَوْصِيَاءِ، فَقَالَ: وَمَن الْقَاتِلُ لهُ يَا جَبْرَئِيْلُ؟ قَالَ: قَاتِلُهُ لعِيْنُ اَهْل سَبْع سَمَاوَات وَسَبْع اَرَضِيْنَ، فَلَعَنَهُ نُوْح اَرْبَعَ مَرّاتٍ...

It is narrated that when Nuh (AS) boarded the Ark, it transported him throughout the world; and when he passed by Karbala, the earth forced the ark towards itself, and Nuh (AS) feared of drowning; so he prayed to his Lord: O my God, I went round the entire world, and nowhere was I afraid as I have been in this place; Thereupon Gabriel (AS) descends, and tells Nuh (AS): “O Nuh this is the place where Husayn (AS), the grandson of the Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets and the son of the Seal of the Divine Trustees would be killed. Nuh asked him: And who would kill him, O Gabriel? Gabriel said: His killer is one whom the inhabitants of seven heavens and the seven earths curse; so Nuh (AS) curses him four times...42

وَرُوِيَ انّ اِبْرَاهِيْمَ مَرّ فِيْ اَرْض كرْبَلا وَهُوَ رَاكِبٌ فَرَسًا فَعَثَرَ بِهِ وَسَقَط إبْرَاهِيْمُ وَشَجّ رَأْسُهُ وَسَالَ دَمُهُ، فَاَخَذَ فِيْ الاِسْتِغْفَار، وَقَالَ: إلهيْ اَيٌّ شَيْءٍ حَدَثَ مِنّيْ؟ فَنَزَلَ إلَيْهِ جَبْرَئِيْلُ وَقَالَ: يَا إبْرَاهِيْمُ مَا حَدَثَ مِنْكَ ذَنْبٌ، وَلكِن يُقْتَلُ هُنَا سِبْط خَاتَم الاَنْبِيَاءِ، وَابْنُ خَاتَم الاَوْصِيَاءِ، فَسَالَ دَمُكَ مُوَافَقَةً لِدَمِهِ. قَالَ: يَا جَبْرَئِيْلُ وَمَنْ يَكُوْنُ قَاتِلُهُ؟ لعِينُ أَهْل السّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرَضِينَ... فَرَفَعَ إبْرَاهِيْمُ يَدَيْهِ وَلَعَنَ يَزِيْدَ لعْنًا كثِيْرًا ...

It is narrated that [Prophet] Ibrahim (AS) passed by the land of Karbala while he was riding his horse. The horse made him stumble and Ibrahim (AS) fell off and his head got wounded and blood started flowing out of him. Thereupon, he began seeking Allah’s forgiveness, and said: ‘O my God, what [wrong] have I done?’

Thereupon Gabriel descends on him and says: ‘O Ibrahim, you have not committed any sin;

but this is the place where the grandson of the Seal of Prophets (AS) and the son of the Seal of the Divine Trustees would be killed; thus your blood flowed in accordance with his blood. He asked Gabriel: ‘And who would be his killer?’ Gabriel said: ‘The one cursed by the inhabitants of the heavens and the earths...Ibrahim raised his hands and excessively sends curses on Yazid...43

These narratives as well others which we have ommitted for the sake of brevity, clearly indicate that Imam al-Husayn (AS) was an example for his predecessors too. In simpler words, ‘he serves as a timeless model’. The curses from the Prophets in all their particularity depict the universal stance against oppression. Hence, Imam al-Husayn (AS) educated, educates and will always educate the human beings with the lesson of utter submission, even at the cost of sacrificing everything. Consequently, we rightfully address him as Abu ‘Abdillah (the father or tutor of a truly submissive servant of Allah.)

عَبْدِ اللّهِ

Servant of Allah

The name ‘Abdullah is of very great significance since it also implies that ‘the named’ is a manifestation of all the attributes of Almighty Allah. This is because the name Allah which is sometimes referred to as *al-ism al-a’zham* (the greatest name of God) is also a name that comprehends in itself all the sublime attributes of the Divine Essence. Hence one who is a servant of such a Being, necessarily is submissive to His orders, all of which manifest His sublime attributes.

Thus whatever a submissive servant of Allah does, he would do it according to what Allah wants, and what Allah wants clearly depicts His sublime attributes. In simple terms: If the king of a certain town possesses excellent traits, his totally obedient servants would carry the same traits, because whatever they do accord with what the king wants.

All the prophets of Allah as well as the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are *‘Ibad Allah* (totally submissive servants of Allah) and consequently manifestations of His Most Beautiful Attributes as well. It is for this reason perhaps that Imam ‘Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

نَحْنُ الاسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنى

We are the Most Beautiful Names of Allah44

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ

Peace be unto you, O obedient servant of Allah

In the Arabic rhetoric there is a rule that says:

تَعْلِيْقُ الْحُكْمِ بِالْوَصْفِ مُشْعِرٌبِالْعِلِّيَّةِ

When a statement is qualified with a certain attribute the quality denotes the reason behind the statement.

Bearing this in mind, if we consider the above verse to be a declarative statement, it would be clear for us that the reason why we declare that Imam al-Husayn (AS) enjoys the state of s*alam* (freedom from calamities) is that he is an 'utterly submissive servant of Allah'. In other words the reason for "*Assalamu 'alayka*" is "*Ya Aba 'Abdillah*". In simpler words, 'I declare that you are in the state of Salam, O utterly submissive servant of Allah' [and the reason for you to be in that state is your characteristic of being utterly submissive to Allah].

Anecdotes for Reflection

1. Haj Sayyid Ahmad Baha al-Dini, an employee of the Office of the late Imam Khumayni is reported to have said:

Imam Khumayni would pay his respects to Sayyid al-Shuhada (Imam al-Husayn (AS)) before and after every canonical prayer: he would for example pay his respects before the morning prayer, and then after the morning prayer, before the *maghrib* prayer, before the 'isha' prayer, and then after the 'isha' prayer, before the *zhuhr* prayer, before the 'asr prayer and then after the 'asr prayer. In this way he would altogether pay his respects eight times a day to Sayyid al-Shuhada'45.

2. A friend of the late saint, Shaykh Rajab 'Ali al-Khayyat, narrates:

'Together with the Shaykh we went to Kashan. The Shaykh had the habit that wherever he traveled, he would visit the cemetery of that place. As we entered the cemetery in Kashan, he said: "*Al-Salamu 'alayka ya Aba 'Abd Allah (AS)*" ("Salutations be on you O Imam Husayn (AS)") We walked a few steps further on, and then he said: "Do you not smell anything?" 'No, what smell?' We asked. Then he asked: "Don't you feel the smell (scent) of red apples?" Our answer was 'no' again. We went further on and met the man in charge of the cemetery.

The Shaykh asked him: "Has anyone been **buried** here today?" The man answered: ''Just before you arrived someone was buried', and then he took us to a newly covered tomb. There it was! We all smelled the scent of red apples. We asked the Shaykh about the scent, to which he answered: "When this person was buried here, the sacred person of Sayyid al-Shuhada' [Imam Husayn (AS)] came here and for the sake of this person (and by the blessed visit of Sayyid al-Shuhada' (AS)) the punishment was removed from those buried in this cemetery."46

1. Raghib al-Isfahani, al-Mufradat, p. 421.
2. Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 391
3. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.3, p. 486
4. 'Allama al-Tabataba`i, al-Mizan, v.10, p.39

5. Shaykh al-Tusi, al-Amali, p. 175
6. Al-Maghribi, Sharh al-Akhbar, v.3, p.21
7. Al-Bahrani, Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v.3, p. 24
8. In Arabic grammar terminology this kind of al is known as al li al-'ahd al-dhihni
9. In order to understand this particular kind of usage better, consider verse 19:47 where Prophet Ibrahim assures Azar that he would not harm him. He employs the phrase 'Salamun 'alaikum….' Exegetes of Qur`an well-grounded in the Arabic language, like Qadhi al-Baydhawi in his Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil take this view into consideration.
10. Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, p. 622
11. Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.23, p. 339. It should be noted that Imam al-Sadiq mentions the most perfect extensions (atamm al-masadiq) of the believers as the Imams . Otherwise the verse clearly tells us that one who has really achieved the expected state of belief can enjoy a station which would enable him to see the actions of others.
12. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 219
13. Ibid.
14. . Mirza Tehrani, Shifa al-Sudur, p. 98; Tadhkirat al-Za'irin [Ref: Persian collection 'Nigahi be Ziyarat-e 'Ashura', p. 142]
15. Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Kimyaye Mahabbat (Elixir of Love), p. 94
16. Mahmud al-Badri, Uswat al-'Arifin, p. 215
17. Jar Allah al-Zamakhshari, Tafsir al-Kashshaf, v.4, p. 401
18. Al-Mustafawi, al-Tahqiq, v.5, p. 188.
19. Shaykh Shams al-Din, The Revolution of al-Husayn , http://www.al-islam.org/revolution/2.htm [12]
20. Shaykh Shams al-Din, The Revolution of al-Husayn , http://www.al-islam.org/revolution/2.htm [12]
21. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 101, p.11
22. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 101, p. 46; Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 315
23. Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 460
24. Shaykh al-Tabrasi, Mishkat al-Anwar, p.349
25. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthur, v.4, p. 373
26. This meaning has been narrated by both the Shi'a as well as the Sunni scholars in their commentaries of Qur`an and lexicons as well.
27. Mulla Hadi al-Sabzawari, Sharh al-Asma', p. 324
28. Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.81, p. 273
29. Shaykh al-Huwayzi, Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.1, p. 524
30. Muhammadi al-Rayshahri, al-Khayr wa al-Baraka fi al-Kitab wa al-Sunna, p. 206
31. Al-Sabban in his glosses over Sham'uni's commentary over the Alfiyya of Ibn Malik, says: 'Indeed a far object is only called with particles that contain letters of protraction (harf al-madd), because when a far object is called it requires one to prolong his voice, so that the vocative can hear. (Al-Sabban, Hashiyat al-Sabban, v.3, p. 1145.)
32. This is one phrase where the comprehensive beauty of the Qur`an can well be appreciated for all those who can appreciate the subtle issues of Arabic grammar and syntax. This small verse describes so many things at the same time: (1) It is a nominal sentence (al-jumla al-ismiyya) and thus it signifies permanence (2) the pronoun huwa denotes 'specificity' and thus these two attributes that follow it are originally reserved for Allah. (3) The form 'ali similar to فعيل 'fa'il' is known as 'al-sifa al-mushbiha' in the Arabic, which denotes intensity and permanence.
33. al-Shahid al-Awwal, al-Mazar, p. 149
34. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.44, pp. 250-251
35. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.22, p. 406
36. Muhammad bin Jurayr al-Tabari al-Shi'i, Nawadir al-Mu'jizat, p. 124

37. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.26, p.2
38. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.75, p. 335
39. Sharh Kalimat Amir al-Mu’minin , p.15
40. ‘Abd al-Wahhab, Sharh Kalimat Amir al-Mu’minin , p. 15
41. Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Bahrani, al-’Awalim- al-Imam al-Husayn , p. 108
42. Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Bahrani, al-’Awalim- al-Imam al-Husayn , p. 102
43. Ibid.
44. Al-Sayyid Hashim al-Bahrani, Madinat al-Ma’ajiz, v.1, p. 556
45. It is Imam al-Husayn who established prayer and ensured its perpetuity. In the well-known ziyarat al-warith we address the martyred Imam as follows: اشهد انك قد اقمت الصلاة...I bear witness that you established prayer. (Author)
46. Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Kimyaye Mahabbat, p. 115

Chapter 2: Peace be on you, O son of the Messenger of Allah

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يا بْنَ رَسُوْلِ الله

Peace be on You, O son of the Messenger of of Allah

Commentary

يا بْنَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ

O son of the Messenger of Allah

Ibnu Rasulillah is a patronym1. Imam al-Husayn (AS) in this verse is introduced as the son of the Holy Prophet (S). There has been a controversy in the past about this bond and relationship. The enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) throughout history would try to denounce it and declare that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are not from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S) but rather only from the progeny of Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Ali (AS). The Ahl al-Bayt (AS), however, would cogently prove to them the veracity of their relationship with the Holy Prophet (S). In fact the most cogent of all proofs is the well-known verse of *mubahala* (imprecation), where Almighty Allah says to His Apostle (S):

فَمَنْ حَاجّكَ فيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ ما جاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْناءَنا وَأَبْناءَكُمْ وَنِساءَنا وَنِساءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمّ نَبْتَهِلْ

فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللّهِ عَلَى الْكاذِبينَ

Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, “Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah’s curse upon the liars.” (3:61)

This verse speaks of the Holy Prophet (S)’s confrontation with the Christians of Najran in the well-known incident of *mubahala* (imprecation), when just beholding the brilliant faces of the *Ahl al-Kisa* (AS) overwhelmend the Christians and made their bishop say:

إِنِّيْ لأَرَى وُجُوْهًا لَوْ سَأَلُوا اللّهَ أَنْ يُزِيْلَ جَبَلاً مِنْ مَكانِهِ لازَالَهُ بِهَا فَلا تُبَاهِلُوْا فَتُهْلِكُوْا وَلا يَبْقَى عَلىَ وَجْهِ الأَرْضِ نَصْرَانِيٌّ إِلى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

Indeed I am seeing faces, who if ask Allah to uproot a mountain from its place, He would surely do so. Therefore do not imprecate, for if you do so you will perish, and there would remain no Christian on the face of the earth until the Judgment Day.2

In the aforementioned verse we clearly find the phrase “*Let us call our sons (abna’ana) and your sons (abna’akum)…”*. Muslim historians have unanimously narrated that the Holy Prophet (S) had brought Imam al-Hasan (AS) and Imam al-Husayn (AS) as his sons for this event3.

Hadhrat Fatima al-Zahra’ (AS) narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) that:

كُلُّ بَنِي أُمٍّ يَنْتَمُونَ إِلى عَصَبَتِهِمْ إِلاّ وُلْدَ فَاطمَةَ فَإِنِّي أَنَا أَبُوهُمْ وَعَصَبَتُهُمْ

The son of every mother is [solely] attributed to his paternal relations, save the sons of Fatima, for surely I am their father and paternal relation.4

This tradition, which is found with slight variations in so many works of traditions, is vocal enough to specify the exceptional relationship between the Holy Prophet (S) and the sons of Hadhrat Fatima (AS).

Throughout the dark pages of history, however, the illegitimate rulers of the Muslim world, due to their jealousy and hatred, always debated this relationship but did not suceed. Following are some examples worthy of consideration:

1. Al-Arbili in his *Kashf al-Ghumma* narrates:

عَنْ ذَكْوَان مَوْلى مُعَاوِيَة قال قَالَ مُعَاوِيَة: لا أَعْلَمَنّ أَحَداً سَمّى هَذَيْنِ الْغُلاَمَيْنِ إِبْنَيْ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ. وَلكِنْ قُوْلُوا: اِبْنَيْ عَلِيّ. قَالَ ذَكْوَان: فَلَمّا كانَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ، أَمَرَنِيْ أَنْ أَكْتُبَ بَنِيْهِ فِي الشّرَفِ. قَالَ: فَكَتَبْتُ بَنِيْهِ وَبَنِي بَنِيْهِ، وَتَرَكْتُ بَنِيْ بَنَاتِهِ.. ثُمّ أَتَيْتُهُ بِالْكِتَابِ، فَنَظَرَ فِيْهِ، فَقَالَ: وَيْحَك، لَقَدْ أَغْفَلْتَ كُبر بَنِيّ! فَقُلْتُ: مَنْ؟ فَقَالَ: أَما بَنُوْ فُلاَنَة ـ لِاِبْنَتِهِ ـ بَنيّ؟ أَمَا بَنُوْ فُلاَنَة ـ لِاِبْنَتِهِ ـ بَنِيّ؟.قَالَ: قُلْتُ: اَللهِ!! أَيَكُوْنُ بَنُوْ بَنَاتِكَ بَنِيْكَ، وَلا يَكُوْنُ بَنُوْ فَاطمَة بَنِي رَسُوْلِ اللهِ ؟! قَالَ: مَا لَكَ؟ قَاتَلَكَ اللهُ ! لا يَسْمَعَنّ هَذا أَحَدٌ مِنْكَ ؟!

Dhakwan, a slave of Mu’awiya, reports: Mu’awiya [once] said [to me]: Surely I do not know anyone call these two boys (Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (AS)) the two sons of the Messenger of Allah (S). Therefore say: “They are the sons of ‘Ali (AS)”. Later, Mu’awiya ordered me to write down the names of his sons in sequence of nobility. I wrote the names of his sons and the names of the sons of his sons, but did not write the names of the sons of his daughters.

Then I came to him with the written script. He looked at it, and retorted: Woe be unto you! You have forgotten the elders from among my children! I said: Who are they? He said: Aren’t the sons of that daughter [of mine] my sons? Aren’t the sons of such and such daughter of mine my sons? Dhakwan said: I remarked [in amazement]: God!! Are the sons of your daughters your sons, whereas the sons of Fatima (AS) not the sons of the Messenger of Allah (S)? He said: What is the matter with you? May Allah kill you! No one should hear this from you![5]

2. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in his *Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb* narrates the following from Shu’bi:

كُنْتُ عِنْدَ الْحَجّاجِ، فَأُتِيَ بِيَحْيَى بْن يَعْمَر، فَقِيْهُ خُرَاسَان، مِنْ بَلْخ، مُكَبّلاً بِالْحَدِيْدِ فَقَالَ لَهُ الْحَجّاج: أَنْتَ زَعَمْتَ: أَنّ الْحَسَنَ وَالْحُسَيْنَ مِنْ ذُرّيّةِ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ؟ فَقَالَ: بَلى. فَقَال الْحَجّاجُ : لَتَأْتِيْنِي بِهَا وَاضِحَة بَيّنَة مِنْ كِتَابِ اللهِ، أَوْ لأَقْطعَنّكَ عُضْواً عُضْواً. فَقَالَ: آتِيْكَ بِهَا بِيّنَة وَاضِحَة مِنْ كِتَابِ اللهِ يَا حَجّاجُ.قَالَ: فَتَعَجّبْتُ مِنْ جُرْأَتِهِ بِقَوْلِهِ: يَا حَجّاجُ. فَقَالَ لَهُ: وَلا تَأْتِنّي بِهَذِهِ الآيَةِ: نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَائَكُمْ .فَقَالَ: آتِيْكَ بِهَا بيّنة وَاضِحَةِ مِنْ كِتَابِ اللهِ، وَهُوَ قَوْلُهُ: وَنُوْحاً هَدَيْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْل، وَمِنْ ذُرّيّتِهِ دَاوُد وَسُلَيْمَانُ .. إِلىَ قَوْلِهِ: وَزَكريّا، وَيَحْيَى، وَعِيْسَى. فَمَنْ كانَ أَبُوْ

عِيْسَى، وَقَدْ أَلْحِقَ بِذُرِّيّةِ نُوْحٍ ؟.! قَالَ : فَأَطرَقَ الْحَجّاجُ مَلِيّاً، ثُمّ رَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ فَقَالَ: كَأَنِّيْ لَمْ أَقْرَأْ هَذِهِ الآيَةَ مِنْ كِتابِ اللهِ حُلّوا وثَاقَهُ .. إلخ

I was with Hajjaj [bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi] and Yahya bin Ya’mar, the jurisprudent of Khurasan, was brought from Balkh shackled with iron. Hajjaj said to him: You think that Hasan and Husayn are from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S)? He said: Of course yes. Thereupon Hajjaj said: You must bring me a clear exposition for that from the Book of Allah or I surely will cut your body into parts. He said: I will bring for you a clear exposition from the Book of Allah, O Hajjaj. Shu’bi says: I was surprised at his audacity in responding with the [concluding] words, “O Hajjaj!” Thereupon Hajjaj said to him: But do not bring for me the verse ***“let us call our sons...”* (3:61)**

He said: I will bring you a clear exposition from the Book of Allah, and that is Allah’s speech

“...And Noah We had guided before, and from his offspring, David and Solomon up to the phrase [in the next verse] “...and Zechariah, John, Jesus...(84-85)

Who then was the father of Jesus, while he is attached to the progeny of Noah? Shu’bi says: Thereupon Hajjaj lowered his head for some time, and then raised it and said: It is as if I have not read this verse from the Book of Allah. Release him!6

3. Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad bin Ya’qub al-Kulayni narrates in his Al-Kafi:

عَنْ أَبِي الْجَارُودِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ قَالَ قَالَ لِي أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ يَا أَبَا الْجَارُودِ مَا يَقُولُونَ لَكُمْ فِي الْحَسَنِ وَالْحُسَيْنِ قُلْتُ يُنْكِرُونَ عَلَيْنَا أَنّهُمَا ابْنَا رَسُولِ اللّهِ قَالَ فَأَيّ شَيْءٍ احْتَجَجْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلْتُ احْتَجَجْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بِقَوْلِ اللّهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ فِي عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيّتِهِ داوُدَ وَسُلَيْمانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسى وَهارُونَ وَكَذلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَزَكَرِيّا وَ يَحْيى وَ عِيسى فَجَعَلَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ مِنْ ذُرِّيّةِ نُوحٍ قَالَ فَأَيّ شَيْءٍ قَالُوا لَكُمْ قُلْتُ قَالُوا قَدْ يَكُونُ وَلَدُ الِلابْنَةِ مِنَ الْوَلَدِ وَلا يَكُونُ مِنَ الصُّلْبِ قَالَ فَأَيّ شَيْءٍ احْتَجَجْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلْتُ احْتَجَجْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بِقَوْلِ اللّهِ تَعَالى لِرَسُولِهِ فَقُلْ تَعالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْناءَنا وَأَبْناءَكُمْ وَنِساءَنا وَنِساءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ قَالَ فَأَيّ شَيْءٍ قَالُوا قُلْتُ قَالُوا قَدْ يَكُونُ فِي كَلامِ الْعَرَبِ أَبْنَاءُ رَجُلٍ وَآخَرُ يَقُولُ أَبْنَاؤُنَا قَالَ فَقَالَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ يَا أَبَا الْجَارُودِ لاعْطِيَنّكَهَا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللّهِ جَلّ وَ تَعَالى أَنّهُمَا مِنْ صُلْبِ

رَسُولِ اللّهِ لا يَرُدُّهَا إلا الْكافِرُ قُلْتُ وَ أَيْنَ ذَلِكَ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ مِنْ حَيْثُ قَالَ اللّهُ تَعَالى حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمّهاتُكُمْ وَبَناتُكُمْ وَأَخَواتُكُمْ الْلآيَةَ إلى أن انْتَهى إلى قَوْلِهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالى وَحَلائِلُ أَبْنائِكُمُ الّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلابِكُمْ فَسَلْهُمْ يَا أَبَا الْجَارُودِ هَلْ كانَ يَحِلّ لِرَسُولِ اللّهِ نِكاحُ حَلِيلَتَيْهِمَا فَإِنْ قَالُوا نَعَمْ كَذَبُوا وَ فَجَرُوا وَ إِنْ قَالُوا لا فَهُمَا ابْنَاهُ لِصُلْبِهِ.

It is narrated from Abu al-Jarud: Abu Ja’far [al-Baqir (AS)] said to me: O Aba al-Jarud, what do they say about al-Hasan A and al-Husayn (AS)? I said: They are against our belief that they are the two sons of the Holy Prophet (S). He (AS) said: Then with what [proof] did you argue with them? I said: With the word of Allah about ‘Isa bin Maryam

***“...And from his [Noah’s] offspring, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron thus do We reward the virtuous; and Zechariah, John, ‘Isa...”* (6:84-85)**

Therefore He placed *‘Isa* in the progeny of Noah (AS). Imam (AS) said: So what did they say to you? I said: They said: It is possible for a son of a female to be a son, but he would not be from the loin. He (AS) said: So with what [other proof] did you argue against them? I said: We argued against them with the word of Allah**,*”...Come! Let us call our sons and your sons...”* (3:61)** He (AS) said: And what did they say to you? I said: They said that sometimes in Arabic rhetoric a person may call the sons of another man as “our sons”.

Thereupon Abu Ja’far (AS) said: O Aba al-Jarud indeed I will give you a verse from the Book of Allah, the Sublime and Exalted [proving] that they (Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (AS)) are from the loin of the Holy Prophet (S), and none save the disbeliever would negate it. I said: And where is it, may I be made your ranson? He (AS) said: From where Allah, the Exalted, says

***“Forbidden to you are your mothers, your daughters and your sisters, your paternal aunts and your maternal aunts, your brother’s daughters and your sister’s daughters, your] foster- who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage, your wives” mothers, and your stepdaughters who are under your care] born [of the wives whom you have gone into but if you have not gone into them there is no sin upon you and the wives of your sons who are from your own loins..”* (4:23)**

Ask them, O Aba al-Jarud, was it permitted for the Messenger of Allah (S) to marry with the wives of al-Hasan and al-Husayn (AS)? If they say ‘yes’, then surely they have lied and voilated the bounds. And if they say “no”, then they [surely] are his two sons from his loin.7

We wish to suffice with the aforesaid incidents. Otherwise there are so many other traditions where this relationship is clearly and explicitly mentioned.

يَا بْنَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ

O product of the Messenger of Allah

The word اِبْن *'ibn'* etymologically means '*the edifice of*' or the '*product of*'. Al-Isfahani in his *al-Mufradat* says:

انّ الإبن سُمّي اِبْنًا لِكوْنِهِ بِنَاءً لِلاَبِ، فَإِنّ الاَبَ هُوَ الّذيْ بَنّاهُ وَجَعَلَهُ اللهُ بنّاءً فِيْ اِيْجَادِهِ، وَيُقَالُ لِكُلّ مَا يَحْصُلُ مِنْ جِهة شيء اَوْمِنْ تَرْبِيَتِهِ اَوْ بِتَفَقُّدِهِ اَوْ كَثْرَةِ خِدْمَتِهِ لَهُ اَوْ قِيَامِهِ بِاَمْرِهِ: هُوَ اِبْنُهُ...

Surely الاِبْن*al-ibn* was known to be so because it is a building (*bina'*) of the father, for it is the father who built him and Allah made him to be the builder in his existence; and *ibn* is known to be anything that is attained because of another thing or training or guardianship or a lot of service or doing something on one's behalf...8

Therefore it is right to say that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the product or fruit of the Holy Prophet (S) in terms of spiritual upbringing. It is in the environment of the Holy Prophet (S) that Imam al-Husayn (AS) grew and learnt so many important things. In some traditions the Holy Prophet (S) also addresses Imam al-Husayn (AS) as *thamarata fu'adi* (the fruit of my heart). For example, once 'A'isha seeing the cordial encounter of the Prophet (S) with al-Husayn (AS) who was then a small baby on the laps of the Prophet (S), asked him:

يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ مَا اَشَدّ اِعْجَابِكَ بِهَذَا الصّبِيّ

O Apostle of Allah, how attached are you to this child!

And the Prophet (S) said:

وَيْلَكِ وَكَيْفَ لاَ اُحِبُّهُ وَلاَ اَعْجَبُ بِهِ، وَهُوَ ثَمَرَةُ فُؤَادِيْ وَقُرّةُ عَيْنِيْ...

Woe be to you, and how should I not love him and not get attracted to him, while ***he is the fruit of my heart*** and the apple of my eyes?9

يَا بْنَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ

O product of the Messenger of Allah

The genitive construction '*Rasulullah*' alludes to a particular identity of the Holy Prophet (S) which is his apostleship (*al-risala*). Therefore *Ibnu Rasulillah* would mean the product of the Messenger of Allah. Specifying this patronym alludes to the reality that Imam al-Husayn (AS) was built to exemplify the attributes that a Divine Messenger must have. Obviously this does not mean that he (AS) was a Divinely proclaimed Messenger, for the Holy Prophet (S) was the Seal of all the Apostles (*khatam al-rusul*), but alludes to the fact that he manifested the qualities of a Divine Messenger.

In fact the word '*rasul*' when employed in the general sense refers to any kind of Allah's messenger, such as the Angels. When Angel Jibra'il (AS) appears before Hadhrat Maryam (AS) in the form of a handsome young man, and the latter seeks refuge in Allah and advises him to observe piety, Jibra'il (AS) responds saying:

إِنّمَا أنَا رَسُوْلُ رَبِّكِ لِلأ هَبَ لَكِ غُلامًا زَكِيًّا

Surely I am only a messenger of your Lord, so that I may gift you a pure male offspring. (19:19)

And Imam 'Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

اَلْمَلائِكةُ هُمْ رُسُلُ اللهِ كسَايِر اَنْبِيَاءِ اللهِ إلى اَلخلْق

...The angels are the messengers of Allah to the creatures like the rest of the prophets of Allah...10

Sometimes the word '*rasul*' is also used for a destitute who is extremely poor. If he seeks help, then he is in reality spreading the message of being openhanded. Those therefore who shun such people are in reality shunning a messenger of Allah. Imam 'Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

اَلْمِسْكِيْنُ رَسُوْلُ اللهِ إلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ مَنَعَهُ فَقَدْ مَنَعَ اللهَ، وَمَنْ أعْطاهُ فَقَدْ أعْطى اللهَ .

The extremely poor is a messenger of Allah unto you; so whosoever refuses to help him, surely he has refused Allah, and whosoever gives him, then surely he has given to Allah.11

يا بْنَ رَسُوْل اللهِ

O product of the Messenger of Allah

The word ‘Allah’ here specifies the kind of message that the Holy Prophet (S) bears. As explained earlier, the name *Allah* exemplifies all the perfect attributes of God, and therefore the Holy Prophet is the bearer of the message of all the perfect attributes. The Holy Qur`an in fact is a written document that calls the human beings to embellish themselves with the attributes of Almighty Allah.

And Imam al-Husayn (AS) being the fruit and edifice of a messenger of *Allah*, qualifies as a caller to all the perfect Divine Attributes. In fact one of the characteristics of the Infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is that they are الدعاة إلى الله *‘al-du’at ila Allah’*(callers to Allah). This call is not only in the realm of words. Their deeds and actions portray the Divine Atrributes. In the well-known *Ziyarat al-Jami’a* we read:

اَلسّلاَمُ عَلى الدُّعَاةِ إلى اللهِ

Peace be on you callers unto Allah.12

In another *Ziyarat* of Imam al-Husayn (AS) declaring our total commitment and harmony with his noble spirit, we repeat the following seven times:

لَبّيْكَ دَاعِيَ اللّهِ إنْ كانَ لَمْ يُجِبْكَ بَدَنِي فَقَدْ أَجَابَكَ قَلْبِي وَشَعْري وَ بَشَري وَرَأْيِي وَ هَوَايَ عَلى التّسْلِيمِ لِخَلفِ النّبِيّ الْمُرْسَل وَالسِّبْط الْمُنْتَجَبِ

Here I am, O caller to Allah; if my body did not respond to your call [due to its absence during the tragedy of Karbala], then surely my heart, hair, skin, opinion, and desire have responded in submission to the call of the successor of the Divinely sent Prophet (S) and his chosen gradson.13

Here there is another allusion worthy of contemplation: notice the words “*khalaf al-nabi al-mursal*” which brilliantly manifest the kind of relationship we are trying to declare. In the Arabic, a *khalaf* is “a successor”. And when the adjective *al-mursal* follows *al-nabi*, there is a particular implication we are trying to convey. In short, we are declaring that Imam al-Husayn (AS) succeeds the role of shouldering the mission of the Apostle of Almighty Allah.

There are other clear indications also that show that the Infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) possessed attributes that qualified them to be bearers of Allah’s message and inviters of the same. In *Ziyarat al-Jami’a* we read:

فَبَلَغَ اللهُ بِــكُمْ اَفْضَلَ شَرَفِ مَحَلّ الْمَكرّمِيْنَ،وَاَعْلى مَنَازِل

الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ، وَارْفَعَ دَرَجَاتِ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ، حَيْثُ لا يَلْحَقُهُ لاحِقٌ، وَلا يَفُوْقُهُ فَائِقٌ...

And Allah made you attain the best sanctimonious station of the ennobled ones, and the highest stations of the near ones, and **the most exalted stations of the *mursalin* (apostles)**, where none can join or transcend...14

This clearly tells us that the Imams (AS) had qualities to carry out the duty of passing on the message of Allah to the people. And by the phrase *"arfa'a darajat al-mursalin"* we should appreciate the fact that they even transcended messengers of Allah preceding the Holy Prophet (S). This is because they bore the message of *Khatam al-Rusul* (the Seal of the Messengers).

In another *Ziyarat* of Imam al-Husayn (AS) we address him as:

السّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَارِثَ مُحَمّدٍ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ

Peace be on you, O Inheritor of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.15

Those who can appreciate the subtle implications of the above statement, understand how vocal it is in revealing the distinction of Imam al-Husayn (AS). We confess that he inherited the Holy Prophet (S)'s duty of conveying the message of Allah. All the components of the above expression such as "*al-salamu*", "*alayka*", "*ya*", "*waritha Muhammad*", "*waritha Muhammadin Rasulillah*", "*Rasul*", *"Rasulillah"*, *"Allah"*, etc. are worthy of reflection. Therefore, read and ascend!

The Relation Between 'Abd And Rasul

An important point to bear in mind is that in order for Imam al-Husayn (AS) to really be a *rasul* and a conveyer of Allah's message to the people, it is incumbent on him to be an '*abd* (an utterly submissive servant of Allah). Hence it was apt to address him with the teknonym Abu 'Abdillah in the first verse and thereafter with the patronym *ibnu Rasulillah*. We find a similar case when we recite our *tashahhud* in the cananonical prayer. We say:

اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لا إِلَهَ إِلاّ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لا شَرِيْكَ لَهُ وَاَشْهَدُ اَنّ مُحَمّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرُسْوْلُهُ

I bear witness that other than Allah there is no god, and I bear witness that Muhammad is **His utterly obedient servant and Apostle**.

Notice that the phrase "'*abduhu*" precedes "*wa rasuluh*", which alludes to the sequence we are talking about.

However, this station is even higher than being the servant of “Allah”. Here the third person pronoun “hu” affixed to ‘abd and rasul refer to the Divine Essence. Discussing this intricacy here is beyond the scope of this commentary.

1. A patronymic, or patronym, is a component of a personal name based on the name of one’s father.
2. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Mafatih al-Ghayb, v.8, p. 247
3. Jar Allah al-Zamakhshari, Al-Kashhaf ‘an Haqa’iqi Ghawamidh al-Tanzil, v.1, p. 368
4. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 43, p. 228
5. Arbili, Kashf al-Ghumma, v.2, p. 176
6. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Mafatih al-Ghayb, V.2, p. 412
7. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.8, p. 217
8. Al-Isfahani, al-Mufradat, p. 147
9. Ibnu Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 144
10. Al-Shaykh al-Tabrasi, al-Ihtijaj, v.2, p. 266
11. Imam ‘Ali (‘a), Nahj al-Balaghah, v.4, p. 74
12. Al-Mashhadi, Al-Mazar, p. 525
13. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.98, p. 168
14. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.99, p. 130
15. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus, Iqbal al-A’mal, v.3, p.70

Chapter 3: Peace be on you, O son of the Commander of the Faithful and the son of the leader of the successors

السّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يا بْنَ اَمِيْرالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَابْنَ سَيِّدِ الْوصِيِّيْنَ

Peace be on You, O son of the the Commander of the Faithful and the son of the Leader of the Successors

Commentary

يَابْنَ اَمِيْرالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O ***son of*** the Commander of the Faithful

The apparent import of this verse signifies that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the son and offspring of Amir al-Mu’minin (AS). This is a historical fact and we would not like to go into details about the same. However to reveal how brilliant is the origin of Imam al-Husayn (AS)

verses 19-20 of Surat al-Rahman come to mind:

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيانِ.بَيْنَهُما بَرْزَخٌ لا يَبْغِيانِ

He merged the two seas, meeting each other. There is a barrier between them which they do not overstep. (55:19-20)

Yahya bin Sa'id narrates:

سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ يَقُوْلُ فِيْ قَوْلِهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ: مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيانِ بَيْنَهُما بَرْزَخٌ لا يَبْغِيانِ قَالَ: عَلِيٌّ وَفَاطِمَةُ، بَحْرَانُ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ عَمِيْقَانِ لاَ يَبْغِي أَحَدُهُمَا عَلىَ صَاحِبِهِ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجانُ، اَلْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْن.

I heard Aba 'Abdillah [al-Sadiq] (AS) saying the following about the verse of Allah "He merged the two seas, meeting each other. There is a barrier between them which they do not overstep.": ***'Ali and Fatima are two deep seas of knowledge***, none of who oversteps the other. From them emerge the pearl and the coral, who are al-Hasan and al-Husayn (AS).1

The appellation Amir al-Mu'minin was conferred to Imam 'Ali (AS) by Allah Himself in the higher levels of existence prior to this material world. Consider the following traditions:

1. Shaykh Saduq narrates in his *Al-Khisal*:

عَنِ النّبِيّ قَالَ: فِي اللّوْحِ الْمَحْفُوْظِ تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ عَلِيٌّ بْن أَبِيْ طالِبٍ أَمِيْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said: In the Guarded Tablet under the Divine Throne is [written] 'Ali bin Abi Talib is Amir al-mu'minin (Commander of the faithful) (AS).2

2. Al-Kulayni in his *Al-Kafi* narrates with his chain of narrators:

عَنْ جَابِرٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ لَهُ لِمَ سُمِّيَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَالَ اللّهُ سَمّاهُ وَهَكَذَا أَنْزَلَ فِي كِتَابِهِ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَ لَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

وَأنّ مُحَمّداً رَسُولِي وَأنّ عَلِيّاً أمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ.

Jabir reports3: I said to Abu Ja'far [al-Baqir (AS)]: Why was Imam 'Ali (AS) named Amir al-Mu'minin? He (AS) said: Allah is the One who named him, and this is how He revealed it in His Book: "When your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves, [He said to them,] Am I not your Lord (7:172) and isn't Muhammad My Messenger and ***'Ali Amir al-mu'minin (the commander of the faithful)?***.4

3. Furat bin Ibrahim in his *Tafsir Furat al-Kufi* narrates the following tradition:

عَنْ أبِيْ جَعْفَر قَالَ: لَوْ أنّ الْجُهّالَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الأُمّةِ يَعْلَمُوْنَ مَتَى سُمِّيَ عَلِيٌّ أمِيْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لَمْ يُنْكِرُوْا ولاَيَتَهُ وَ طاعَتَهُ قَالَ فَسَأَلْتُهُ وَمَتَى سُمِّيَ عَلِيٌّ أمِيْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ؟ قَالَ حَيْثُ أخَذَ اللهُ مِيْثَاقَ ذُرِّيَةِ آدَم...

Imam al-Baqir (AS) is reported to have said: If the ignorant of this nation would know when Imam 'Ali (AS) was named Amir al-mu'minin, they would not reject his guardianship and obedience. The reporter said: I asked him (AS): And when was Imam 'Ali (AS) named Amir al-mu'minin? He replied: ***It was when Allah took the covenant with the progeny of Adam..***.5

Some traditions clearly tell us that the Holy Prophet (S) called Imam 'Ali (AS) Amir al-mu'minin (AS) on different occasions during his life time. Consider the following:

1. When Hadhrat Fatima bint al-Asad, the noble mother of Imam 'Ali (AS), comes out of the Ka'ba with her exalted offspring 'Ali (AS), the following is reported to have transpired:

قَالَ عَلِيٌّ ألسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أبَهْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّهِ وَبَرَكاتُهُ ثُمّ تَنَحْنَحَ وَقَالَ بِسْمِ اللّهِ الرّحْمنِ الرّحِيمِ قَدْ أفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ...فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ قَدْ أفْلَحُوا بِكَ أنْتَ وَاللّهِ أمِيرُهُمْ تَمِيرُهُمْ مِنْ عِلْمِكَ فَيَمْتَارُونَ وَأنْتَ وَاللّهِ دَلِيلُهُمُ وَبِكَ وَاللّهِ يَهْتَدُونَ

Imam 'Ali (AS) said: Peace be unto you, O father and may Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you. Thereafter he coughed a little and recited [the following verses of Surat al-Mu'minun]: ***In the name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful. Indeed the believers have become victorious (23:1)...*** Thereupon the Messenger of Allah said: Surely they have gained victory by you; ***You are, by Allah, their Amir (commander)***, you provide them from your knowledge, and hence they gain knowledge; and I swear by

Allah you are their Guide, and I swear by Allah they attain guidance through you.6

This tradition has so many allusions worthy of contemplation. Not only does the Holy Prophet (S) call Imam ‘Ali (AS) as the commander of the faithful, but also informs us the close relationship between one’s commandership of the faithful and one’s vast knowledge. In clearer words, since Imam ‘Ali (AS) is the commander of the faithful he practically serves as the source and treasure trove of their knowledge. And that is why he provides them with the knowledge they require.

Another allusion worthy of consideration is that Imam (AS) upon birth already manifested an ocean of knowledge. Perhaps it alludes to the Muhammadan Light (*al-Nur al-Muhammadi*) where he unites with the Holy Prophet (S). For, any kind of grace, whether knowledge or otherwise, is conferred to the creation through this very reality. This truth is elicited from a tradition narrated from Jabir bin Abdillah al-Ansari:

قُلْتُ لِرَسُوْلِ اللهِ:أَوّلُ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَ اللهُ تَعَالَى مَا هُوَ؟ فَقَالَ:نُوْرُ نَبِيِّكَ يَا جَابِرُ، خَلَقَهُ اللهُ، ثُمّ خَلَقَ مِنْهُ كُلّ خَيْرٍ

I asked the Messenger of Allah (S): What is the first thing that Allah created? He (S) said: The light of your prophet O Jabir. Allah created it; ***thereafter He created from it every good***.7

2. ‘Amr bin Husayb, the brother of Burayda bin Husayb is reported to have said:

بَيْنَا أَنَا وَأَخِي بُرَيْدَةُ عِنْدَ النّبِيّ إِذْ دَخَلَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَسَلّمَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللّهِ فَقَالَ لَهُ انْطلِقْ فَسَلِّمْ عَلَى أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللّهِ وَمَنْ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ؟ قَالَ: عَلِيٌّ بْنُ أَبِي طالِبٍ. قَالَ عَنْ أَمْرِ اللّهِ وَأَمْرِ رَسُولِهِ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ. ثُمّ دَخَلَ عُمَرُ فَسَلّمَ فَقَالَ انْطلِقْ فَسَلِّمْ عَلَى أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللّهِ وَمَنْ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ؟ قَالَ: عَلِيٌّ بْنُ أَبِي طالِبٍ. قَالَ: عَنْ أَمْرِ اللّهِ وَأَمْرِ رَسُولِهِ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ.

While I and my brother Burayda were in the presence of the Prophet (S), Abu Bakr entered and greeted the Messenger of Allah (S), and he (S) said: Go and greet Amir al-mu’minin. *Abu Bakr asked: O Messenger of Allah, and who is Amir al-mu’minin? The Prophet (S) said:’Ali bin Abi Talib (AS)*. Abu Bakr asked: Is this by the command of Allah and the Apostle of Allah? The Prophet (S) said: yes. Thereafter ‘Umar entered and greeted, and the Prophet (S) said to him: Go and greet Amir al-Mu’minin (AS). ‘Umar said: O Messenger of Allah, and who is Amir al-mu’minin? The Prophet (S) said: ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (AS). Umar asked: Is this by the command of Allah and the Apostle of Allah? The Prophet (S) said: yes.8

3. Imam al-Ridha (AS) is reported to have narrated from his fathers from Imam al-Husayn bin ‘Ali (AS):

قَالَ لِي بُرَيْدَةُ: أَمَرَنَا رَسُولُ اللّهِ أَنْ نُسَلِّمَ عَلى أَبِيكَ بِإِمْرَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ .

Burayda said to me: The Messenger of Allah commanded us to greet your father ***with the name Amir al-mu’minin***.9

يَابْنَ اَمِيْرالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O son of the **Commander of the Faithful**

The appellation Amir al-mu’minin, according to different traditions, has different meanings, all of which aptly befit the exalted personality of Imam ‘Ali (AS). Therefore in reality there is no contradiction. The most well-known meaning of this appellation is ‘commander of the faithful’. The word *amir* comes from the word *amr* (order, command). Imam ‘Ali (AS) manifesting faith in its utmost purity in all the dimensions of his being qualified to be the *amir* of the faithful.

One of the milestomes of history that brilliantly manifested this reality is the battle of Khandaq, when after having permitted Imam ‘Ali (AS) to fight against *‘Amr bin ‘Abd Wudd*, the Holy Prophet (S) said:

بَرَزَ الإِيْمَانُ كُلّهُ إِلى الشِّرْكِ كُلِّهِ

Faith in its totality has come out to fight with polytheism in its totality...10

The Holy Prophet (S) in calling Imam ‘Ali (AS) *al-iman kulluh (faith in its totality)* resonated a wealth of information, which only the comprehending ears (*al-udhun al-wa’iyah*) were able to appreciate. It is such epitomization of faith that makes the entity of ‘Ali emanate nothing but instructions of faith and makes him worthy of being the commander of the faithful.

Unfortunately those who later branded themselves with this title were oblivious of the simple reality that ‘*faqid al-shay’ la yu’tih*” (one who lacks something cannot confer the same). One who clearly disobeys Allah and usurps the right of others becomes a laughing stock when he names himself Amir al-mu’minin. This is because only one who totally submits to Allah (SwT) and personifies faith can confer injunctions and directions of faith. In an interesting tradition narrated from ‘Umar bin al-Khattab we are told:

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللّهِ يَقُولُ إنّ السّمَاوَاتِ السّبْعَ وَالأَرَضِينَ السّبْعَ لَوْ وُضِعَتْ فِي كِفّةٍ وَوُضِعَ إيمَانُ عَلِيٍّ فِي كِفّةٍ لَرَجَحَ إيمَانُ عَلِيٍّ

I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say: Surely if the seven heavens and the seven earths were placed in one of the palms of the scale, and the faith of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib placed on the other, the faith of ‘Ali would be heavier.11

In another tradition the Holy Prophet (S) vocally informs us that the yardstick of the belief of the believers is the radiant being of ‘Ali. In one of his conversations with Imam ‘Ali (AS), the Holy Prophet (S) says:

لَوْ لاَ أَنْتَ لَمْ يُعْرَفِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي...

If you were not there, the believers would not be known after me...12

Therefore Imam ‘Ali (AS) serves as the scale of faith (*mizan al-iman*).

يَا بْنَ اَمِيْرِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O ***the edifice of*** the Commander of the Faithful

As explained in the previous verse, the word اِبْن *ibn* can either refer to the meaning ‘the son of’ or ‘the product of’. Hence, Imam al-Husayn (AS) is both the physical edifice13 of his noble father as well as his spiritual artifact. And if we consider the genitive construction *Amir al-mu’minin* to mean ‘commander of the faithful’ then he becomes an edifice of one who deserves to command the faithful, and consequently inherits and acquires the same qualities.

Due to his infallibility in thought, speech, and action, and ability to bear the Divine Leadership (*imama*), Imam al-Husayn (AS) is qualified to command the faithful. In the radiant salutational recital *Ziyarat al-Jami’a* narrated from Imam al-Hadi (AS), we address the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) as follows:

...وَعِبَادِهِ الْمُكْرَمِينَ لاَ يَسْبِقُوْنَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِاَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُوْنَ ..

And His ennobled servants who do not advance Him in speech, and **act according to His Command**...14

And in another place of the same *Ziyarat* we say:

فَإِنّي لَكُمْ مُطيْعٌ، مَنْ اطاعَكُمْ فَقَدْ اطاعَ اللهَ، وَمَنْ عَصَاكُمْ فَقَدْ عَصَى اللهَ...

So indeed I am obedient to you; **whosoever obeys you has obeyed Allah**, and whosoever disobeys you has indeed disobeyed Allah...15

There are other traditions too that clearly depict that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are the *ulu al-amr* (those worthy to command) mentioned in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الّذينَ آمَنُوا أَطيعُوا اللّهَ وَأَطيعُوا الرّسُولَ وَأُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنازَعْتُمْ في شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلى اللّهِ وَالرّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْويلاً

O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle* and those among you who hold command. *And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (4:59)

Jabir al-Ju'fi narrates: I heard Jabir bin 'Abdillah al-Ansari say:

لَمّا أَنْزَلَ اللهُ عَزّ وَجَلّ عَلىَ نَبِيّهِ مَحَمّدٍ: يَا أَيّهَا الّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطيعُوا اللّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرّسُولَ وَأُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ، عَرَفْنَا اللهَ وَرَسُوْلَهُ، فَمَنْ أولُو الأَمْرِ الّذِيْنَ قَرَنَ اللهُ طاعَتَهُمْ بِطاعَتِكَ؟ فَقَالَ: »هُمْ خُلَفَائِيْ- يَا جَابِرُ- وَأَئِمّةُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِيْ، أَوّلُهُمْ عَلِيٌّ بْنُ أَبِيْ طالِب، ثُمّ الْحَسَنُ، ثُمّ الْحُسَيْن، ثُمّ عَلِيٌّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْن، ثُمّ مُحَمّد بْن عَلِي الْمَعْرُوْف فِي التّوْرَاةِ بِالْبَاقِر، سَتُدْرِكُهُ- يَا جَابِرُ- فَإِذَا لَقَيْتَهُ فَاقْرَأْهُ مِنّي السّلاَمَ، ثُمّ الصّادِقُ جَعْفَر بْن مُحَمّد، ثُمّ مُوْسَى بْن جَعْفَر، ثُمّ عَلِيّ بْن مُوْسَى، ثُمّ مُحَمّد بْن عَلِيّ، ثُمّ عَلِيّ بْن مُحَمّد، ثُمّ الْحَسَن بْن عَلِيّ، ثُمّ سَمِيّي وَكُنْيَي حُجّة اللهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ، وَبَقِيّتُهُ فِي عِبَادِهِ ابْن الْحَسَن بن عَلِي، ذَاكَ الّذِيْ يَفْتَح اللهُ تَعَالى ذِكْرَهُ

عَلىَ يَدَيْهِ مَشَارِقَ الأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا...

When Allah revealed unto His Prophet Muhammad (S) the verse *“O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle* ***and those among you who hold command****”*(4:59). I asked [the Prophet (S)]: O Messenger of Allah, we know about Allah and His Messenger. But who are the *Ulu al-Amr* (those who hold command) whose obedience Allah placed in line with your obedience?

He (AS) said: *They are my successors*, O Jabir, and the leaders of the Muslims after me. The first among them is ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (AS), then comes al-Hasan (AS), and then al-Husayn (AS), then ‘Ali the son of al-Husayn (AS), then Muhammad the son of ‘Ali (AS) who is well-known in the Torah as al-Baqir (the cleaver). Soon you will meet him, O Jabir! And when you meet him convey to him my salams (greetings). Then comes al-Sadiq Ja’far bin Muhammad (AS), then Musa bin Ja’far (AS), then ‘Ali bin Musa (AS), then Muhammad bin ‘Ali (AS), then ‘Ali bin Muhammad (AS), then al-Hasan bin ‘Ali (AS), then one whose name and teknonym (*kunya*) would be like mine, the proof of Allah on the earth and His remnant among His servants, the son of al-Hasan bin ‘Ali (AS). He is the one by whom Allah will conquer the easts and wests of the earth...16

Therefore all the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) qualify in the universal sense to be *Amir al-mu’minin* (commander of the faithful).

يَابْنَ اَمِيْرِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O edifice of the Commander of ***all the*** Faithful

A grammatical allusion worthy of consideration, can be understood by looking at the article ‘*al*’ prefixed in the plural “*al-mu’minin*” (the faithful) above. One the well-known grammatical laws is that when the article ‘*al*’ precedes a plural, it signifies that all the extensions of the plural are taken into consideration.

In our case, when we say *al-mu’minun*, we mean “all the faithful”. Therefore, the appellation Amir al-mu’minin signifies that Imam ‘Ali (AS) is the commander of *all the faithful*. In a tradition the Holy Prophet (S) after informing Imam ‘Ali (AS) how Allah Himself named him Amir al-mu’minin, says:

...فَأَنْتَ يَا عَلِيٌّ أَمِيْرُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَأَمِيْرُ مَنْ فِي الأَرْضِ وَأَمِيْرُ مَنْ مَضَى وَأَمِيْرُ مَنْ بَقِي فَلاَ أَمِيْرَ قَبْلَكَ وَلاَ أَمِيْرَ بَعْدَكَ لأَنَّهُ لاَ يَجُوْزُ أَنْ يُسَمّى بِهَذَا الاِسْمِ مَنْ لَمْ يُسَمِّهِ اللهُ تعَالىَ بِهِ

...Therefore, you, ***O ‘Ali, are the commander (amir) of those in the heavens and the commander (amir) of those in the earth, and the commander (amir) of those who***

have passed, and the commander (amir) of those who remain. Hence there is no amir prior to you, nor is there any amir after you. For it is impermissible to name someone with this name whom Allah has not named.17

Consequently his edifice, Imam al-Husayn (AS), who is *ibnu Amir al-mu'minin* is also the *amir* of all the believers.

Amir Al-Mu'minin – An Exclusive Apellation

It should be known that the appellation '*Amir al-mu'minin*' although widely employed by different people in history, is exclusively for Imam 'Ali (AS). The other Imams (AS) would not allow their followers to use it for them. Observe the following narrations:

1. Imam 'Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ لَمّا أُسْرِيَ بِي إِلَى السّمَاءِ كُنْتُ مِنْ رَبِّي كَقَابِ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنى فَأَوْحَى إِلَيّ رَبِّي مَا أَوْحَى ثُمّ قَالَ يَا مُحَمّدُ اقْرأْ عَلَى عَلِيّ بْنِ أَبِي طالِبٍ أَمِير الْمُؤْمِنِينَ السلام فَمَا سَمّيْتُ بِهِ أَحَداً قَبْلَهُ وَلا أُسَمِّي بِهَذَا أَحَداً بَعْدَهُ

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: When I was made to ascend to the Heavens, I was at a distance from my Lord that was like the length of two bows or nearer. So my Lord Revealed unto me what He Revealed. Then He said: O Muhammad send your greetings to 'Ali bin Abi Talib, Amir al-mu'minin (AS). *Indeed I have not named anyone with this appellation before him, and will never name anyone with it after him*.18

2. 'Allama Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* narrates:

قَالَ رَجُلٌ للصّادِق: يَا اَمِيْرَ الْمُؤْمِنينَ فَقَالَ: مَهْ فَإِنّهُ لا يَرْضَى بِهَذِهِ التّسْمِيَة أَحَدٌ إِلاّ ابْتَلاهُ بِبَلآء اَبيْ جَهْل.

A man called Imam al-Sadiq (AS) 'O Commander of the faithful! whereupon the Imam (AS) said: Stop! For surely no one approves being named so, save that he is tried with the trial of Abu Jahl.19

3. Shaykh al-Kulayni in his al-Kafi narrates the following tradition:

سَأَلَهُ رَجُلٌ عَنِ الْقَائِمِ يُسَلّمُ عَلَيْهِ بِإِمْرَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَالَ لا ذَاكَ اسْمٌ سَمّى اللّهُ بِهِ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَمْ يُسَمّ بِهِ أَحَدٌ قَبْلَهُ وَ لا

يَتَسَمّى بِهِ بَعْدَهُ إلاّ كافِرٌ قُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ كَيْفَ يُسَلّمُ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ يَقُولُونَ السّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَقِيّةَ اللّهِ ثُمّ قَرَأَ بَقِيّتُ اللّهِ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

A person asked Imam al-Sadiq (AS) about [Imam] Al-Qa'im (AS), whether it is proper to greet him with [the appellation] Amir al-Mu'minin, and he said: No. That is a name that Allah named Amir al-Mu'minin with it, none before him was named with it, and none will name himself with it after him save a disbeliever. The person said: may I be made your ransom, how should one greet him? He (AS) said: They should say: Peace be unto you, O remnant of Allah (*Baqiyyat Allah*). Thereafter he A read the verse of Qur`an, "*What remains of Allah's provision is better for you...*"(11:86)20

يَابْنَ اَمِيْرِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O the Edifice of **the Provider of the Faithful**

Another meaning of '*Amir al-mu'minin*' is the 'one who provides knowledge to the believers'. This is when the word Amir stems from the infinitive مِيرْ '*mir*' which means جَلْبُ الطعَامِ '*jalb al-ta'am*' (to draw food). Al-Turayhi in his *Gharib al-Qur`an* says:

يُقَالُ : فُلاَنٌ يَمِيْرُ اَهْلَهُ اِذَا حَمَلَ إِلَيْهِمْ اَقْوَاتَهُمْ مِن غَيْرِ بَلَدِهِمْ مِنَ الْمِيْرَة بِكسْرِ الْمِيْمِ وَسُكُوْنِ الْيَاءِ طعَامٌ يَمْتَارُهُ الإِنْسَانُ اَيْ يَجْلُبُهُ من بَلَدٍ اِلى بَلَدٍ.

It is said: *Fulan yamiru ahlahu* (So and so provides his family) when he carries to them their provisions from another town. It comes from *al-mira* which is food that a person obtains or takes from one town to another.21

And food in this case does not only refer to 'physical food' that satisfies one's stomach, but fundamentally to spiritual food that elevates the human being. Under the verse of the holy Qur`an that says '***Then let man look at his food*'(80:24).**

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) explains to Zayd al-Shahham22, one of his companions that food here refers to knowledge, and that the human being is told to reflect on his knowledge and its origin. Likewise, as we shall soon see, the '*mir'* referred to in this case is interpreted by the infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) to mean knowledge. Consider the following narrations:

1. 'Allama Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* reports :

عَنْ جَابِرٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ: لِمَ سُمِّيَ اَمِيْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَمِيْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ؟ قَالَ: لاَنّهُ يَمِيْرُهُمْ اَلْعِلْمَ، اَمَا سَمِعْتَ كِتَابَ اللهِ عَزّوَجَلّ ونمير أهلنا؟

Jabir is reported to have said: I asked Abi Ja'far (al-Baqir (AS)): "May I be made your ranson; why was Amir al-Mu'minin (Imam 'Ali (AS)) known as Amir al-mu'minin?" The Imam (AS) said: 'It is because he provides them (*yamiruhum*) with knowledge; haven't you heard the Book of Allah '*wa namiru ahlana*' (...***we will get provisions for our family... (12:65***))?23

2. 'Allama Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* reports:

أَبَانُ بْنُ الصّلْتِ عَنِ الصّادِقِ: سَمِيٌّ اَمِيْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ إنّمَا هُوَ مِنْ مِيْرَةِالْعِلْمِ، وَذَلِكَ اَنّ الْعُلمَآءَ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ امْتَارُوْا وَ مِنْ مِيْرَتِهِ اسْتَعْمَلُوْا

Aban bin al-Salt is reported to have said that Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: Indeed naming *Amir al-mu'minin is* from 'the provision of knowledge'; and that is because the knowledgeable ones took knowledge from him, and took advantage of his provision.24

Some esteemed *muhaddithun* like the late 'Allama Majlisi give the probability that the word Amir instead of being a common noun meaning 'commander' is an indefinite verb (*al-fi'l al-mudhari'*(meaning 'I provide' (اَمِيْرُ) that later turned into a proper noun ('*alam*). In other words, Imam 'Ali (AS) said "*Amiru* (I provide) *al-mu'minina* (the believers)' and thereafter the whole statement turned into a noun referring to Imam 'Ali (AS). They liken this with name تَأبّط شَرّاً (lit. he put evil beneath his armpit). The well-known poet Thabit bin Jabir was called that because it is said that the sword never left him.25 According to a narration indicated in the *Bihar al-Anwar*, he was known to be so because:

تَأبّط سَيْفًا وَخَرَجَ فَقِيْلَ لاُمِّهِ: اَيْنَ هُوَ؟ فَقَالتْ: تَأبّط شَرًّا وَخَرَجَ.

...he put a sword beneath his armpit (*ta'abbata sayfan*) and went out; and when his mother was asked, 'Where is he?' she said: He put evil under his armpit (*ta'abbata sharran*) and left.26

In short, therefore, *Amir al-mu'minin (I provide the faithful)* could be a sentence which later turned into a proper noun.

يَابْنَ اَمِيْرالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O son of the **Commander of the Bestowers of Protection**

If we carefully consider the meaning of *al-mu'minun* (plural of *al-mu'min*) in the genetive construction Amir al-mu'minin we may be able to unravel and draw some of the secrets of this radiant verse. Following are some narratives that define the word *mu'min*:

1. Imam al-Sadiq (AS) was asked why a believer was known as *mu'min* and he said:

لِلأَنّهُ اشْتَقّ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ اسْماً مِنْ أَسْمَائِهِ تَعَالى فَسَمّاهُ مُؤْمِنا، وَإِنّمَا سُمِّيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلأَنّهُ يُؤْمَنُ مِنْ عَذَابِ اللّهِ تَعَالى، وَيُؤْمِنُ عَلىَ اللهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُجِيْزُ لهُ ذَلِكَ.

It is because He (Allah) derived for the believer a name from His Names, and named him *mu'min*. And he was named *mu'min* because he is protected from the punishment of Allah, the Exalted, and gives warrant to Allah [for others] on the Judgment Day, and Allah would approve that for him.

2. Imam al-Sadiq (AS) when defining the meaning of the Divine Name *al-Mu'min* is reported to have said:

سُمِّيَ الْبَارئُ عَزّ وَجَلّ مُؤْمِنًا لأَنّهُ يُؤْمِنُ مِنْ عَذابِهِ مَنْ أَطاعَهُ

The Maker, Invincible and Exalted, was named *Mu'min* because He protects (*yu'minu*) whosoever obeys Him from His punishment...27

Notice carefully that the aforementioned traditions allude to the following important realities:

(a) The believer is a manifestation of the Divine Name *al-Mu'min*.
(b) He enjoys protection (*aman*), and
(c) He confers protection (*yu'minu*) by seeking the same for others from Allah.

3. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

أَلا اُنَبِّئُكُمْ لِمَ سُمِّيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ مُؤْمِنًا؟ لإِيْمَانِهِ النّاسَ عَلىَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ

Should I not inform you why a believer was named *mu’min*? It is because he grants security to people in themselves and their wealth.

4. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

وَاللّهِ مَا سُمِّيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ مُؤْمِناً إلاّ كرَامَةً لِلأمِير الْمُؤْمِنِين

“I swear by Allah, the believer was not named *mu’min* save in honor of Amir al-Mu’minin."

If we study the various derivatives of the word *mu’min* as expounded in the above traditions, we would realize that all of them converge at one single attribute: protection (*aman*). The reason why a believer is called *mu’min* is because he ‘enjoys protection’ and ‘confers the same’.

The fourth tradition however requires deliberation to comprehend. Perhaps it would like to tell us that in order to bestow the honorable appellation Amir al-mu’minin to Imam ‘Ali (AS), Allah named the believer as *mu’min*. For the appellation Amir al-mu’minin would have no meaning in the absence of people called ‘*mu’minun*’. Obviously this should not be considered a kind of superficial honorification. The Imam (AS) most brilliantly manifesting the Divine Attribute al-Mu’min, qualified to command the believers who manifest this attribute acording to their limitations. Therefore Allah bestowing honor to Him called the believer a *mu’min* and named Him Amir al-mu’minin.

In conclusion, the genitive construction Amir al-Mu’minin means ‘The commander of those who confer protection’. Therefore Imam ‘Ali (AS) is the commander of one who enjoys and confers protection. Consequently, he is the professor and teacher of the lesson of protection (*aman*). He is not merely a theoretical professor, but ‘a commander’ and thus ‘a practical mentor’. And the believers always benefit from his banquet. If we ponder over the abovementioned traditions we would realize that the protection that is spoken about is not always physical protection. A believer fundamentally seeks the spiritual protection of others.

The entire life of Amir al-mu’minin (AS) serves as a lesson for those who would like to learn how to protect themselves and others. The yardstick of such a life, as mentioned in the aforementioned tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (AS), is obedience to Allah. The Imam’s thoughts, words, and deeds, all reflect utter submission to Allah’s will.

The Holy Prophet (S) describing some of the phenomena of the Day of Judgment to Imam ‘Ali (AS) says:

...ثُمّ يُنَادِيْ مُنَادٍ مِنْ قِبَل اللهِ تَعَالى: ألا إنّ عَلِيّا وَشِيْعَتَهُ الآمِنُوْنَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

...Thereafter a caller on behalf of Allah would call: Look! Surely ‘Ali and his followers are the protected ones (*al-aminun*) on the Judgment Day.28

And in another tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) says:

يَا عَلِيٌّ، أَنْتَ وَشِيْعَتُكَ عَلىَ الْحَوْضِ تَسْقُوْنَ مَنْ أَحْبَبْتُمْ، وَتَمْنَعُوْنَ مَنْ كرِهْتُمْ، وَأَنْتُمْ الآمِنُوْنَ يَوْمَ الْفَزَعِ الأَكْبَر...

O ‘Ali, you and your followers would quench the thirst of whom you love at the Fountain, and hamper those whom you abhor. ***You are the protected ones (al-aminun)*** on the Day of the great terror (See 21:103)...29

Some of the verses of the Holy Qur`an also inform us that by maintaining pure faith and observing *taqwa*, ‘protection’ (*aman*) is a guarantee:

الّذينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إيمانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولئِكَ لَهُمُ الأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

Those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing for such there shall be safety, and they are the [rightly] guided.”(6:82)

إِنّ الْمُتّقينَ في مَقامٍ أَمينٍ

Indeed the God wary are in a secure station (44:51)

Imam al-Husayn (AS) who is *ibnu Amir al-mu’minin* is in this sense “the product of the commander of those who confer protection”. Necessarily, then, he likewise enjoys the characteristics of his father. His entire life serves as a lesson of *aman* and protection from Hell Fire.

In one of the supplications of the Holy month of Sha’ban we express the following about the Ahl al-Bayt (AS):

اَللّهُمّ صَلِّ عَلىَ مُحَمّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمّد اَلْفُلْكِ الْجَارِيَةِ فِي اللُّجَجِ الْغَامِرَةِ يَأْمَنُ مَنْ رَكِبَهَا وَيَغْرَقُ مَنْ تَرَكَهَا

O Allah bless Muhammad and his progeny, the moving ark in the covering depths [of the sea], whosoever boards in it is protected and whosoever leaves it drowns.30

Recitation & Realization

Reciting this verse after having known its comprehensive meaning undoubtedly fills the heart of the loving *za'ir* with awe and veneration for the *mazur*. However, as we had mentioned in the very beginning of this commentary, the most important and fundamental purpose of our recitation must be unity and coherence with the *mazur*. If we address Imam al-Husayn (AS) with *ibnu Amir al-mu'minin*, and believe that he is fit to command the believers, then we must resolve to practically follow his commands.

Believing someone to be *amir* is practically realized when one follows him. And when we understand Amir al-mu'minin (AS) as the commander of those who confer *aman* and safety, then we must practically seek and follow the lesson of confering safety from Imam (AS) and apply the same in our lifetimes.

And if we comprehend the appellation Amir al-mu'minin as the provider of knowledge to the believers, then we must practically draw our fundamental knowledge from authorities like Imam 'Ali (AS) and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). And if we understand the meaning of Amir al-mu'minin (AS) as the Commander of those who have faith, then we should resolve in following his footsteps and drawing closer to him so that we are entitled to be the bearers of iman and faith.

يَابْنَ اَمِيْرِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

O Son Of The **Commander Of Those Who Confer Tranquility**

The word *mu'min* is conventionally translated as '*faithful*' or '*believer*'. Its literal import however is worthy of consideration. It comes from the word '*amn*' which according to leading lexicographers like al-Isfahani, means '*tuma'ninat al-nafs*' (tranquility and contentment of the heart). And the word *iman* which we translate as faith actually means *'to place in oneself or another [the state of] amn (tranquility)*. And when we say آمن بالله '*amana bilLahi*' which we conventionally translate as 'he believed in Allah' we literally mean 'he attained contentment and tranquility by Allah'.

Principally when we speak of *iman billah* we mean to agree and have tranquility that God exists, He is the overwhelming One, and to Him belong the Attributes of Beauty and Majesty. However, such tranquility which is limited to the belief in the existence of God is substantially different from the tranquility and serenity attained in Allah.

Perhaps the most apt example of tranquility one can cite in the life of the commander of the tranquil ones (Amir al-mu'minin) is what transpired on the well-known *laylat al-mabit* when Imam 'Ali (AS) rests with utter peace and tranquility on the blessed bed of the Holy Prophet (S) while the Prophet (S) sets for his well-known migration to Madina. Indeed I feel it is only the Holy Qur`an that can properly narrate the nature of this historic incident. Almighty Allah says:

وَ مِنَ النّاسِ مَنْ يَشْري نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغاءَ مَرْضاتِ اللّهِ وَاللّهُ رَؤُوْفٌ

بِالْعِبادِ

And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is most kind to [His] servants.(2:207)

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (AS) is reported to have said:

نَزَلَتْ فِيْ عَلِيٍّ حِيْنَ بَاتَ عَلىَ فِرَاشِ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ

This verse was revealed about 'Ali (AS) when he slept on the bed of the Messenger of Allah (S).31

In another tradition which shows the extent of *itmi'nan* and tranquility of 'Ali (AS), we are told:

فَبَاتَ عَلِيٌّ مُوَطنًا نَفْسَهُ عَلىَ الْقَتْلِ...

So Imam 'Ali (AS) slept while he stationed his soul to be killed...32

The phrase *'muwattinan nafsahu 'ala al-qatl'* reveals so much. It shows the Imam's readiness to be martyred in the way of Allah. The word '*muwattinan*' literally connotes that Imam 'Ali (AS) had stationed his spirit in the *watan* (hometown) of martyrdom.

Ayatullah al-Rayshahri quoting *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* among other historical texts writes in his *Mawsu'at al-Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (AS)*:

...فَاقْتَرَحَ عَلى عَلِيٍّ أَنْ يَبِيْتَ فِيْ فِرَاشِهِ تِلْكَ اللّيْلَة، فَسَأَلَهُ: أَوَ تُسْلَمْ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ. فَرَحّبَ الإِمَامُ بِهَذَا الاِقْتِرَاحِ مُوَطنًا نَفْسَهُ لِلْقَتْلِ عِنْدَ مُوَاجَهَةِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ صَبَاحًا، وَسَجَدَ سَجْدَةَ الشّكْرِ عَلىَ هَذِهِ الْمَوْهِبَةِ الْعَظِيْمَةِ وَالْتَحَفَ بِالْبُرْدِ الْيَمَانِي الأَخْضَرِ الّذِيْ كانَ يَلْتَحِفُ بِهِ النّبِيٌّ عِنْدَ نَوْمِهِ، وَنَامَ مُطمَئِنًا فِيْ فِرَاشِهِ

...So the Prophet (S) suggested to 'Ali (AS) that he sleeps that night in his bed, and 'Ali (AS) asked him: Would you be protected thereby O Messenger of Allah? He (S) said: Yes. So the Imam (AS) welcomed this suggestion while stationing himself to be martyred when he

confronts the polytheists in the morning, and he prostrated in thanks to Allah for this great gift, and wrapped himself with the green Yemenite cloak that the Messenger of Allah would cover himself with when he slept, *and he slept in the state of tranquility...*33

The phrase '*wa nama mutma'innan fi firashihi'* (*and he slept in the state of tranquility in the Prophet's bed)* is worthy of reflection. It shows how Amir al-mu'minin having sold his soul to the only beloved is overwhelmed and overtaken with utmost composure and tranquility.

Bearing the aforesaid understanding of the appellation Amir al-mu'minin in mind, the meaning of *ibnu Amir al-mu'minin* confers the implication that Imam al-Husayn (AS) who is the edifice of the commander of the tranquil spirits also exemplifies the same attribute of tranquility.

Both his words as well as his deeds reveal this reality. In his well-known supplication of 'Arafa, Imam al-Husayn (AS) is narrated to have said:

مَا ذَاوَجَدَ مَنْ فَقَدَكَ وَمَا الّذِيْ فَقَدَ من وَجَدَكَ؟

What has he who has lost You found? And what has he who has found You lost?34

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

اِقْرَؤُوا سُوْرَةَ الْفَجْر فِيْ فَرَائِضِكُمْ وَنَوَافِلِكُمْ، فَإِنها سُوْرَةُ الْحُسَيْن وَارْغَبوا فِيْهَا رَحِمَكمُ الله فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُو أُسَامَة وَكَانَ حَاضِرَ الْمَجْلِس: كَيْفَ صَارَتْ هَذِهِ السّوْرَةُ لِلْحُسَيْن خَاصّةً؟ فَقَالَ: أَلا تَسْمَعُ إِلى قَوْلِهِ تَعَالى: يَا أَيّتُهَا النّفْسُ الْمُطمَئِنّة اِرْجِعِيْ إِلى رَبّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيّة فَادْخُلِيْ فِيْ عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِيْ جَنّتِيْ إِنّمَا يَعْنِي الْحُسَيْن بْن عَلِيّ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيْهمَا، فَهُوَ ذُوْ النّفْس الْمُطمَئِنّة الرّاضِيَةِ الْمَرْضِيّةِ...

Read *Surat al-Fajr* in your obligatory and supererogatory prayers, for indeed it is the chapter of al-Husayn (AS), and have a liking to it, may Allah have mercy on you. Thereupon Abu Usama, who was present in the gathering asked him (AS): How did this *sura* become specifically for al-Husayn (AS)? The Imam (AS) said: Do you not listen to Allah's word "O contented spirit (*ya ayyatuha al-nafs al-mutma'inna*), return to your Lord, while you are pleased with Him, and He is pleased with you, and enter the company of My servants, and enter My paradise". It refers to Imam al-Husayn bin 'Ali (AS), for he is the contented spirit who is pleased with his Lord and his Lord is pleased with him...35

Al-Bahrani narrates a beautiful tradition from Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (AS) which describes the situation of Imam al-Husayn (AS) and his brilliant companions before their departure from

this world when the situation intensified as follows:

...وَكانَ الْحُسَيْنُ وَبَعْضُ مَنْ مَعَهُ مِنْ خَصَائِصِهِ تُشْرِقُ أَلْوَانُهُمْ، وَتَهْدَأُ جَوَارِحُهُم، وَتَسْكُنُ نُفُوْسُهُمْ...

...while the situation of al-Husayn (AS) and some of those with him, would be such that their colors would shine, the parts of their bodies would be composed, and their spirits would be in the state of serenity...36

Having known the subtle meaning of *ibnu Amir al-mu'minin* as the edifice of the possessor and bestower of tranquility, our aspiration should be to uplift ourselves and realize the characteristics of a tranquil soul.

'Allama Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* narrates:

عَنْ أَنَس بْن مَالِك قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُوْلُ اللهِ: اَلّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا وَتَطمَئِنٌ قُلُوْبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللهِ أَلاَ بِذِكْرِ اللهِ تَطمَئِنّ الْقُلُوْب: أَتَدْرِيْ مَنْ هُمْ يَا ابْنَ أُمّ سليم؟ قُلْتُ: مَنْ هُمْ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ؟ قَالَ: نَحْنُ أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ وَشِيْعَتُنَا.

Anas bin Malik is reported to have said: The Messenger of Allah recited ***"And those who have faith and their hearts are tranquil by the remembrance of Allah..."*** **(13:28)** and said: Do you know who they are, O son of Umm Sulaym? I said: Who are they, O Messenger of Allah? He (S) said: They are we and our Shi'a.37

...وَابْنَ سَيِّدِ الْوصِيِّيْنَ

...and the son of the **Leader of the Successors**

Here, as in the previous cases, اِبْن 'ibn' bears two different messages: Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the son of *sayyid al-wasiyyin*, as well as his spiritual product. And because he is the spiritual product of the master of all the past successors of the prophets of Allah, he likewise excels them and is embellished with the attributes of his father. The word '*sayyid*' literally means 'leader'. Its correlatives are the verbs *sada-yasudu* (he led, he is leading). That which makes Imam 'Ali (AS) to be *sayyid al-wasiyyin* is his capability to succeed the Leader of the Apostles (*sayyid al-rusul*), who bore the most comprehensive message of Allah, the Qur`an, which is introduced as *al-Muhaymin*. Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur`an:

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ وَلا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ...

We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book and as a guardian (muhayminan) over it. So judge between them by what God has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you. (5:48)

No Divine Messenger (*rasul*) or Successor (*wasi*) can bear the message of the Holy Prophet (S) save Imam ‘Ali and his successors, for every Prophet (S) enjoys the station of the Book that was revealed unto him. Therefore because the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are the bearers of the Qur`an *(hamalat kitabilLah*) they excel the other prophets and their successors and are rightly known as *sadat al-awsiya*’. Consider the following narrations:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ: أَنَا سَيِّدُ النَّبِيِّينَ وَوَصِيِّي سَيِّدُ الْوَصِيِّينَ وَأَوْصِيَاؤُهُ سَادَةُ الاَوْصِيَاء

The Apostle of Allah, upon whom and whose immaculate progeny be peace, said: ‘I am the leader of the Prophets and **my successor is the leader of all the successors, and his successors are the leaders of all the successors**.38

وعَن ابْنِ عَبّاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ: أَنَا سَيِّدُ الأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ وَأَفْضَلُ مِنَ الْمَلائِكةِ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ وَأَوْصِيَائِي سَادَةُ أَوْصِيَاءِ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ وَذُرِّيَّتِي أَفْضَلُ ذُرِّيَّاتِ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ...

Ibn ‘Abbas is reported to have said: The Holy Prophet (S) said: ‘I am the leader of the Prophets and Apostles, and better than the angels nearmost to Allah, **and my successors are the the leaders of the successors** of the other prophets and apostles, and my lineage is the best of the lineages of the Prophets and Apostles of Allah.39

And in the proximity of the radiant dome of Imam al-Husayn (AS), Imam al-Sadiq (AS) tells his companion Safwan that all the Divine prophets and their sucessors visit Imam al-Husayn (AS), including the Imam (AS) himself. He (AS) says:

...وَمُحَمّدٌ اَفْضَلُ الاَنْبِيَاءِ وَنَحْنُ اَفْضَلُ الاَوْصِيَاءِ...

...[including] Muhammad **the best of the Prophets and we, the best successors**...40

In the first volume of his well-known thematic exegesis of Qur`an, the grand Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli (may the Almighty protect his noble self) says:

‘Inasmuch as the Noble Qur`an is *muhaymin (supervisor and protector)*, the Seal of the Apostles is also *muhaymin* over the prophets, for every Apostle invites his community to the station of his book, and the station of every prophet is the same as the station of his book, and the station of the Messenger of Allah (AS) is the same as the station of the Message that he brought.41

And when trying to establish how Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the Leader of martyrs, Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli in his *Shekufaieye ‘Aql* says:

Husayn (AS) is the leader and superior to all the martyrs of the universe. And this station is due to his company with the reality of the Holy Qur`an which is a guardian over all other heavenly scriptures. In other words:

1- The reality of the Prophet (S)’s progeny is at par with the Holy Qur`an.

2- The reality of Qur`an, apart from verifying the previous books has a supervisory role over them.

3- Every prophet is at par with the heavenly book given to him.

4- When the Progeny of the Holy Prophet (S) is equal to the noble Qur`an, they [obviously] are guardians over the great divine men of the past.

This same evidence can be employed to prove that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is among the leaders of all the sucessors of the previous prophets of Allah (*sayyid al-wasiyyin*).

...وَابْنَ سَيِّدِ الْوصِيِّيْنَ

...and the son of the **Leader of the Successors**

The word *wasiyyin* is the plural of *wasi* and it literally means [the] ‘trustee’ to whom one entrusts his will (*wasiyya*). In the present context, however, it refers to the Divine Trustee who is entrusted with a Divine Will, which is to govern the Islamic state and rule according to the Divine Laws. And Imam ‘Ali (AS) was entrusted with this Divine Will before the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) on several occasions, the fundamental of which was in *Ghadir Khumm*, where he (S) announced Imam ‘Ali (AS) as his successor and sought confirmation from others too.

Therefore, when we say that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the edifice, product, and inheritor of the Leader of the Divine successors and trustees, we are also implying that he has inherited the qualities of such successorship. And in rising against an illegal government that would ruin and demolish the material and spiritual felicity of the believers, he practically manifested his trustworthiness and successfully undertook his mission of Divine leadership.

1. Shaykh Saduq, Al-Khisal, v.1, p. 65

2. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus, Al-Yaqin, p. 152
3. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 412
4. It should be noted that Imam al-Baqir wanted to inform Jabir about what is not apparently indicated in the verse, but is a reality that exists in the higher realm. Therefore one should not misconstrue and conjecture that the exposition of the Imam is a physical part of the Qur`an.
5. Furat bin Ibrahim al-Kufi, Tafsir Furat al-Kufi, p. 147
6. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.35, p.17
7. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.25, p.21
8. Shaykh al-Tusi, Al-Amali, p. 289
9. Shaykh al-Saduq, ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha , v.1, p. 73
10. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus, Al-Tara’if fi Ma’rifati Madhahib al-Tawa’if, p. 60
11. Haji al-Nuri, Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, V.15, p. 337
12. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.37, p. 272
13. In his well-known Treatise of Rights, Imam Zayn al-’Abidin specifying the rights of the father alludes to his fundamental mediation of the existence of his offpring. He says: And as for the right(s) of your father, you should know that he is your source (fa’lam annahu asluk), and that was it not for him you would not have existed; so whatever you find in yourself that pleases you, then know that your father is the source of the blessing (fa’lam anna abaka asl al-ni’ma), then praise and thank Allah. (Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Amali, pp. 453-454)
14. Shaykh al-Kaf’ami, Misbah, p. 505
15. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.99, p. 133
16. Al-Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, v.2, p. 103
17. Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Qummi, Mi’at Manqaba, pp. 52-53
18. Shaykh al-Tusi, Al-Amali, p. 295
19. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 37, p. 334
20. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 411
21. Al-Turayhi, Gharib al-Qur`an, p. 279. Also check his Maj’ma’ al-Bahrayn v.4, p. 253
22. Shaykh al-Bahrani, Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v.5, pp. 584-585
23. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.37, p.293
24. Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 37, p. 334
25. E.W.Lane, E.W.Lane Arabic-English Lexicon, see under the root word ‘abata’
26. Ibid,, v. 35, p. 133
27. Shaykh Saduq, Al-Tawhid, p. 205
28. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 37, p. 75
29. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 65, p. 45
30. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 87, p. 19
31. Al-Bahrayni, Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v.1, p. 442
32. Ibid., v.1, pp. 442-443
33. Al-Rayshahri, Mawsu’at Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, v.1, pp. 158-159
34. Al-Rayshahri, Mizan al-Hikma, v.1, p. 502
35. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 24, p. 93
36. Al-Bahrani, Al-’Awalim, pp. 350-351.
37. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 35, p. 405
38. Shaykh al-Tusi, Man la Yahdhuruhu al-Faqih, v.4, p. 174
39. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.8, p. 22
40. Ibid., v.101, p. 60
41. Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli, Qur`an dar Qur`an, p. 292

Chapter 4: Peace be on you, O son of Fatima – the leader of the women of the worlds

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يا بْنَ فَاطمَة

سَيِّدَةِ نِسَآءِ الْعَالمِيْنَ

Peace be on You, O son of Fatima- the Leader of the Women of the Worlds

Commentary

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يا بْنَ فَاطمَة

Peace be unto you, O son of Fatima

This verse is one of the most radiant verses of *Ziyarat 'Ashura'*, for it reveals the pleasant origin of Imam al-Husayn (AS) and his utter purity. Not only is the Imam (AS) a physical offspring of the sublimest example of purity and goodness, he is her spiritual artifact (*bina'*) as well. One of the appellations of Hadhrat Fatima (AS) is *al-Tayyiba* (the pleasant one). In a well-known *Ziyarat* of the Holy Prophet (S) we supplicate as follows:

...اللّهُمّ صَلّ عَلىَ فَاطمَةَ الطيّبَةِ الطاهِرَةِ الْمُطهّرَةِ، الّتِيْ انْتَجَبْتَهَا وَطهّرْتَهَا وَ فَضّلْتَهَا عَلىَ نِسَاءِ الْعَالمِيْنَ...

...O Allah, bless Fatima, *the pleasant one* (*al-Tayyiba*), the pure, the purified, whom You chose, purified and preferred over all the women of the worlds...1

Imam al-Husayn (AS) being the offspring of a pure mother the like of *al-Tayyiba*, also inherits utter purity. Small wonder it is that one of his appellations is *al-Tayyib*: Abu Shibl narrates:

قُلْتُ لأَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ أَزُورُ قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ قَالَ نَعَمْ زُرِ الطيّبَ وَأَتِمّ الصّلاَةَ فِيه...

I said to Imam al-Sadiq (AS): I visit the grave of *al-Husayn* (AS) He (AS) said: Yes, *visit al-Tayyib*2 *(the pleasant one),* and pray the complete prayer (and not *qasr*) near him...3

In another tradition, Abu Sa'id al-Mada'ini says: I entered in the presence of Abu 'Abdillah [al-Sadiq (AS)], and I said: May I be made your ransom. Should I visit the grave of al-Husayn (AS)? He ('a) said:

نَعَمْ يَا أَبَا سَعِيدٍ ائْتِ قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ ابْنِ رَسُول اللّهِ أَطيَبِ الأَطيَبِينَ وَأَطهَرِ الطاهِرِينَ وَأَبَرّ الأَبْرَار فَإِنّكَ إِذَا زُرْتَهُ كَتَبَ اللّهُ لَكَ بِهِ خَمْساً وَ عِشْرِينَ حَجّةً.

Yes O Aba Sa'id, visit the grave of al-Husayn (AS), the offspring of the Messenger of Allah (S), **the most pleasant of the most pleasant ones and the most pure of the pure ones**, and the most righteous of the righteous ones; for surely if you visit him, Allah will write for you the reward of twenty five pilgrimages (*hajjs*).4

In the well-known *Ziyarat al-Jami'a al-Kabira* there is a statement that alludes to the *process of the transfer* of purity. We are taught to address the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) in the following way:

...وَأَنّ أَرْوَاحَكُمْ وَنُورَكُمْ وَطِينَتَكُمْ وَاحِدَةٌ طابَتْ وَطهُرَتْ بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْض...

...and that your spirits, your light, and your nature are one; they became pleasant and purified some from others...5

In another tradition where the *basis of transfer* is clearly depicted, the Holy Prophet (S) presents a Divine law:

...فَأَبَى أَنْ يُخْرِجَ مِنَ الطيّبِ إِلاّ الطيّبَ

...And He [Allah] did not allow to produce from a pleasant entity save a pleasant entity.6

In a beautiful conversation with Kumayl bin Ziyad al-Nakha'i Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (AS) narrates the Prophet (S) as saying:

عَلِيٌّ مِنِّي وَابْنَايَ مِنْهُ وَالطيِّبُونَ مِنِّي وَأَنَا مِنْهُمْ وَهُمُ الطيِّبُونَ بَعْدَ أُمِّهِمْ وَهُمْ سَفِينَةُ مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا وَمَنْ تَخَلّفَ عَنْهَا هَوَى...

‘Ali is from me, and my two sons are from him, and the *tayyibun* [a reference to the A’imma (AS)] are from me, and I am from them, and they are the *tayyibun* (pleasant ones) after their mother, and they are the Ark upon which whoever boards is emancipated, and whosoever lags behind, falls...7

Readers are requested to reflect on the phrase “*wa hum al-tayyibun ba’da ummihim*” (and they are the pleasant ones after their mother) which subtly alludes to the root and transfer of their purity.

In order to understand better the transfer of purity, let us consider the following verses and narrations:

1- The Holy Qur`an presents a parable of universal significance:

أَلمْ تَرَى كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللّهُ مَثَلاً كَلِمَةً طيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السّمَاءِ.تُؤْتِي أُكُلَهَا كُلّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللّهُ الأَمْثَالَ لِلنّاسِ لَعَلّهُمْ يَتَذَكّرُونَ

Don’t you see how Allah sets forth a parable?* A pleasant word8 *(kalima tayyiba) is like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens, It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition. (14:24)

This verse must be understood in light of the fact that Allah’s word is different from the word of the human being. According to a radiant expression of Amir al-mu’minin ‘Ali (AS) in *Nahj al-Balagha*, Allah’s words are His very creations. He A says: ‘*And surely His speech is the action that He originates...*’9

Therefore when we speak of *kalima tayyiba* we refer to a pleasant and good being. And among the fundamental requisites of such an entity, as depicted in the above verse, is a firm and powerful origin. One who is born to parents of firm knowledge and action, would always inhabit the skies of spiritual elevation, and benefit others every moment by the permission of their Lord. In a tradition Imam al-Baqir (AS) says the following about the aforementioned verse:

...نَحْنُ الشّجَرَةُ الّتِيْ قال الله تَعالىَ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وفَرْعُهَا فِي السّماءِ،نَحْنُ نُعْطي شِيعَتَنَا مَا نَشَاءُ مِنْ عِلْمِنَا

We are the tree about which Almighty Allah said ***"...whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens"* (14:24).** We are the ones who give our Shi'as what we want from our knowledge...10

2. Imam Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (AS) alluding to the reality that the fruit depends on the water of the plant says:

...وَاعْلَمْ أَنّ كُلّ عَمَلٍ نَبَاتٌ، وَكُلّ نَبَاتٍ لا غِنَى بِهِ عَنِ الْمَاءِ، وَالْمِيَاهُ مُخْتَلِفَةٌ، فَمَا طابَ سَقْيُهُ طابَ غَرْسُهُ، وَحَلَتْ ثَمَرَتُهُ، وَمَا خَبُثَ سَقْيُهُ خَبُثَ غَرْسُهُ، وَأَمَرّتْ ثَمَرَتُه.

...and know that every action is a plant, and every plant is not needless of water, and waters are of different kinds. And if the water of a plant is pure and pleasant, its growth would be pleasant and its fruit sweet. And if the water of a plant is dirty and unpleasant, its growth would be unpleasant and its fruit bitter.11

3. Alluding to the fundamental importance of the land where the plant grows, the Holy Qur`an says:

وَالْبَلَدُ الطيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالّذِي خَبُثَ لا يَخْرُجُ إِلاّ نَكِدًا

The good land *its vegetation comes out by the permission of its Lord, and as for that which is bad, it does not come out except sparsely. (7:58)*

4. In a well-known *Ziyarat* when addressing the Imams of the Baqi' cemetery in Madina we say:

...طبْتُمْ وَطابَ مَنْبِتُكُم...

You are pleasant and the place of your growth too is pleasant and pure...12

5. Alluding to the pleasant growth of Hadhrat Maryam (AS) Almighty Allah says:

فَتَقَبّلَها رَبُّها بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَها نَباتاً حَسَناً...

Thereupon her Lord accepted her with a beautiful acceptance, and caused her to grow as a lovely plant...(3:37)

6. Imam al-Husayn (AS) says in his well-known supplication of ‘Arafa:

خَلَقْتَنِي مِنَ التُّرَابِ، ثُمّ أَسْكَنْتَنِي الأَصْلابَ آمِناً لِرَيْبَ الْمَنُوْنِ وَإِخْتِلافِ الدُّهُوْرِ، فَلَمْ أَزَلْ ظَاعِناً مِنْ صُلْبٍ إِلى رَحِمٍ فِيْ تَقَادُمِ الأَيّامِ الْمَاضِيَةِ وَالْقُرُوْنِ الْخَالِيَةِ

...You created me from clay, then established me in loins safe from the unpredictable turn of destiny and the difference of times; **then I have been shifting from the loin to the womb along the course of the bygone days and the past centuries**.’13

Here Imam al-Husayn (AS) is trying to teach us of a profound reality: the question of transfer of purity or impurity is not necessarily from the immediate parents. Generations are responsible.

7. In the well-known *Ziyarat al-Warith* we address Imam al-Husayn (AS) in the following way:

أَشْهَدُ أَنّكَ نُوْراً فِي الأَصْلابِ الشّامِخَةِ وَالأَرْحَامِ الْمُطهّرَةِ لَمْ تُنَجِّسْكَ الْجَاهِلِيّةُ بِأَنْجَاسِهَا ...

Surely I bear witness that you were **a light in the great loins and the pure wombs**, the [age of] ignorance did not taint you with its dirt...14

Here again notice the words *al-aslab* (loins) and *al-arham* (wombs) are in the plural form, which means that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is the edifice of a whole generation, and not mere one *sulb* (loin) and *rahim* (womb).

8. In his address to the disobedient Kufans on the plains of Karbala he alluded to his pure origin saying:

اَلا إِنّ الدّعِيّ بْنَ الدّعِيّ قَدْ رَكزَ بَيْنَ اثْنَتَيْن، بَيْنَ الْقِلّةِ وَالذّلّةِ، وَهَيْهَات مَا آخُذُ الدّنِيّة، اَبى اللهُ ذَلِكَ وَرَسُوْلُهُ، وَجُدُوْدٌ طابَتْ وَحُجُوْرٌ طهُرَتْ، وَاُنُوْفٌ حَمِيّةٌ وَنُفُوْسٌ اَبِيّةٌ...

Beware the illegal offsping, product of the illegal offspring, has made me to choose between the two: fighting with my few men and accepting the degradation [of paying oath of allegiance to Yazid]; this [i.e. accepting the latter] is farfetched; I will never accept degradation; Allah and His Messenger and ***pleasant grandparents and pure bossoms***

and leaders of valor and protective souls do not allow that...15

The aforementioned quotations teach us that in order for one to be bestowed with an offspring the like of Imam al-Husayn (AS), one is required to travel through a similar spiritual chain. Obviously a completely indentical chain is impossible to attain, but one can establish the foundation of a chain that nurtures the values of the lineage of Imam al-Husayn (AS). There is always time for rectification and change. The Holy Qur`an says:

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيّ مِنَ الْمَيّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيّتَ مِنَ الْحَيّ وَيُحْيِي الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ

He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and gives life to the earth after its death, and thus shall you be brought forth. (30:19)

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) explaining the phrase '*He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead*' in a tradition says:

فَالْحَيّ اَلْمُؤْمِنُ الّذِيْ تَخْرُجُ طيْنَتُهُ مِنْ طيْنَةِ الْكافِرِ.وَالْمَيّتُ الّذِيْ يَخْرُج مِنَ الْحَيّ هُوَ اَلْكافِرُ الّذِيْ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ طيْنَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ.

The living is the believer whose clay comes out from the clay of a disbeliever, and the dead that comes out from the living is a disbeliever, who comes out from the clay of a believer.16

Therefore if we firmly resolve to purify our beliefs and actions and unite with the spirit of *tawhid*, we can serve as the foundation of a powerful generation to come17. This is where determining issues such as 'the formation of the worldview of the youth', 'spouse selection and its correct criteria', 'etiquette of spousal interaction', 'prenatal care in both the physical as well as spiritual dimensions', 'child upbringing', 'the importance of the temperament of the wetnurse during breastfeeding' etc. come into focus. Modern science has partially contributed in showing how some of these factors determine the felicity and happiness of the child.

The Canadian Psychiatrist, Dr. Thomas Verny, well-known as the world's leading expert on the effects of the prenatal and the early post-natal environment on personality development in his '*The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*' has interesting information to reveal. He says:

... a woman is her baby's conduit to the world. Everything that affects her, affects him. And nothing affects her as deeply or hits with such lacerating impact as worries about her husband (or partner). Because of that, few things are more dangerous to a child, emotionally and physically, than a father who abuses or neglects his pregnant wife...

An equally vital factor in the child's emotional well-being is his father's commitment to the marriage. Any number of things can influence a man's ability to relate to his partner, from the way he feels about his wife or his own father to his job pressures or his own insecurities. (Ideally, of course, the time to work out these problems is before conceiving, not during a pregnancy.)18

(The mother's) thoughts and feelings are the material out of which the unborn child fashions himself. When they are positive and nurturing, the child can ... withstand shocks from almost any quarter. But the fetus cannot be misled either. If he is good at sensing what is on his mother's mind generally, he is even better at sensing her attitude towards him...19

Certainly exemplifying the method of how to prepare the foundation of a powerful generation would require a separate work in itself. One of the very important secrets for the success of the future child is the perfection of the preparatory causes.

If both the spouses enjoy a sound temperament and spiritual purity, and both consume the right foods before and after copulation, and both maintain an environment of serenity and Divine love, they would always serve as foundations of powerful generations to come.

The Holy Qur`an cites a beautiful parable showing that Divine Grace is abundantly showered to all. The limitations of the receptacles, however, determine the nature of their bodies and spirits. The more deficient the receptacle, the more deificient the result. This also pertains to physical beauty. Hence you may find some children with excellent physical features, but poor moral traits, and vice versa. The Holy Qur`an says:

أنزَلَ مِنْ السّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالتْ أوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرهَا...

He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure...(13:17)

Philosophically explaining the differences in quality of the off-springs born, the late Imam al-Khumayni in his book *'al-Talab wa al-Irada* says:

فاعلم أنّ واجب الوجود بالذّات لمّا كان واجب الوجود من جميع الجهات والحيثيّات يمتنع عليه قبض الفيض عن الموضوع القابل فَإنّ قبضه بعد تماميّة الاستعداد وعدم نقصٍ في جانب القابل مستلزمُ لنقصٍ في الفاعل أو جهة امكانٍ فيه تعالى عنه. وهذا اللزوم والوجوب كلزوم عدم صدور القبيح وامتناع صدور الظلم عنه اختياريٌ اراديٌ لا يضُرٌ بكونه مريداً مختاراً قَادِراً فَإذَا تَمّت الإستعدادات في القوابل أفيضت الفيوضات والوجودات من المبادي العالية. وأمّا إفَاضة الفيض الوجودي

بمقدار الاستعداد وقابلية المواد للتاسب بين المادة والصورة للتركيب الطبيعي الإتحادي بينهما لا يمكن قبولها صورة الطف من مقتضى استعدادها كما لا يمكن منعها عمّا استُعِدّت له...

Then be it known to you that because the Essentially Necessary Being is necessary in every dimension, it is impossible to withhold grace from the receptacle of grace. This is because withholding it while the latter enjoys complete receptivity or does not have any deficiency, necessitates the imperfection of the Provider of grace or His contingent nature, exalted is He from such attributions. And such kind of necessity [when we say that it is impossible to withhold Divine Grace] is similar to the essential impossibility of evil and oppression issuing from God, which is something volitional and does not contradict

His possession of free will and power. Hence when there exists complete receptivity in the receptacles, grace is bestowed from higher causes. And as for bestowing existential grace in proportion to the receptivity of potency of the receptacle (*al-madda*), it is because there is a specific coherence between the potency of a receptacle (*al-madda*) and the actuality of its form (*al-sura*), due to a united natural composition between them, and thus the receptacle cannot accept a subtler and more perfect form than the requisite of its aptitude. Similarly it is impossible to deprive it from that which it can potentially accept.

Therefore there is no stinginess or favoritism from the All-Gracious. He bestows abundance of grace to every human being from the onset. The receptacles, however, are deficient, and thus limit or hamper the grace. The doors, however, are never closed. The temporal life of this world is an opportunity to change. The human being, from which ever land it starts developing, is in possession of an unsullied innate nature. It is the parents that blemish their attitudes and direct them to the path of spiritual destruction.

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

مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ يُولَدُ إِلا عَلَى الْفِطرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ اللّذَان يُهَوّدَانِهِ وَ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ وَ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ

No baby is born save with the sound nature (*fitra*). Thereafter it is his parents that change him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.20

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بْنَ فَاطمَةَ

Peace be unto you, O son of **Fatima**

Ibnu Fatima is a matronym worthy of contemplation. In order to understand it well it is imperative for us to look at the origins of the name *Fatima*. According to traditions of the

Ahl al-Bayt (AS), the name ‘*Fatima*’ has various derivatives. Some of them are as follows:

1. Her weaning (*fitam*) was concurrent with Divine inspiration and she was detached from impurity (*futimat ‘an al-tamth*):

Imam Abu Ja’far [al-Baqir (AS)] is reported to have said:

لَمّا وُلِدَتْ فَاطمَةُ أَوْحَى اللّهُ إلى مَلَكٍ فَأَنْطقَ بِهِ لِسَانَ مُحَمّدٍ فَسَمّاهَا فَاطمَةَ ثُمّ قَالَ إِنّي فَطمْتُكِ بِالْعِلْمِ وَفَطمْتُكِ مِنَ الطمْثِ ثُمّ قَالَ أَبُو جَعْفَر وَاللّهِ لَقَدْ فَطمَهَا اللّهُ بِالْعِلْمِ وَعَن الطمْثِ فِي الْمِينَاق

When Fatima (AS) was born, Allah sent down a revelation to an angel, who thereupon made the tongue of Muhammad (S) speak whereupon he named her Fatima (AS). Then Allah (SwT) said: Indeed I detached you [from ignorance] through knowledge (*fatamtuki bi al-’ilm*) and detached you from menstruation (*fatamtuki min al-tamth*). Thereafter Abu Ja’far (AS) said: I swear by Allah, indeed Allah detached her [from ignorance] through knowledge and detached her from menstruation during the Divine covenant (*fi al-mithaq*).21

Commenting on this, ‘Allama Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* says:

بيان: فطمتك بالعلم أي أرضعتك بالعلم حتى استغنيت وفطمت، أو قطعتك عن الجهل بسبب العلم أو جعلت فطامك من اللبن مقرونا بالعلم كناية عن كونها في بدو فطرتها عالمة بالعلوم الربانية. وعلى التقادير كان الفاعل بمعنى المفعول كالدافق بمعنى المدفوق

Exposition: *Fatamtuki bi al-’ilm* (I detached you through knowledge) means *ardha’tuki bi al-’ilm* (I fed you with knowledge) until you were satisfied and weaned. Or it means “I detached you from ignorance by means of knowledge”, or “I made your weaning from milk accompany knowledge”, which alludes that from the very beginning of her inner makeup she was endowed with the Divine knowledge (*‘ulum Rabbaniyya*). In the aforesaid possibilities, the active participle (*fa’il*) is in the meaning of the passive participle (*maf’ul*) such as *al-dafiq* in the meaning of *al-madfuq* (86:6)22

Considering Imam al-Husayn (AS) as *ibnu Fatima*, we conclude that he is an offspring of one who was free from physical impurities and endowed with Divine knowledge even before her descent to this worldly life. Consequently he (Imam (AS)) also possesses similar qualities: his birth did not accompany any kind of impurity and he was endowed with Divine knowledge from the very onset. Following are traditions worthy of contemplation:

• In a tradition narrated in al-Kafi, Imam al-Baqir (AS) enumerating some of the characteristics of an infallible Imam says:

...يُولَدُ مُطهّراً مَخْتُوناً وَإِذَا وَقَعَ عَلَى الأَرْضِ وَقَعَ عَلَى رَاحَتِهِ رَافِعاً صَوْتَهُ بِالشّهَادَتَيْن...

...He [the infallible Imam (AS)] is born pure and circumcised, and when he descends on the ground he falls on his arms, while he loudly declares the *shahadatayn*...23

• In another tradition narrated from Hadhrat Safiyya Bint ‘Abd al-Muttalib, where the specific details of the pure birth of Imam al-Husayn (AS) is mentioned we read:

لَمّا سَقَط الْحُسَيْنُ بْنُ فَاطمَةَ كُنْتُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا فَقَالَ لِيَ النّبِيٌّ هَلُمِّي إِلَيّ بِابْنَيّ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللّهِ إِنّا لَمْ نُنَظِّفْهُ بَعْدُ فَقَالَ النّبِيٌّ أَنْتَ تُنَظِّفِينَهُ إِنّ اللّهَ قَدْ نَظّفَهُ وَطهّرَهُ...

When al-Husayn (AS), the son of Fatima (AS) descended to the ground, I was near Fatima (AS). Thereupon the Prophet (S) said to me: Bring to me my son. I said: O Messenger of Allah, we have not yet cleaned him. So the Prophet (S) said: Do you think you would clean him? Indeed Allah has cleaned and purified him...24

• With regard to Imam al-Husayn (AS)’s knowledge even prior to his descent in this material world, we have ample traditions that reveal that the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) possessed knowledge even prior to their birth. One of these that speak of this reality is as follows:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ أَنَا وَعَلِيٌّ وَفَاطمَةُ وَالْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ كُنّا فِي سُرَادِقِ الْعَرْشِ نُسَبّحُ اللّهَ وَتُسَبّحُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ بِتَسْبِيحِنَا قَبْلَ أَنْ خَلَقَ اللّهُ عَزّ وَ جَلّ آدَمَ بِأَلْفَيْ عَامٍ...

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said: I, ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn, were in the pavilion of the Divine Throne glorifying Allah, and the angels would glorify through our glorification. This was two thousand years before Allah created Adam...

This tradition speaks of their light which was prior to their earthly descent. The fact that they resided in the pavilion of Divine Throne reveals their vast knowledge already. This is because in other traditions the ‘Arsh is translated as Divine Knowledge:

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

...وَالْعَرْشُ هُوَ الْعِلْمُ الّذِي لا يَقْدِرُ أَحَدٌ قَدْرَهُ

...And the throne is knowledge which none can measure...25

2. She and her followers are detached from the Hell Fire

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said to Hadhrat Fatima (AS) in the presence of Imam ‘Ali (AS):

يَا فَاطمَةُ أَتَدْرِيْنَ لِمَ سُمِّيْتِ فَاطمَة؟ فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ: يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ لِمَ سُمِّيَتْ؟ قَالَ: لأَنَّهَا فُطمَتْ هِيَ وَشِيْعَتُهَا مِنَ النّار.

O Fatima, do you know why you were named Fatima? Imam ‘Ali (AS) said: O Messenger of Allah, why was she named Fatima (AS)? He (S) said: Because she and her Shi’as are detached from the Hell Fire.26

Imam al-Husayn (AS), who is the offspring and fruit of Fatima (AS) likewise enjoys the same characteristic: in sacrificing whatever he had for the emancipation of the entire humanity, he serves as a radiant signpost of detaching those who follow his noble footsteps from Hellfire.

In fact, in visiting his grave and expressing our salutation to his noble self there is emancipation from Hellfire. Ibn Qulawayh narrates in his masterpiece collection *Kamil al-Ziyarat*:

قال أبو عبد الله: مَنْ أَتَى قَبْرَ أَبِيْ عَبْدِ الله فَقَدْ وَصَلَ رَسُوْلَ اللهِ وَوَصَلَنَا وَحَرُمَتْ غِيْبَتُهُ وَحَرُمَ لَحْمُهُ عَلىَ النّار...

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: Whosoever comes to the grave of Abu ‘Abdillah [al-Husayn (AS)], has indeed established contact with the Messenger of Allah (S) as well as us, and backbiting him is forbidden and his flesh ***is forbidden on the Hell-Fire***...27

On the day of ‘Ashura` while addressing Imam al-Husayn (AS) as our host, we request him to ask Allah to emancipate us from Hell Fire:

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ أَنَا ضَيْفُ اللّهِ وَضَيْفُكَ وَجَارُ اللّهِ وَجَارُكَ وَلِكُلّ ضَيْفٍ وَجَارٍ قِرًى وَقِرَايَ فِي هَذَا الْوَقْتِ أَنْ تَسْأَلَ اللّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى أَنْ يَرْزُقَنِي فَكَاكَ رَقَبَتِي مِنَ النّار إِنّهُ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

قَريبٌ مُجِيب.

O Aba ‘Abdillah, I am the guest of Allah and your guest, and the refugee of Allah and your refugee; and for every guest there is a hospitable reception; and the hospitable reception I need from you at this moment is that you ask Allah, to provide me with emancipation from Hell Fire. Surely He listens to prayers and is near to us.28

We must try to understand this tradition carefully. What we seek from Imam al-Husayn (AS) is not prayer for future safety but current emancipation. And emancipation presumes that we are already burning in Hell Fire. Scholars of gnosis tell us that due to our inner blindness, we cannot perceive our inner pathetic state. Otherwise, if the curtains of darkness were unveiled from our hearts we would comprehend the fire that is in us.

3. She was severed and detached from evil

Yunus bin abyan is reported to have said: Abu ‘Abdillah [al-Sadiq] (AS) said:

أَتَدْرِيْ أَيٌّ شَيْءٍ تَفْسِيْرُ فَاطمَة؟ قُلْتُ: أَخْبِرْنِيْ يَا سَيِّدِيْ، قَالَ: فُطمَتْ مِنَ الشّرّ.

Do you know what is the meaning of the name Fatima? I said: Inform me, O master. He (AS) said: [It means that] she was detached from evil (*sharr*)....29

And *sharr* (lit. evil) is interpreted by some scholars as sin. The Holy Qur`an sometimes also employs it for the same meaning:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقالَ ذَرّةٍ خَيْراً يَرَهُ.وَ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقالَ ذَرّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it. (99:78)

Observe that the word “*sharr*” here is employed to denote an evil action, which is “sin” itself.

Hence Fatima (AS) was *ma’suma* (infallible). Her offspring and the fruit of her noble being, who is Imam al-Husayn (AS) likewise was free from sin. This is because he is among the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) whom Allah (SwT) Himself purified from sin and indecency.

The Holy Qur`an says in Surat al-Ahzab:

...إنّما يُريدُ اللّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطهِّرَكُمْ تَطهيراً

...Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (33:33)

4. Her lovers are detached from Hellfire

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إِنِّي سَمَّيْتُ ابْنَتِي فَاطمَةَ لِلأَنَّ اللّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَطمَهَا وَفَطمَ مَنْ أَحَبَّهَا مِنَ النّار

Indeed I named by daughter as Fatima because Allah, the Invincible and Exalted, **detached her and those who love her from the Hell-Fire.**30

According to a universal principle conveyed by the Holy Qur`an, a true lover is a sincere follower:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللّهَ فَاتَّبِعُوني يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَ اللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحيمٌ

Say, "If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins, and Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful." (3:31)

Therefore those who sincerely follow the footsteps of Hadhrat Zahra' (AS) and hence enjoy true love for her, would obviously be detached from Hell Fire. In a very beautiful tradition Imam al-Baqir (AS) says:

وَهَل الدِّينُ إلاّ الْحُبُّ

And is religion other than love?31

Imam al-Husayn (AS) in this sense being *ibnu Fatima* (AS) likewise is one whose love emancipates one from Hell Fire. In fact there is a narration that pertains to the true love of all the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

مَنْ أَحَبّنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ حَشَرَهُ اللّهُ آمِناً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Whosoever loves us the Ahl al-Bayt, Allah would raise him in the state of protection on the Day of Judgment.32

5. She is an intermediary of Divine Grace

In different traditions we are told that Allah derived the name Fatima from His Name *Fatir al-samawati wa al-ardh* (6:79) (The Cleaver of the heavens and the earth). The name *al-Fatiru* comes from the word *fatr* which means to “cleave”. Here it means one who cleaves and breaks non-existence and brings about existence. In conclusion, as some scholars have written in their works, it means ‘The Originator’. Observe the following traditions:

• In a lengthy tradition, where the Ahl al-Kisa’ (AS) were present, the Holy Prophet (S) at one point addresses Hadhrat Fatima (AS) saying:

...وَشَقّ لَكِ يَا فَاطمَةُ اسْماً مِنْ أَسْمَائِهِ فَهُوَ الْفَاطرُ وَأَنْتِ فَاطمَة

...And He derived for you O Fatima a name from His Names, for He is *al-Fatiru* (the Originator), and you are *Fatima*.33

• Almighty Allah in a conversation with prophet Adam (As) introduces the light of Fatima (AS) as follows:

...وَهَذِهِ فَاطمَةُ وَأَنَا فَاطرُ السّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ فَاطمُ أَعْدَائِي عَنْ رَحْمَتِي يَوْمَ فَصْلِ قَضَائِي وَفَاطمُ أَوْلِيَائِي عَمّا يَعْتَريهمْ وَيَشِينُهُمْ فَشَقَقْتُ لَهَا اسْماً مِن اسْمِي

...and this is *Fatima* while I am the *Fatir al-samawati wa al-ardh* (Originator of the heavens and the earth), *Fatimu a’da’i min Rahmati yawma fasli qadha’i* (the Severer of My enemies from My mercy on the day of My judgment), and *Fatimu awliya’i ‘amma ya’tarihim wa yashinuhum* (the Relinquisher of affliction and disgrace from those near to me). So I derived for her a name from My Name.

• In a supplication taught by Angel Jibra’il (AS) to Prophet Adam (AS) we read as follows:

يَا حَمِيدُ بِحَقّ مُحَمّدٍ يَا عَالِي بِحَقّ عَلِيٍّ يَا فَاطرُ بِحَقّ فَاطمَة...

O praised one, I swear by the station of Muhammad, O Exalted One, I swear by the station of ‘Ali, O Originator, I swear by the station of Fatima (AS)...34

Readers must understand that this tradition does not speak simply of the method of derivation that we commonly know. Fatima (AS) plays a fundamental role in the creation and origination of the heavens and the earth. She unites with the Muhammadan Light which is the first Divine Creation, from which proceeds every good.

Imam al-Husayn (AS), being *ibnu Fatima (AS)*, also manifests the attribute of *al-Fatiru*. This is also because he is united with the Muhammadan Reality (*al-Nur al-Muhammadi*), which is the intermediary of Divine grace.

Other traditions also indicate that they - the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) - are the intermediaries (*wasa’it*) between Allah and the creation. For example, in one of his brilliant messages, our 12th Holy Imam (AS) is reported to have said:

نحنُ صَنائِعُ رَبِّنا والخَلقُ بَعْدُ صَنَائِعُنَا

We are the actions of our Lord, and the creation thereafter are our actions.35

And in a lengthy tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) tells Imam ‘Ali (AS):

...يا عَلِيٌّ وَلَوْلا نَحْنُ مَا خَلَقَ اللّهُ آدَمَ وَلا حَوّاءَ وَلا الْجَنّةَ وَلا النّارَ وَلا السّمَاءَ وَلا الأَرْض...

...O ‘Ali, and was it not for us (the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)), Allah would not have created Adam, nor Hawa’, nor Paradise, nor Hell Fire, nor the sky, nor the earth...36

Commenting on this tradition, Imam Khumayni in his book of gnosis, *Misbah al-Hidaya* says:

قوله: ((لَوْلا نَحْنُ مَا خَلَقَ اللهُ آدَمَ)) إلى آخره. لأنهم وسائط بين الحق والخلق وروابط بين الحضرة الوحدة المحضة والكثرة التفصيلية؛ وفي هذه الفقرة بيان وساطتهم بحسب أصل الوجود، وكونهم مظهر الرحمة الرحمانية التي هي مفيض أصل الوجود...

The Holy Prophet (S) said: ‘*Was it not for us Allah would not create Adam...*’ This is because they (the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)) are intermediaries (*wasa’it*) between God and the creation, and links between the Presence of Sheer Unity (*al-hadhra al-wahda al-mahdha*) and separative

plurality (*al-kathra al-tafsiliyya*); and this part of the tradition explains their intermediary role in terms of existence, and that they are manifestations of the All-comprehensive Mercy of Allah, which confers existence itself...37

6. The creation cannot comprehend her reality

In the well-known Qur`anic commentary of *Furat al-Kufi* we read the following tradition narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (AS) about the chapter al-Qadr:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ أَنّهُ قَالَ إِنّا أَنْزَلْناهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْر اللّيْلَةُ فَاطمَةُ وَالْقَدْرُ اللّهُ فَمَنْ عَرَفَ فَاطمَةَ حَقّ مَعْرفَتِهَا فَقَدْ أَدْرَكَ لَيْلَةَ الْقَدْر وَإِنّمَا سُمِّيَتْ فَاطمَةَ لِلأَنّ الْخَلْقَ فُطمُوا عَنْ مَعْرفَتِهَا

Imam Abu ‘Abdillah al-Sadiq (AS) is reported to have said that in the verse ‘Indeed we sent it on the *laylat al-qadr*” the word *al-layla* refers to Fatima (AS) and the word *al-qadr* refers to Allah. Therefore whosoever knows Fatima (AS) the way she must be known, then indeed he has comprehended the *laylat al-qadr*. And surely she was named *Fatima* because the creation was detached from comprehending her reality (*li anna al-khalqa futimu ‘an ma’rifatiha*).

Readers should understand that the Imam (AS) is referring to the esoteric and inner meaning of this verse.38

Expounding on this tradition39, the saintly scholar, Ayatullah ‘Ali Sa’adat Parwar (may Allah elevate his noble spirit) in his brilliant treatise on the spiritual status of Hadhrat Fatima (AS) *Jelweye Nur* says that this tradition is understandable after we believe that the reality of the entire Holy Qur`an was received all at once by the heart of the Holy Prophet (S) on the night of grandeur. This is because Fatima (AS) similar to her father enjoys a receptacle that can contain the Divine message. Hence it is proper to call her *Laylat al-Qadr*.

Bearing the aforesaid in mind, the matronym *Ibnu Fatima (AS)* implies that the creation is likewise detached from knowing the exalted status and sanctity of Imam al-Husayn (AS).

In a lengthy conversation, Imam ‘Ali (AS) says to Abu Dharr:

...فَإِنّكُمْ لا تَبْلُغُونَ كُنْهَ مَا فِينَا وَلا نِهَايَتَه

...for surely you will not attain the zenith or of our station, nor its ultimate state...40

And in a brilliant tradition, Imam al-Ridha (AS), defining the station of an infallible Imam (AS) says:

الإِمَامُ وَاحِدُ دَهْرِهِ لاَ يُدَانِيهِ أَحَدٌ وَلاَ يُعَادِلُهُ عَالِمٌ وَلاَ يُوجَدُ مِنْهُ بَدَلٌ وَلاَ لَهُ مِثْلٌ وَلاَ نَظِيرٌ...فَمَنْ ذَا الّذِي يَبْلُغُ مَعْرِفَةَ الْلإِمَامِ أَوْ يُمْكِنُهُ اخْتِيَارُهُ هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ...

The Imam is unique in his time. None can come closer to him in rank, and no scholar equals him, and he has no subtitute, nor does he have an example or peer...Who then can attain the knowledge of Imam or is able to venture into knowing him? It is indeed farfetched! It is indeed farfetched!...41

يَا بْنَ فَاطمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَآءِ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

O son of Fatimah, the Mistress of the Women of the Universe

If we ponder over the appellation that follows the name Fatima (AS) we come to understand another very important implication of this verse. Hadhrat Fatima (AS) is known as *Sayyidatu nisa' al-'alamin* (*Mistress of the women of the worlds*), which reveals her presiding status (*siyada*) over all other women, past, present, and future. The word *sayyida* is the feminine form of the noun *sayyid*, which confers the connotation of presidence and mastership.

In order to understand the *root meaning* of mastership (*siyada*), some authoritative scholars like Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli refer to the following tradition of Amir al-mu'minin (AS):

ِباحْتِمَال الْمُؤَن يَجِبُ السّؤْدُد

By shouldering responsibilities mastership becomes essential.

In this sense, all the fourteen infallibles are *sadat*, for they are the fundamental beings who have shouldered the heaviest responsibility any being can ever shoulder. In the ontological and existential sense they represent the middle link between Allah and His creation. Therefore every good is sourced through their light. Hence they have mastership over the entire caravan of the creation.

Shaykh Saduq narrates in his masterpiece collection *'Ilal al-Sharayi`* from Imam al-Sadiq (AS):

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ قَالَ: إِنّمَا سُمِّيَتْ فَاطمَةُ مُحَدّثَةً لِلأَنّ الْمَلاَئِكَةَ كَانَتْ تَهْبِط مِنَ السّمَاءِ فَتُنَادِيهَا كَمَا تُنَادِي مَرْيَمَ بِنْتَ عِمْرَانَ فَتَقُولُ يَا فَاطمَةُ إِنّ اللّهَ اصْطفاكِ وَطهّرَكِ وَاصْطفاكِ عَلى

نِساءِ الْعالَمِينَ يَا فَاطِمَةُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرّاكِعِينَ فَتُحَدِّثُهُمْ وَيُحَدِّثُونَهَا فَقَالَتْ لَهُمْ ذَاتَ لَيْلَةٍ أَ لَيْسَتِ الْمُفَضّلَةُ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ مَرْيَمَ بِنْتَ عِمْرَانَ فَقَالُوا إِنّ مَرْيَمَ كانَتْ سَيِّدَةَ نِسَاءِ عَالَمِهَا وَإِنّ اللّهَ عَزّ وَجَلّ جَعَلَكِ سَيِّدَةَ نِسَاءِ عَالَمِكِ وَعَالَمِهَا وَسَيِّدَةَ نِسَاءِ الأَوّلِينَ وَ الْلآخِرِينَ

Fatima (AS) was known as *Muhaddatha* (one spoken to by the angels) because the Angels would descend from the heaven and call her the way they would call Maryam, daughter of ‘Imran. They would say: Indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you over the women of the worlds. O Fatima be obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow down with those who bow down. So she would speak to them and they would speak to her. One night she said to them: isn’t the one who has more merit over all the women of the world Maryam, the daughter of ‘Imran? They said: Indeed Maryam was the Mistress of her world, and indeed Allah, the Invincible and Magnificent made you the Mistress of the women of your and her world as well as the Mistress of the preceding and succeeding women.42

The word *al-’alamin* confers the meaning that her mistressship envelops all the worlds, and she presides every woman whatsoever. This is because when the article ‘*al*’ precedes a plural noun, it refers to *all the extensions* of the noun.

Imam al-Husayn (AS) being *ibnu Fatimati Sayyidati nisa’ al-’alamin*, and hence a product and fruit of the mistress of the women of the world, also enjoys qualities of mastership.

Imam Zayn al-’Abidin (AS) reports from Imam al-Husayn (AS):

كانَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ يَقُولُ فِيمَا بَشّرَنِي بِهِ: يَا حُسَيْنُ أَنْتَ السّيّدُ ابْنُ السّيّدِ أَبُو السّادَةِ ...

Among the glad tidings that the Messenger of Allah (S) would give me, is: O Husayn, you are the master (sayyid), son of the master (sayyid), father of masters (sayyids)...43

And in the well-known *Ziyarat al-Arba’in* Imam al-Sadiq (AS) teaches us to address Imam al-Husayn (AS) as follows:

وَجَعَلْتَهُ سَيّداً مِنَ السّادَةِ وَقَائِداً مِنَ الْقَادَةِ...

...and He (Allah) made you a *sayyid* from the sayyids, and a leader from the leaders...44

The Path Towards Mastership

When we try to to address Imam al-Husayn (AS) with mastership, we must struggle to embark on a spiritual journey to attain a color of the same. The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) whose light presides over the creation have also taught us the path towards *siyada* (mastership).

One of the fundamental criteria of mastership is generosity and open-handedness (*jud*). Consider the following narrations:

1. Imam al-Husayn (AS) is reported to have said:

مَنْ جَادَ سَاد وَمَنْ بَخِلَ رَذِلَ

Whosoever bestows generously reigns supreme, and one who is stingy becomes ignoble.45

2. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

سَيِّدُ الْقَوْمِ خَادِمُهُمْ

The sayyid of a nation is their servant.46

3. Imam ‘Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

بِالْجُوْدِ تَكُوْنُ السِّيَادَةُ

Mastership comes about through open-handedness.47

4. Imam ‘Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

سَبَبُ السِّيَادَةِ السَّخَاءُ

Generosity is the cause of mastership.48

5. Imam ‘Ali (AS) is reported to have said:

تَجَاوَزْ مَعَ الْقُدْرَةِ وَأَحْسِنْ مَعَ الدَّوْلَةِ تَكْمُلُ لَكَ السِّيَادَةُ

Forgive in power and do good in fortune, your mastership will turn perfect.49

Considering the aforesaid narrations which speak of generosity and open-handedness as the criteria of mastership, let us consider the following narration that speaks of the best kind of open-handedness:

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

وَأَجْوَدَ النّاسِ مَنْ جَادَ بِنَفْسِهِ وَمَالِهِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ

...And the most openhanded of all people, is one who generously bestows his self and his wealth in the way of Allah.50

And Imam al-Husayn (AS) was that sayyid who sacrificed everything that he had for the sake of Allah. Therefore he has *al-siyada al-'uzhma* (The greatest mastership).

Hilal bin Nafi' reports:

وروى هلال بن نافع قال: إني لواقف مع أصحاب عمربن سعد إذ صرخ صارخ: أبشر أيها الامير فهذا شمر قد قتل الحسين، قال: فخرجت بين الصفين فوقفت عليه وإنه ليجود بنفسه فوالله مارأيت قط قتيلا مضمخا بدمه أحسن منه ولاأنور وجها، ولقد شغلني نور وجهه وجمال هيبته عن الفكرة في قتله ...

Hilal bin Nafi' reports: I stood with the companions of 'Umar bin Sa'd, when a caller shouted: Glad tidings to you, O Amir, for this is Shimr, who has already killed al-Husayn (AS). Hilal says: I left between the two ranks and stood besides him (al-Husayn (AS)) while surely *he was giving away his life*; I swear by Allah I never saw a killed man smeared in his blood more beautiful and more sparkling in face than him. And indeed the light of his face and the beauty of his awe-inspiring appearance occupied me from thinking about his martyrdom...51

يَا بْنَ فَاطمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَآءِ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

O son of Fatimah, the Leader of the Women of the Worlds

Some commentators of Ziyarat 'Ashura`52 have defined *siyada* as *sharafa wa 'ulluw al-martaba.* In other words, when we say Hadhrat Fatima (AS) is *Sayyidatu nisa' al-'alamin*, we mean she is the most high-ranking of all women, past, present, and future:

Shaykh Saduq in his *al-Amali* narrates a lengthy tradition from the Holy Prophet (S), who at one point says:

فَأَمّا اِبْنَتِي فَاطمَة فَهيَ سَيِّدَةُ نِسَاءِ الْعَالمِيْنَ مِنَ الأوّلِيْنَ وَالآخِرِيْنَ، وَإِنّهَا لَتَقُوْمُ فِيْ مِحْرَابِهَا فَيُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْهَا سَبْعُوْنَ أَلْف مَلَكٍ مِنَ الْمَلاَئِكةِ الْمُقَرّبِيْنَ، وَيُنَادَوْنَهَا بِمَا نَادَتْ بِهِ الْمَلاَئِكةُ مَرْيَمَ فَيَقُوْلُوْنَ: يَا فَاطمَةُ إِنّ اللهَ اصْطفَاكِ وَطهّرَكِ وَاصْطفَاكِ عَلىَ نِسَاءِ الْعَالمِيْنَ

As for my daughter Fatima, *she is the Mistress of the women of the worlds from the foremost and latter ones*, and surely she stands in her place of prayer, whereupon seventy thousand angels close to Allah, send their salutations to her, and call her with what the angels called Maryam. So they say: “O Fatima, indeed Allah chose you and purified you, and chose you over the women of all the worlds.”53

Therefore Imam al-Husayn (AS) who is the son and edifice of *Sayyidatu nisa’i al-’alamin* also is among the most elevated of people. We have already mentioned traditions that clearly distinguish Imam al-Husayn (AS) as *sayyid*. However, because we defined the word *sayyid* here to mean *sharif*, let us consider the following verse of the well-known salutational recital of *Ziyarat al-Jami’a al-Kabira*:

وَطأطأ كُلّ شَرِيْفٍ لِشَرَفِكُمْ...

And every *sharif* (one who enjoys an elevated status) bows down before your elevated status (*li sharafikum*)...54

This clearly informs us that the Infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) enjoy the highest stations, and therefore all of them are *sayyids* in relation to the people.

يَا بْنَ فَاطمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَآءِ الْعَالمِيْنَ

O son of Fatimah, the Mistress of the Women of the Universe

Another possible meaning of *Sayyidat al-Nisa*, as understood from a tradition, is that she is *mufrudhat al-ta’a* (one who must be obeyed) with regard to all the women. That is, whatever she commands must be obeyed, and her words and deeds are are proof for them. Rather according to a tradition, she has this position with regard to all:

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) is reported to have said:

وَلقَدْ كانَتْ مَفْرُوْضَةَ الطاعَةِ عَلىَ جَمِيْعٍ مِنْ خَلْقِ اللهِ مِنَ الْجِنّ وَالإِنْس وَالطيْر وَالْوَحْش وَالأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمَلآئِكةِ.

And indeed she (AS) was **one to be compulsorily obeyed by all the creation: the Jins, the human beings, the birds, the wild animals, the prophets and the angels**.55

And *mafrudhat al-ta'a* (one who must be obeyed) in this tradition should not be merely taken as one who must be obeyed by all through their volitions. Rather it also speaks of *wilaya takwiniyya* (ontological presidence), which means that she has Divinely bestowed power and can control or lay effect on their entities of existence. This definition of mistressship is an inspiration from the following tradition:

'Allama Majlisi narrated the following tradition in *Bihar al-Anwar*:

وَقَالَ النّبِيٌّ: عَلِيٌّ سَيّدُ الْعَرَبِ فَقَالتْ عَائِشَةُ يَا رَسُولَ اللّهِ أَلسْتَ سَيّدَ الْعَرَبِ؟ قَالَ أَنَا سَيّدُ وُلْدِ آدَمَ وَعَلِيٌّ سَيّدُ الْعَرَبِ. فَقَالتْ عَائِشَةُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللّهِ وَمَا السّيّدُ؟ قَالَ : مَن افْتُرضَتْ طاعَتُهُ كمَا افْتُرضَتْ طاعَتِي.

The Prophet (S) said: 'Ali is the Sayyid of the Arabs. So 'A`isha asked: O Messenger of Allah, aren't you the Sayyid of Arabs? He (S) said: I am the Sayyid of the children of Adam, and 'Ali is the Sayyid of the Arabs. So 'A`isha asked: O Messenger of Allah, and who is a sayyid? He (S) said: One whose obedience is made compulsory, the way my obedience is made compulsory.56

And the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) are clear that all the Imams are *muftaradh al-ta'a*. There are clear expressions about that in some interesting traditions. Observe the following traditions:

Al-'Amili in his *Wasa`il al-Shi'a* narrates:

قَالَ وَرُوِيَ أَنّ الصّادِقَ مَرِضَ فَأَمَرَ مَنْ عِنْدَهُ أَنْ يَسْتَأْجِرُوا لَهُ أَجِيراً يَدْعُو لَهُ عِنْدَ قَبْرِ الْحُسَيْنِ فَوَجَدُوا رَجُلَا فَقَالُوا لَهُ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ أَنَا أَمْضِي وَلَكِنّ الْحُسَيْنَ إِمَامٌ مُفْتَرَضُ الطاعَةِ وَهُوَ إِمَامٌ مُفْتَرَضُ الطاعَةِ فَرَجَعُوا إِلى الصّادِقِ وَأَخْبَرُوهُ فَقَالَ هُوَ كمَا قَالَ وَ لَكِنْ أَ مَا عَرَفَ أَنّ لِلّهِ تَعَالى بِقَاعاً يُسْتَجَابُ فِيهَا الدُّعَاءُ فَتِلْكَ الْبُقْعَةُ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْبِقَاعِ.

It is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (AS) once got ill, and ordered someone who was near him to to tell his people to hire someone, so that he may pray for him near the grave of al-Husayn (AS). So they found a person, and told him to do what is required. He said: I will go, **but al-Husayn (AS) is an Imam who must be compulsorily obeyed (muftaradh al-ta'a) and he (i.e. Imam al-Sadiq (AS)) [likewise] is an Imam who must be compulsorily obeyed**.[Aren't they equal in status?] So they went to Imam al-Sadiq (AS) and informed him what the person had said. The Imam (AS) said: What he said is correct. However, is he not aware that Allah has places, wherein supplications are accepted. And that spot [i.e. near the grave of al-Husayn (AS)] is among those places.57

'Allama Majlisi narrates the following tradition in his *Bihar al-Anwar*:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللّهِ بْنِ الْفَضْلِ قَالَ كُنْتُ عِنْدَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ فَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ طوسَ فَقَالَ لَهُ: يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللّهِ مَا لِمَنْ زَارَ قَبْرَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ: يَا طوسِيٌّ مَنْ زَارَ قَبْرَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنّهُ إِمَامٌ مِنَ اللّهِ مُفْتَرَضُ الطاعَةِ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ غَفَرَ اللّهُ لَهُ مَا تَقَدّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخّرَ وَقَبِلَ شَفَاعَتَهُ فِي سَبْعِينَ مُذْنِباً وَلَمْ يَسْأَلِ اللّهَ جَلّ وَعَزّ عِنْدَ قَبْرِهِ حَاجَةً إِلا قَضَاهَا لَهُ.

'Abdullah bin al-Fadhl is reported to have said: I was with Abu 'Abdillah [al-Sadiq (AS)], and a person from the inhabitants of Tus came in his presence. He said to the Imam (AS): O son of the Messenger of Allah, what reward is there for one who visits the grave of Abu 'Abdillah al-Husayn bin 'Ali (AS)? The Imam (AS) said to him: **O Tusi, whosoever visits the grave of Abu 'Abdillah al-Husayn bin 'Ali (AS) while he knows that the Imam (AS) is one who is compulsorily to be obeyed (*muftaradh al-ta'a*) by the servants of Allah**, Allah would forgive him his past and future sins, and would accept his intercession for seventy sinners, and he would not ask any need from Allah near the Imam's grave save that Allah would fulfil his need.58

'Allama Majlisi narrates the following tradition in his *Bihar al-Anwar*:

عَنْ عَبْدِ الْحَمِيدِ بْنِ نَصْرٍ قَالَ قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللّهِ: يُنْكِرُونَ الإِمَامَ الْمُفْتَرَضَ الطاعَةِ وَيَجْحَدُونَ بِهِ وَاللّهِ مَا فِي الأَرْضِ مَنْزِلَةٌ أَعْظَمَ عِنْدَ اللّهِ مِنْ مُفْتَرَضِ الطاعَةِ ...

'Abd al-Hamidh bin Nasr reports: Abu 'Abdillah [Imam al-Sadiq] (AS) said: They deny the Imam who must be compulsorily obeyed and reject him. ***I swear by Allah there is no station in the earth greater near Allah then one who must be compulsorily***

obeyed...59

1. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.98, pp.262-263
2. The root meaning of al-tayyib is ‘that which is desirable, in which there is no kind of apparent or hidden dirt…’ [See Mustafawi’s al-Tahqiq, v.7, p. 151]. Al-Isfahani confers a similar definition in his Al-Mufradat. He says: ‘wa asl al-tayyib ma tastalidhhuhu al-hawas, wa ma tastalidhhuhu al-nafs’ (and the root meaning of al-tayyib is that by which the senses take pleasure, and that which the soul takes pleasure [See Al-Mufradat of Al-Isfahani, , p. 527.]
3. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.4, p. 587
4. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.98, pp. 41
5. Shaykh al-Tusi, Man La Yahdhuruhu al-Faqih, v.2, p. 613
6. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.65, p. 24
7. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p. 278
8. Unlike the word of man which is expressed by the tongue, kalima with regard to Almighty Allah refers to His creation. His creation is His speech. Therefore kalima tayyiba refers to a being of purity. Prophet ‘Isa in the Holy Qur`an is referred to as “…wa kalimatuhu alqaha ila Maryam…” (and His Word that He cast toward Mary) (4:171)
9. Imam ‘Ali , Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 228
10. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, Al-Khara’ij wa al-Jarayih, v.2, p. 596
11. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.29, p. 600
12. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.4, p. 559
13. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus al-Hasani, Iqbal al-A’mal, v.2, p.74
14. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus al-Hasani, al-Luhuf fi Qatla al-Tufuf, p.6
15. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.45, p.9
16. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.2, p. 5
17. One of the interpretations given for kalima tayyiba is kalimat La ilaha illa Allah. If the parents purify themselves and make their foundations of belief and action firm, they would serve as origins of those human beings who truly personify La ilaha illa Allah.
18. Dr. Thomas Verny, The Secret Life of the Unborn Child, p.25
19. Ibid., p. 43
20. Shaykh Saduq, Man la Yahdhuruhu al-Faqih, v.2, p. 49
21. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 460
22. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 43, p. 13. Allama is trying to simply say that the word Fatima which is in the pattern of an active participle signifies the meaning of a passive participle. This is because she is “cut off from ignorance” and “cut off from impurity”. So in this case she is the passive participle.
23. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 388
24. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 43, p. 256
25. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 4, p. 89
26. Ibid., v. 43, p. 14
27. Ibnu Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 127
28. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 4, p. 89
29. Shaykh Saduq, Al-Khisal, p. 414
30. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 43, p. 12
31. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.8, p. 79
32. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 27, p. 79
33. Ibid., v. 37, p. 47
34. Ibid., v.44, p.245
35. Ibid., v.53, p. 178
36. Ibid., v.18, p. 345

37. Imam Khumayni, Misbah al-Hidaya, p. 78
38. Al-Kufi, Tafsir Furat, p. 581
39. In order to understand the core of this tradition which is beyond the scope of this work, readers are requested to refer to pp. 11-112 of the Persian treatise Jelweye Nur.
40. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 26, p. 1
41. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 201
42. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 14, p. 206
43. Ibid., v. 36, p. 344
44. Ibid., v. 98, p. 331
45. Shaykh Baqir Sharif al-Qarashi, Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn , v.1, p. 157
46. Man La Yahdhuruhu al-Faqih, v.4, p. 378
47. Al-Amadi, Ghurar al-Hikam, p.378
48. Al-Wasiti, ‘Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa’i³, p. 281
49. Al-Wasiti, ‘Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa’i³, p. 200
50. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 73, p. 12
51. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 45, p. 57
52. Shaykh ‘Ali Haydar Mu’ayyad, Adhwa’ ‘ala Ziyarat ‘Ashura`, p. 131
53. Shaykh Saduq, Al-Amali, p. 575
54. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 99, p. 132
55. Al-Shahrudi, Mustadrak Safinat al-Bihar, v.6, p. 208
56. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.4, p.198
57. Al-’Amili, Wasa`il al-Shi’a, v.14, p. 537
58. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.4, p.198
59. Ibid., v.25, p.141

Chapter 5: Peace be unto you, O blood of Allah and the son of the blood of Allah

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللّهِ وَابْنَ ثَارِهِ

Peace be unto You, O Blood of Allah and the son of the Blood of Allah

Commentary

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللّهِ

Peace be unto You, O possessor of the blood venerated by Allah

The word *thar* ثَار in the Arabic language has been employed for different meanings: avenging for blood, rancour, blood, the slain, etc.

Many commentators of *Ziyarat 'Ashura'* have rendered the phrase '*thar Allah*' as 'blood of Allah'. 'Allama al-Tabataba`i likewise is reported to have said the same thing when asked about its meaning.1

In order for this verse to be comprehensible, a *mudhaf* (first particle of a genetive construction) is taken to be elliptical and hidden before the word *thar*. The sentence would originally read "*ya sahiba tharillah*" (O *possessor* of the blood of Allah'. Therefore when we say "*ya thar Allah*", we actually mean "*ya sahiba tharillah*".

Obviously Allah is free from any kind of anthropomorphic attribute (Qur`an, 42:11), and thus the meaning of 'blood of Allah' should not be taken as 'the blood that is a part of Allah', far is He from any kind of imperfection whatsoever. The possibility that *thar Allah* means 'the blood owned by Allah' is although correct in the real sense, for Almighty Allah has absolute ownership over every entity (Qur`an, 3:189), it is not meant in the present case. This is because the appellation '*thar Allah*' here denotes a distinct characteristic of al-Husayn (AS) whereas '*thar Allah*' in its general sense refers to every human being. Unless, however, we would like to express the nobility (*sharafa*) of the blood of Imam al-Husayn (AS), which was sacrificed in the way of Allah.

We do have similar instances in the Arabic language such as *baytullah* (house of Allah), *ruhullah* (spirit of Allah), *naqatallah* (camel of Allah: 91:13), etc. Annexing the name Allah in such instances is in order to reveal the nobility of the first particle of the genetive construction. In short, when we say '*ya thar Allah*' we mean 'O one whose blood is the blood that Allah venerated and preferred over the blood of others.'2

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللّهِ

Peace be unto you, O the spilled blood, whose avenger is Allah

One of the most clear expositions3 for *thar Allah* is that it refers to that blood that has been spilled in falsehood and injustice, and is attributed to the *wali al-dam* (one who has the right to avenge for the blood). Therefore when we say *thar Allah* we mean 'the spilled blood that belongs to Allah', and He alone is the avenger of the same. This meaning can be understood in other salutational recitals as well. For example in one of the *ziyarat* of Imam al-Husayn (AS) we address him as follows:

...وَاَنّكَ ثَارُ اللهِ فِي الاَرْضِ وَالدّمُ الّذِيْ لا يُدْرِكُ ثَارَهُ اَحَدٌ مِنْ اَهْلِ الاَرْضِ وَلا يُدْرِكُهُ إلاّ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ

...and that you are the blood of Allah (*thar Allah*) in the earth and **the blood** that none of the inhabitants of the earth can avenge, and none save Allah alone can avenge it.4

This, however, does not contradict those salutational recitals and supplications that encourage us to ask Almighty Allah to enable us avenge the blood of Imam al-Husayn (AS) with our present Imam (AS), for he is a vicegerent of Allah on earth and His medium, and

can thus serve as Allah’s representative in avenging the blood of Imam al-Husayn (AS).

The Holy Qur`an says:

وَلا تَقْتُلُوا النّفْسَ الّتي حَرّمَ اللّهُ إلاّ بِالْحَقّ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُوماً فَقَدْ جَعَلْنا لِوَلِيّهِ سُلْطاناً فَلا يُسْرِفْ فِي الْقَتْلِ إنّهُ كانَ مَنْصُوراً

Do not kill a soul [whose life] Allah has made inviolable, except with due cause, and whoever is killed wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir an authority. But let him not commit any excess in killing, for he enjoys the support [of law.] (17:33)

Al-Bahrani in his *Tafsir al-Burhan*, while commenting on the above verse narrates the following tradition:

عَنْ مُحَمّد بن سِنَان، عَنْ رَجُلٍ، قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ عَنْ قَوْلِهِ تَعَالىَ: وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُوماً فَقَدْ جَعَلْنا لِوَلِيّهِ سُلْطاناً فَلا يُسْرِفْ فِي الْقَتْلِ إنّهُ كانَ مَنْصُوراً.قال: ذَلِكَ قَائِمُ آلِ مُحَمّدٍ، يَخْرُجُ فَيَقْتُلُ بِدَمِ الْحُسَيْن...

Muhammad bin Sinan narrates from a person who said: I asked Aba ‘Abdillah [al-Sadiq (AS)] about the verse “and whoever is killed wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir an authority”, and he said: **That is the Qa`im of the progeny of Muhammad (AS). He will come out and rise to avenge the blood of al-Husayn (AS)...**5

We also read in the supplication of *al-Nudba*:

اَيْنَ الطالِبُ بِدَمِ الْمَقْتُوْلِ بِكَرْبَلاءِ

Where is the one who would avenge the blood of the one who was killed in Karbala’...6

Therefore whether we say that Allah Himself will avenge the blood of Imam al-Husayn (AS) or the present Imam (AS) will do the same, there is no difference. This is because the Imam (AS) is an entirely submissive servant of Almighty Allah and whatever he does is whatever Allah wants.

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللّهِ

Peace be unto you, O one whose blood is the blood of Allah

One of the possible meanings of the phrase *ya thar Allah* is '*ya man tharuhu thar Allah'* (O one whose blood is the blood of Allah)7. Here the *za'ir* declares that Imam al-Husayn (AS) enjoys the lofty spiritual state of *al-baqa' bi Allah ba'd al-fana'* (survival in Allah after dissolution in Him) which the mystic-scholars expound in their works. Due to the comprehensive and profound meaning it entails, we would not like to go into the details of this reality here.

Those who have attained heights of human perfection through supererogatory worship and obedience (*nawafil*) come to a station where they vision and comprehend that every act of theirs is done through Almighty Allah. In other words, Almighty Allah becomes their means of action. In a sacred tradition [*hadith al-qudsi*], Almighty Allah is reported to have said:

مَا يَتَقَرّبُ إلىّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيْ بِشَيْءٍ احَبٌّ إلىّ مِمّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ. وَإنّهُ لَيَتَقَرّبُ إلىّ بِالنّافِلَةِ حَتّي اُحِبّهُ، فَإذَا احْبَبْتُهُ، كُنْتُ إذاً سَمْعَهُ الّذِيْ يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَبَصَرَهُ الّتِيْ يَبْصُرُ بِهَا وَلِسَانَهُ الّذِيْ يَنْطقُ بِهِ وَيَدَهُ الّتِيْ يَبْطشُ بِهَا، إنْ دَعَانِيْ اجَبْتُهُ.

My servant does not draw near to me with anything more lovable to Me than what I have made obligatory on him. And surely he never ceases to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his tongue through which he speaks, his hand through which he grasps. When he calls on Me I respond to him.

This tradition speaks of two fundamental kinds of proximity: (a) proximity attained through obligatory deeds (*qurb al-fara'idh*), and (b) proximity attained through supererogatory deeds (*qurb al-nawafil*). *Thar Allah* refers to the first level. In this level it is the servant who becomes the instrument of Allah. Almighty Allah Sees, Hears, and Speaks through His servant. This should not lead one to conjecture that Allah is in need of His servant, for the latter's very existence as well as subsistence entirely depend on Allah's volition. Being an instrument of Allah rather shows the utter obedience of the servant and his unity with Divine volition.

Perhaps Imam al-Husayn (AS)'s well-known dictum '*Ridha Allah Ridhana Ahl al-Bayt'* (The pleasure of Allah is our pleasure, the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)8 refers to this very state. The servant in this state becomes عَيْنُ الله *'aynullah* (the eyes of Allah), يَدُالله *yadullah* (the hand of Allah) or ثارَالله"*tharullah*" (blood of Allah), which means that He employs these intermediaries of the elevated human being to do what He decides. Hashim bin 'Umara narrates: I heard Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (AS) say:

أنَا عَيْنُ اللّهِ وَأنَا يَدُ اللّهِ وَأنَا جَنْبُ اللّهِ وَأنَا بَابُ اللّهِ

I am the eye of Allah, and I am the hand of Allah; and I am the side of Allah and I am the door of Allah.9

And Aswad bin Sa’id reports: I was with Abu Ja’far (AS), and he said:

نَحْنُ حُجّةُ اللّهِ وَنَحْنُ بَابُ اللّهِ وَنَحْنُ لِسَانُ اللّهِ وَنَحْنُ وَجْهُ اللّهِ وَنَحْنُ عَيْنُ اللّهِ فِي خَلْقِهِ...

We (the Ahl al-Bayt) are the proof of Allah, we are the door of Allah, and we are the tongue of Allah, and we are the face of Allah, and we are the eye of Allah in His creation...10

Scholars of insight when expounding this exalted state also refer to the following verse of the Holy Qur`an:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلكِنّ اللّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَما رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلكِنّ اللّهَ رَمى وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنينَ مِنْهُ بَلاءً حَسَناً إِنّ اللّهَ سَميعٌ عَليمٌ

You did not kill them; rather it was Allah who killed them; and you did not throw when you threw, rather it was Allah who threw, that He might test the faithful with a good test from Himself. Indeed Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (8:17)

This verse speaks of the Battle of Badr. The Holy Prophet (S) asks Imam ‘Ali (AS) to give him a handful of pebbles, whereafter he (S) throws them at the faces of the polytheists of Quraysh.11 Almighty Allah describes this as His own action. In other words, the Holy Prophet (S) was Allah’s agent and medium. He is told: *You did not throw when you threw, but Allah threw*. In reality no kind of selfhood remained in the Prophet (S). His entire being manifested the Divine.

Thar Allah, according to some Divine scholars, refers to this very kind of perfection. Imam al-Husayn (AS)’s entire movement and sacrifice manifested the attributes of Allah.

Scholars of insight, considering the reality that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is *thar Allah* say that the compensatory price of the blood of al-Husayn (AS) therefore is Allah Himself. The late scholar Ayatullah Muhammad Ridha Rabbani in his *Jalawat-e-Rabbani* says:

آن حضرت مقام ثاراللهي را واجد است و بهمين جهت است كه خونبهاي او خود خداست

That Hadhrat occupies the station of *thar Allah* and for this very reason his compensatory price is God Himself.12

And in his comments over ‘Allama al-Tabataba`i’s translation of *thar Allah* as ‘*blood of Allah*’ Shaykh Rukhshad, a former student of ‘Allama says:

منظور اين است كه خداوند متعال خود خونبهاي امام حسين – عليه السلام – مي باشد؛ زيرا در برابر شهادت و فداكاري آن حضرت هيچ نعمتي از نعمتهاي آخرتي جز ديدار پروردگار قرار نمي گرفت.

This implies that Almighty God Himself is the compensatory price of the blood of Imam al-Husayn (AS). This is because in exchange for the Imam’s martyrdom and sacrifice, there was no blessing of the Hereafter other than the vision of God.13

Perhaps the reason why the compensatory price of al-Husayn (AS) is Allah Himself is the Imam’s state of utter dissolution in the Beloved and survival by Him (*al-fana’ fi Allah wa al-baqa’ bihi*)14. As we said earlier, Imam al-Husayn (AS), due to his very exalted station, was a medium of Allah’s works.

Therefore, like the Prophet (S) who is told ***‘you did not throw when you threw, rather it was Allah who threw’*(8:17),** Imam al-Husayn did not fight gallantly when he fought gallantly in the plains of Karbala’ but Allah fought gallantly in the plains of Karbala’. This is because every element of Imam al-Husayn (AS) was for Allah. Hence he can rightly be known as ‘*aynullah* (eye of Allah), *yadullah* (hand of Allah), *lisanullah* (tongue of Allah), *tharullah* (blood of Allah), etc.

Mentioning the lofty station of Imam al-Husayn (AS) and his companions, al-Naraqi in his *Mathnawi-e-Taqdis* says:

اين فناي بنده در مولا بُوَد

اين فنا از صد بقا اولي بُوَد

اين عدم باشد رهِ كويِ بقا

فهم آن خواهي برو تا كربلا

This is the dissolution of the servant in his Master
This dissolution is better than a hundred lives
This dissolution is a path towards the alley of survival
*If you would like to know its reality go upto Karbala.*15

Although the compensatory price for the horrendous massacre cannot be paid, the meaning of 'avenging the blood of Imam al-Husayn (AS)', as we shall come to understand later in this *Ziyarat*, would in reality be a struggle to eradicate all those enemies who are openly against a Divine government being established, where the laws of Allah are executed and the religion is practised in the best possible manner, so that an environment for human perfection is facilitated for every human being.

يَا ثَارَ اللهِ

O one who has been killed for the sake of Allah

Thar has also been translated as *qatil* (the one who is killed). And when Allah is annexed to the word *thar*, it confers the meaning *qatilullah* (the one killed for Allah or in His way). The expression *qatilu Allah* has come in different *ziyarat* related to Imam al-Husayn (AS). For example in a *Ziyarat* taught by Imam al-Sadiq (AS) we address the Imam (AS) saying:

أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا قَتِيلَ اللّهِ وَابْنَ قَتِيلِهِ أَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللّهِ وَابْنَ ثَارِهِ

Peace be unto you O martyr, the son of a martyr, peace be unto you, O blood of Allah, the son of the blood of Allah...16

Observe that the phrase '*thar Allah wabna tharih*' has also come in this *Ziyarat*. Does it mean therefore that *thar Allah* has a different meaning from *qatil Allah*? Obviously in this place it is possible. However we can also take *thar Allah* as an emphasis of *qatil Allah*. In our case, i.e. in Ziyarat 'Ashura', however, it is possible that this phrase would like to confer the meaning of both the phrases depicted in the above quotation. And Allah is All-Knowing.

وَابْنَ ثَارِه

And the offspring of the blood of Allah

This phrase talks about Imam 'Ali (AS) also occupying the exalted station of *thar Allah*. Perhaps it would like us to know that Imam al-Husayn (AS) being the product (*ibn*) of a *thar Allah* inherited the same appellation from his father.

1. Muhammad Husayn Rukhshad, Dar Mahzare ‘Allameye Tabataba`i, p. 177
2. Habibullah Kashani, Sharhu Ziyarat ‘Ashura`, p. 45
3. Sayyid Mahdi Mir Baqiri, Sabr-e-Jamil Sayr o Suluk ba ‘Ashura`, pp. 75-76
4. Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, v.1, p. 216
5. Al-Bahrani, Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v.3, p. 528
6. Al-Mashhadi, al-Mazar, p. 579
7. Habibullah Kashani, Sharhu Ziyarat ‘Ashura`, p. 45
8. Imam Khumayni, Glosses on the Commentary of Fusus al-Hikam, pp. 281-282
9. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 145
10. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.25, p. 384
11. Shaykh al-Bahrani, Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v.2, p. 662
12. Ayatullah Muhammad Ridha Rabbani, Jalawat-e-Rabbani, v.1, p.305
13. Muhammad Husayn Rukhshad, Dar Mahzare ‘Allameye Tabataba`i, p. 177
14. One should not misconceive such kind of unity being a kind of compositional unity (ittihad) or incarnation (hulul); far is Allah from every kind of deficiency whatsoever. Those endowed with a sharp vision say that such a state is nothing but ‘the unveiling of the reality.’ The utterly submissive human being understands that he is nothing but an action of Allah.
15. Mawla al-Naraqi, Mathnawi-e-Taqdis, p. 273
16. ‘Allama Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.98, p. 151

Chapter 6: The Exceptionally Unique

الْوِتْرَ الْمَوْتُورَ

The Exceptionally Unique

Commentary

الْوِتْرَ الْمَوْتُورَ

The Exceptionally Unique

The original meaning of *al-witr* in the Arabic language is *al-fard* (single) and *man la thaniya lah* (one who does not have a second)’1. And *al-mawtur* which is an adjective of *al-witr* also means the same, but is brought as an emphasis2 in this case. A similar example3 has come in the Qur`an with regard to *hijr* (forbidden) and *mahjur* (prohibited), the latter being an emphasis of the former:

يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلائِكَةَ لا بُشْرَى يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا

On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: **It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited.** ***(25:22)***

And in the well-known supplication of *al-Sabah*, Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (AS) tries to emphasize *al-layl* (the night) with the adjective *al-alyal* (nightly):

صَلِّ اللّهُمَّ عَلَى الدَّلِيلِ إِلَيْكَ فِي اللَّيْلِ الأَلْيَلِ وَالْمَاسِكِ مِنْ أَسْبَابِكَ بِحَبْلِ الشَّرَفِ الأَطوَلِ

Bless, oh Allah, the guide to You in the darkest night, him who, of Thy ropes, clings to the cord of the longest nobility...4

Some scholars opine5 that *al-witr* refers to Imam al-Husayn (AS)'s unique spiritual status which the Holy Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) also possess. Hence, in relation to the rest of the creation an infallible leader (*al-imam al-ma'sum*) the like of Imam al-Husayn (AS) occupies a unique station, and hence is *al-witr al-mawtur*.

Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (AS) describing an Infallible Imam as:

لا يُوجَدُ لَهُ مَثِيلٌ وَلا يَقُومُ لَهُ بَدِيل

He is peerless, no substitute can represent him.6

And in another tradition, Imam al-Ridha (AS) describing the qualities of an infallible Imam, says:

الإِمَامُ وَاحِدُ دَهْرِهِ لا يُدَانِيهِ أَحَدٌ

The Imam is unique in his time. **None can come closer to him in rank.**..7

We may also say that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is a manifestation of the Divine Name *al-Witru*. The Holy Prophet (S), after speaking about the Divine Names, is reported to have said:

إِنّهُ وِتْرٌ، يُحِبُّ الوِتْرَ

Surely He [Allah] is Unique, and He Loves the unique[8]

Expounding the meaning of *Ya Witru* in his commentary on the supplication of *al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, Mulla Hadi Sabzawari says:

(يَا وِتْرُ) ايْ انه الوجود الصرف البسيط الذى لا يخالطه سنخ اخر من ماهية أو مادة أو قوة أو استعداد...

Ya Witru means that He is Sheer Existence, which is Simple [Non-composite], and nothing accompanies it like quiddity (*mahiyya*), matter (*madda*), potentiality (*quwwa*) or potential (*isti'dad*)...[9]

The corollary of being 'sheer existence' (*al-wujud al-sirf*) and 'non-compositeness' (*al-basata*) is uniqueness. This is because it is impossible for a non-composite entity to have a second. Hence, no entity can be likened to His Sacred Essence, nor can any entity be compared to Him.

Imam 'Ali (AS) explaining the meaning of the phrase *Allahu Akbar* says:

يَعْنِيْ اَلْوَاحِدُ الاحَدُ الّذِيْ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ لا يُقَاسُ بِشَيْءٍ...

It means that He is One, Non-composite, the like of which there is nothing, and nothing can be compared to Him...[10]

The Ahl al-Bayt (AS), being the most perfect manifestations of the Divine Names, enjoy such an exalted station near Allah, that none can be compared to them. They undoubtedly are manifestations of the Divine Name *al-Witr*, which means مَنْ لا ثَانِيَ لَهُ (One who does not have a second). In a tradition narrated from Zurara, Imam al-Baqir (AS) says:

وَإِنّا لا نُوصَفُ وَكَيْفَ يُوصَفُ قَوْمٌ رَفَعَ اللّهُ عَنْهُمُ الرّجْسَ وَهُوَ الشّك

And surely we cannot be described, and how can a people be described from whom Allah has removed impurity, which is doubt...[11]

Apparently the doubt that is spoken about in this tradition is related to the realities of the Creator and His creation. The Ahl al-Bayt (AS), due to their lofty spiritual status, transcend the lower levels of conviction and enjoy the level of *haqq al-yaqin* or even higher. Therefore the absence of doubt should not be conjectured to be merely in the conceptual level.

الْوِتْرَ الْمَوْتُورَ

The Exceptionally Unique

Some commentators give the possibility that this verse refers to Imam al-Husayn (AS)’s uniqueness with regard to everyone, including Prophet Muhammad (S) and the other members of his infallible progeny (AS). This however is not because his spiritual station is higher than theirs, for all of them unite in the Muhammadan Light (al-Nur al-Muhammadi). In a conversation with Salman and Jundub, Imam ‘Ali (AS) says:

اَنَا اُحْيِي وَاُمِيْتُ بِاِذْنِ رَبّيْ، اَنَا اُنَبّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ وَمَا تَدّخِرُوْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ بِاِذْنِ رَبّيْ، وَاَنَا عَالِمٌ بِضَمَائِر قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَالأَئِمّة مِنْ اَوْلاَدِيْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ هَذَا إِذَا اَحَبّوْا وَاَرَادُوْا لاَنّا كُلّنَا وَاحِدٌ، اَوّلُنَا مُحَمّدٌ وَآخِرُنَا مُحَمّدٌ وَاَوْسَطنَا مُحَمّدٌ وَكُلّنَا مُحَمّدٌ فَلاَتُفَرّقُوْا بَيْنَنَا...

I revive the dead, and make the living ones die by my Lord’s permission; I can inform you about what you eat and what you store in your homes by my Lord’s permission; and I know what is hidden in your hearts; and the Imams from my progeny (AS) can [also] know this and do the aforesaid if they desired and wanted, because all of us are one**: the first among us is Muhammad, the middle one among us is Muhammad, the last among us is Muhammad, and all of us are Muhammad; therefore do not differentiate between us**.12

The reason, as some great scholars like the late ‘Allama al-Tabataba`i13 and Ayatullah Sa’adat Parwar (may Allah elevate their noble spirits) expound14, why Imam al-Husayn (AS) occupies a unique station, is his utilization of the greater opportunity to manifest his perfect qualities by carrying out his great movement and sacrificing everything he had for the sake of the Only Beloved. The Holy Qur`an says that for everyone are stations according to what they did:

وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجَاتٌ مِّمّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لا يُظْلَمُونَ

And for all are degrees according to what they did, and that He may pay them back fully their deeds and they shall not be wronged. (46:19)

If the other Imams (AS) faced the same conditions that Imam al-Husayn (AS) had encountered, they too would have done what he did. The opportunity however was gifted to Imam al-Husayn (AS) and accordingly he acquired a station that is unparalleled. The following tradition refers to a unique station for Imam al-Husayn (AS):

رُويَ عَنِ الرّسُوْلِ الاعْظَمِ قَالَ لِزَوْجَتِهِ اُمّ سَلَمَة: اَوْحي اللهُ عَزّ وَجَلّ إلَيّ اَنّ لَهُ (اَيْ لِلْحُسَيْنِ) دَرَجَةً لا يَنَالُهَا اَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمَخْلُوْقِيْنَ.

The Most Noble Messenger (S) said to his wife Umm Salama: Allah Revealed unto me that verily he (al-Husayn) has a station which none of the creation would attain.15

And Imam al-Husayn (AS) just before his departure from Madina sees the Prophet (S) in his dream saying to him:

وَ إنّ لَكَ فِي الْجَنّةِ دَرَجَاتٍ لا تَنَالُهَا إلا بِالشّهَادَة

And indeed you have stations in the Paradise that you shall not attain save with martyrdom.16

A Peerless Contingent Being

In his masterpiece *Jalawat-e-Rabbani* Ayatullah Muhammad Ridha Rabbani (may Allah elevate his spirit) believes and tries to establish that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is a peerless contingent being (*mumkin al-wujud bila sharik*). At one place he says: In our book *Tawhid---Rabbani we* have comprehensively explained the meaning of the magnificent name Allah. One of its meanings is, "*aliha al-khalq 'an darki ma'iyyatih wal ihata bikayfiyyatih*" (The creation is baffled in comprehending His whatness and apprehending His howness)17, which the cleaver of the knowledge of the disciplines of the foremost and latter ones and the fifth brilliant star of Divine Leadership and Guardianship, Hadhrat Imam al-Baqir (AS) has mentioned. Imam al-Baqir (AS) has said that Allah is that God before Whose Essence and Attributes the intellects of the entire creation are bewildered, confounded and mystified.

Sa'di, the Persian poet says:

جهان متفق بر الهیتش

فرو مانده در کنه ماهیتش.

The entire creation is unanimous in his Godhood
Unable to apprehend the Essence of His Being

Thereafter Rabbani says that Imam al-Husayn (AS), who is a manifestation of the Name Allah, likewise, confounds the intellects and overcomes the human beings with perplexity and amazement.

فيك يا أعجوبة الكون غدا الفكر كليلاً. أنت حيّرت ذوي اللب وبلبلت العقولا.

O the marvel of existence, the intellect is exhausted in You; You confounded people of insight and confused the intellects

اين حسين كيست كه عالم همه ديوانه اوست

اين چه شمعي است كه جانها همه پروانه اوست

Who is this Husayn, that the entire world is mad after him; What candle is this, that all the souls are its moth(s)?

Imam Husayn (AS) not only puzzled and astounded the human world and realm of humanity, but also made the most exalted angels and the residents of the Divine throne as well as the entire chain of the sacred intellects, astonished at his display of intense love and self-sacrifice in the path of the Eternal and Infinite Beloved.18

الْوتْرَ الْمَوْتُورَ

The martyr, whose near ones have been killed, but their blood have not been avenged for

Lexicologists like al-Turayhi in his *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, have defined the word *mawtur* as one whose near one has been unjustly killed but his blood has not been avenged for as yet19. And since he is *mawtur*, he necessarily is the *tha'ir* (avenger of the blood) as well. Muhammad bin Muslima in the battle of Khaybar employs a similar expression when he tells the Holy Prophet (S):

أَنَا الْمَوْتُوْرُ الثّائِرُ

I am one whose kin has been unjustly killed but his blood not yet avenged, and I am the avenger.20

The word *witr* also signifies ‘the blood that has been spilled unjustly’21. Therefore when we address Imam al-Husayn (AS) as *al-witr al-mawtur* we mean he is the martyr whose near ones and companions were unjustly killed, but their blood has not been avenged for. Hence he is the avenger of their blood.

Some commentators opine that if we consider the Imam (AS) to be the one who would avenge the blood of his near ones, then that would transpire during his return to this world (*raj’a*). With regard to *raj’a*, Hamran narrates from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS):

إِنّ أَوّلَ مَنْ يَرْجِعُ لَجَارُكُمُ الْحُسَيْنُ فَيَمْلِكُ حَتّى تَقَعَ حَاجِبَاهُ عَلَى عَيْنَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ

Indeed the first one to return is your refuge al-Husayn (AS), who will rule [for so many years] until his eyebrows would hang over his eyes, out of old age.22

الْوِتْرَ الْمَوْتُورَ

The Alone who was Rendered Solitary

Sometimes the word *witr* is translated as ‘alone’, whereas the word *mawtur* as ‘one whose relation is slain, and so is separated from him and rendered solitary’.23 Imam al-Husayn (AS) was rendered solitary after he lost his near ones and noble companions and stood alone to fight against the forces of evil.

Some analysts of this radiant *Ziyarat* believe that the enemies of Islam right from the time of the Holy Prophet (S) planned how to isolate and make people be indifferent of the household of the Holy Prophet (S). The word *al-witr* can also allude to this situation that the Imam (AS) experienced. Therefore he was the lonely one, whose relation was slain and who was rendered solitary.

We must understand that the Imam (AS), due to his sublime rank was even lonelier than his companions and family members in the plains of Karbala. The station of Imamate is unique and has no parallel. In this sense he was not only from the strangers (*ghuraba’*) like his companions, but also *gharib al-ghuraba’* (the stranger of the strangers). In a *Ziyarat* narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (AS) we address Imam al-Husayn (AS) as follows:

السّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا غَرِيبَ الْغُرَبَاءِ

Peace be unto you, o stranger of the strangers.24

In this state of intense *ghurba*, the enemies did not spare the lives of his noble family members and companions, and rendered him solitary and alone. It is in these moments that he cried from the depths of his heart:

هَلْ مِنْ نَاصِرٍ يَنْـصُرُ الذُّرِّيَّةَ الأطهَار، هَلْ مِنْ مُجْيْرٍ لأَبْـنَاءِ الْبَتُوْل، هَــلْ مِنْ ذَابٍّ يَذُبٌّ عَنْ حَرَمِ الرَّسُوْل ؟

Is there any helper to help the immaculate progeny? Is there any protector for the children of al-Batul (AS)? Is there any defender to guard the sanctuary of the Messenger of Allah?

Perhaps Imam al-Husayn (AS) summed up his message to his lovers in these short, but very meaningful expressions. The call was made to ‘the future’ and every receptive heart can hear it every moment. Imam al-Husayn (AS) was the epitome of Islam, and his call was the call for the emancipation of Islam. If we are receptive enough to hear his call, then every step of ours must be geared towards assiting Islam. If we struggle to eradicate sin and try to perfect ourselves as well as others and revive Islam, then we do respond to his call. Otherwise we should not be surprised if we also rank among those who left him alone. May Allah protect us from being among those who leave him alone.

الْوِتْرَ الْمَوْتُورَ

The Alone and Deprived

Sometimes the word *al-mawtur* is employed to mean ‘one who is deprived’ (*al-manqus*). The following tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) is translated taking this meaning into consideration:

الْمَوْتُورُ أَهْلُهُ وَمَالُهُ مَنْ ضَيّعَ صَلاَةَ الْعَصْرِ

One who is deprived of his family and wealth is one who wastes the prayer of ‘Asr25

Therefore if we take the word *witr* to mean ‘alone’, the phrase would mean ‘the alone who was deprived of his hometown, family and wealth’.

1. Sayyid Husayn al-Hamadani, Sharh al-Asma’ al-Husna, p.143
2. This variable has been discussed by great scholars like al-Naraqi in his Mushkilat al-Akhbar (p. 301) and al-Shubbar in his Masabih al-Anwar (p. 341). ‘Allama al-Tabataba`i also translated al-witr al-mawtur as ‘the unique one’ (Rukhshad, Dar Mahzar-e-’Allameye Tabataba’i, p. 184)

3. Other examples that have come in Arabic literature are: bardun barid, shi’run sha’ir, etc.
4. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 84, p. 339
5. I heard this opinion from Ayatullah Ansari Shirazi, from whom I would study the 9th volume of the magnum opus al-Asfar of Mulla Sadra.
6. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 25, pp. 169-170
7. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 201
8. ‘Allama al-Tabataba`i, al-Mizan, v.8, p. 359
9. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, Sharh al-Asma’ al-Husna, p. 722
10. Shaykh al-Saduq, ‘Ilal al-Shara’i`, v.2, p. 320
11. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.2, p. 182
12. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.26, p.6
13. Muhammad Husayn Rukhshad, Dar Mahzare ‘Allameye Tabataba’i, p. 184
14. Ayatullah Sa’adat Parwar, Furugh-e-Shahadat, p.40
15. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 44, p.225
16. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 58, p.182
17. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.3, p. 222
18. Ayatullah Muhammad Ridha Rabbani, Jalawat-e-Rabbani, v.1, pp. 278-279.
19. Shaykh al-Turayhi, Majma’ al-Bahrayn, v.4, p. 463
20. Al-Zubaydi, Taj al-’Arus, v.7, p. 582
21. Mirza Tehrani, Shifa’al-Sudur, p. 165
22. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.53, p.43
23. Al-Zubaydi, Taj al-’Arus, v. 7, p.583
24. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.98, p.230
25. ‘Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.80, p.28

Chapter 7: Peace be unto you and unto the spirits who descended in your courtyard

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلى الأَرْوَاحِ الَّتِى حَلَّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ

Peace be unto you and unto the spirits who descended in your courtyard

Commentary

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلى الأَرْوَاحِ

Peace be unto you and unto the spirits...

In this verse not only do we declare that Imam al-Husayn (AS) is in the state of *salam*, but also bear witness that his noble companions who sacrificed their lives for Allah and attained the great station of martyrdom, also enjoy the state of peace and protection from calamities. And if we take the verse to be invocative, then we also pray for higher states of *salam* for them.

وَعَلىَ الارْوَاح

And unto the spirits (*arwah*)

The word a*rwah* in the above phrase is the plural of *ruh*. And the word *ruh* (spirit) comes from the word *rih* (wind)1. *Ruh* has the quality of *rih*, which moves (*mutaharrik*) and makes things move (*muharrik*). The *ruh* likewise moves and makes the body move. In a tradition narrated in *al-Kafi*, Imam al-Sadiq (AS) tells Muhammad bin Muslim:

إِنّ الرّوْحَ مُتَحَرّكٌ كالرّيْحِ وَإِنّمَا سُمِّيَ رُوْحًا لأَنّهُ اشْتُقّ اِسْمُهُ مِنَ الرّيْح...

Indeed *ruh* (spirit) is in motion like *rih* (lit. wind), and ***it was named ruh because its name was gotten from al-rih...***2

In fact the entire universe, constantly moves and travels towards Allah, for the Holy Qur`an explicitly tells us that every entity does *tasbih*, which, according to authoritative lexicographers like Raghib al-Isfahani, fundamentally means:

اَلْمَرّ السّرِيْعُ فِيْ عِبَادَةِ اللهِ

"...to travel swiftly in the path of Divine worship."3

Almighty Allah says:

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السّماواتُ السّبْعُ وَالأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فيهنّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلاّ يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلكِنْ لا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبيحَهُمْ إِنّهُ كانَ حَليماً غَفُورا

The seven heavens glorify Him, and the earth [too], and whoever is in them. There is not a thing but that it glorifies Him with praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Indeed He is all-forbearing, all-forgiving. (17:44)

Spirit- A Higher Level of The Body

Some of us conjecture that the human being is “composed”- in the physical sense- of a body and a spirit, and that the spirit comes down to, and settles in the body as a separate thing. This stereotype is incorrect, for the human being is a unit of different levels of reality, the spirit being one of them. The spirit is a higher reality of the very body, and the body serves as a lower manifestation of the spirit. Observe the following verse of the Qur`an which talks about how the human spirit is blown:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلاَلَةٍ مِنْ طِيْنٍ. ثُمّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطفَةً فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَكِيْنٍ. ثُمّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللهُ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِيْنَ

And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place, Then We made the seed a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh,* then We made it another creation, *so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators. (23:12-14)

Here Almighty Allah explicitly tells us that it is the very body that He creates in another form: *thumma ansha’nahu khalqan akhara* (then we made ***it*** another creation). In this verse the third person pronoun “*hu*” refers to the material body. In other words, Allah perfects the very body and brings it to a higher state.

The great philosopher and mystic, Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, in his poetical masterpiece *al-Manzhumah* says:

اَلنّفْسُ فِي الْحُدُوْثِ جِسْمَانِيّةٌ

وَفِي الْبَقَا تَكُوْنُ رُوْحَانِيّـــــــــــة

The soul in its origination is material,
*but in its survival is spiritual.*4

Perhaps the first person to expound this body-spirit relation in a logical manner was Sadr al-Muta’allihin. Al-Kharrazi5 writes:

Mulla Sadra believes that soul is created corporeally. That is, there exists at first corporeal

soulless matter. Then, under certain conditions, soul comes into being gradually through matter and its substantial motion. When the fetus settles in its place it starts its evolution on the strength of trans–substantial motion. The fetus first takes a natural mineral shape.

Then, because of further evolution, it takes a vegetative form. At this stage, the corporeal matter is mature enough to take on perception; but as long as it is devoid of sense under the influence of environment, there exists no room for soul therein. After having found vegetative form within the womb, and been influenced both by external factors, and their stimulants, the corporeal matter passively takes on sense, and then the earliest form of perception takes place. Thus, the first manifestation of soul occurs. Here it could be said that soul is created out of corporeal matter...6

There is a tradition from Imam ‘Ali (AS) worthy of contemplation:

مَا أَضْمَرَ أَحَدٌ شَيْئًا اِلاّ ظَهَرَ فِيْ فَلَتَاتِ لِسَانِهِ وَصَفَحَاتِ وَجْهِهِ

No one hides anything save that it appears in the lapses of his tongue and the cheeks of his face.7

This shows a unity between the outer side of the human being which is his physical structure and his inner side which is the spirit. The physical can only reveal what is hidden of the spiritual if it is united with the latter.

وَعَلىَ الارْوَاحِ

And unto the spirits (*al-arwah*)

Some commentators of this sacred *Ziyarat* have given the possibility that the *arwah* mentioned in this verse refers to the angels who live around the radiant *rawdha* of Imam al-Husayn (AS). Explaining the reality of angels, Shaykh al-Tabrasi in his *Tafsir Majma’ al-Bayan* says:

وَالْمَلاَئِكةُ رُوْحَانِيُّوْنَ خُلِقُوْا مِنَ الرِّيْحِ فِي قَوْلِ بَعْضِهِمْ، وَمِن النُّوْرِ فِيْ قَوْلِ الْحَسَنِ، لا يَتَنَاسَلُوْنَ وَلا يَطعَمُوْنَ وَلا يَشْرَبُوْنَ.

And angels are spiritual entities (*ruhaniyyun*). They were created from *al-rih (the wind)* according to some, and from light (*al-nur*) according to al-Hasan, they neither mate, not eat, nor drink.8

We should note however that words like *al-rih* and *al-nur* must not quickly transport us to their material extensions. Words, as has been established in its own place, have been

coined for the spirits of their meanings. Therefore these terms have a subtler meaning, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this work. One should however at least understand that they do not necessarily refer to the wind that we can feel, or the physical light that we can vision.

According to authoritative scholars like Mir Damad and Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, *al-ruhaniyyun* (the spiritual entities) are the highest of the classes of the angels. In his *Sharh al-Asma'* Sabzawari says:

...فَالأَعْلى طبَقَةً اَلّذِيْنَ طعَامُهُمْ التّسْبِيْحُ وَشَرَابُهُم التّقْدِيْسُ اَلرُّوْحَانِيُّوْنَ....

...The angels of the highest level, whose food is glorification (*al-tasbih*) and whose drink is sanctification (*al-taqdis*), are the *ruhaniyyun*...9

There are ample traditions that explicitly mention the existence of so many angels in the proximity and neighborhood of the grave of Imam al-Husayn (AS). The following is an example:

عَنْ مُحَمّد بْن مَرْوَان، عَنْ أَبِيْ عَبْدِ اللهِ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُوْلُ: زُوْرُوْا الْحُسَيْنَ وَلَوْ كُلَّ سَنَة، فَإِنّ كُلّ مَنْ أَتَاهُ عَارِفًا بِحَقِّهِ غَيْرَ جَاحِدٍ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ عِوَضٌ غَيْرُ الْجَنّةِ، وَرُزِقَ رِزْقًا وَاسِعًا، وَأَتَاهُ اللهُ بِفَرَجٍ عَاجِلٍ، إِنّ اللهَ وَكّلَ بِقَبْرِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ أَرْبَعَةَ آلاف مَلَكٍ كُلُّهُمْ يَبْكُوْنَهُ وَيُشَيّعُوْنَ مَنْ زَارَهُ إِلى أَهْلِهِ، فَإِنْ مَرِضَ عَادُوْهُ، وَإِنْ مَاتَ شَهِدُوا جَنَازَتَهُ بِالاِسْتِغْفَارِ لَهُ وَالتّرَحّمِ عَلَيْهِ

Muhammad bin Marwan is reported to have said: I heard him [Imam al-Sadiq (AS)] say: Visit al-Husayn (AS), even if it is once a year, for whosoever comes to him, with knowledge of his station, and not a non-believer, would not be given other than Paradise, and he would be bestowed with extensive sustenance, and Allah would quickly relieve him (from his problems). **Indeed Allah entrusted four thousand *angels on the grave of al-Husayn***, all of who weep for him. They accompany the visitor until he returns to his family, and if the visitor gets sick they visit him, and if he dies, they witness his bier and seek for his forgiveness and mercy.10

Therefore *salam* can also be expressed for these spirits who accompany the grave of al-Husayn (AS). In another *ziyara* of bidding farewell to Imam al-Husayn (AS) we explicitly send our salams to the angels. Al-Mashhadi in his *al-Mazar* narrates the following *Ziyarat*:

اَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا مَلاَئِكَةَ رَبِّي الْمُقِيْمِيْنَ فِيْ هَذَا الْحَرَمِ

Peace be on you o angels of my Lord, **who inhabit this sanctuary**.11

According to this nondescript, the most probable meaning of *al-arwah* refers to the companions, but there is no harm if we intend the angels too.

الّتِي حَلّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ...

...who descended in your courtyard

The past tense verb حَلّتْ '*hallat*' means نَزَلتْ '*nazalat*' (they came down, or descended). And the word *fina'* in the phrase "*bi fina'ik*" means 'open space in front or at either side of the house' or 'the courtyard'. The above phrase indicates that the spirits of the companions of al-Husayn (AS) enjoy his company and neighborhood after their martyrdom. The implication that the word '*hallat*' gives, as some commentators have stated, is that the station of the companions is lower than that of the Imam (AS), a reality which by now is quite clear to the readers, for the Imam (AS) is in an apex which none can comprehend and fathom.

Outstanding Qualities of the Companions of Imam Al-Husayn (AS)

It would not be without benefit to mention some of the outstanding qualities of the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS), for that would make us understand better their sanctity and elevated spirits:

1.The Best Companions (Khayru Ashab)

The Holy Qur`an says:

لا يَسْتَوي أَصْحَابُ النّار وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

The companions of Hell Fire and the companions of the Paradise are not alike; the companions of the Paradise are the achievers. (59:20)

Imam al-Husayn (AS) is reported to have said about his noble companions:

إِنِيْ لا اَعْلَمُ اَصْحَاباً اَوْفَى، وَلا خَيْراً مِنْ اَصْحَابِيْ

‘Surely I do not know companions more faithful and better than my companions’.12

In one of the radiant *ziyarat*, we address the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) as follows:

السّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا خَيْرَ أَنْصَارٍ...

Peace be unto you O best helpers.

It is important for us to know the literal meaning of *ashab*, so that we can understand the traditions narrated about the *ashab* of lofty personalities like Imam al-Husayn (AS). There has been a tendency among many people to conjecture that *ashab* merely refers to those who physically accompany someone.

For example, those who physically accompanied the Holy Prophet (S) are known as *ashabu Rasulillah* (S). Although such usage of the word is common, it is not always meant. Before we establish our contention, let us consider the meaning of *ashab*: Raghib al-Isfahani in his lexicon of Qur`an under the discussion of the root word صحب *“s h b”* says:

الصاحب الملازم إنسانا كان أو حيوانا أو مكانا أو زمانا ولا فرق بين أن تكون مصاحبته بالبدن وهو الاصل والاكثر أو بالعناية والهمة وعلى هذا قال:

لَئِنْ غِبْتِ عَنْ عَيْنِيْ لَمَا غِبْتِ عَنْ قَلْبِيْ

Al-sahib [pl. *ashab*] is one who accompanies whether a human being, an animal, a place or an age. And it makes no difference whether his company is with his body, which is primarily and mostly the case, or through concern and ambition. And based on this it is said:

If you hide from my eyes
*You cannot hide from my heart.*13

In verse 59:20 quoted in the beginning, we observed that the noun *ashab* is annexed to Paradise and Hell Fire. The literal import of the verse, which also is an established reality, reveals that despite their physical existence in this corporeal world, the *ashab*, depending on their state, either spiritually accompany Paradise or Hell Fire. Therefore the criteria of sharing the company of someone or something is not always physical and material.

A well-known tradition narrated by some Muslims to establish the purity of all those who physically accompanied the Holy Prophet (S) is as follows:

اَصْحَابِيْ كَالنّجُوْمِ بِاَيّهِمْ اِقْتَدَيْتُمْ اِهْتَدَيْتُمْ

My companions are like stars, whosoever among them were you to follow, you will be guided.14

The Holy Qur`an, traditions of the Holy Prophet (S), the intellect as well as history falsifies this tradition if we were to interpret the word *ashab* to merely mean 'whosoever met the Holy Prophet (S) or physically accompanied him'. For the sake of brevity, we would not like to explain this matter here. Interested readers may refer to a host of scholarly books written on this subject, especially sparkling works like the outstanding masterpiece*'Abaqat al-Anwar* of the esteemed Indian scholar Sayyid Mir Hamid al-Husayni al-Hindi.

Weren't the enemies who fought against Imam Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (AS) in the battle of Jamal and Siffin not among those who physically accompanied the Holy Prophet (S)? And what about the battle of Siffin? Can Mu'awiya, who did meet and share the company of the Holy Prophet (S) but fought against the Divinely appointed leader of the time, be considered as a *najm* (a star) through which one can achieve guidance? It is absurd to attribute something like this to the Holy Prophet (S) or misinterpret what he (S) said.

There is another tradition narrated by Shi'i sources however, that is somewhat similar to the abovementioned traditon, but sound and more meaningful: Imam al-Baqir (AS) narrates from the Holy Prophet (S):

مَا وَجَدْتُمْ فِيْ كِتَابِ اللّهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ فَالْعَمَلُ بِهِ لازِمٌ لا عُذْرَ لَكُمْ فِيْ تَرْكِهِ، وَمَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيْ كِتَابِ اللّهِ وَكانَتْ فِيْهِ سُنّةٌ مِنّي لا عُذْرَ لَكُمْ فِيْ تَرْكِ سُنّتِيْ، وَمَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيْهِ سُنّةٌ مِنّيْ فَمَا قَالَ اَصْحَابِيْ فَخُذُوْهُ، فَإِنّمَا مَثَلُ اَصْحَابِيْ فِيْكُمْ كَمَثَلِ النّجُوْمِ، بِاَيّهَا اُخِذَ اهْتُدِيَ فَبِاَيّ اَقَاوِيْلِ اَصْحَابِيْ اَخَذْتُمْ اِهْتَدَيْتُمْ، وَاِخْتِلافُ اَصْحَابِيْ لَكُمْ رَحْمَةٌ، قِيْلَ: يَا رَسُوْلَ اللّهِ مَنْ اَصْحَابُكَ؟ قَالَ: اَهْلُ بَيْتِيْ

It is essential to act according to what you find in the Book of Allah; and you have no excuse to abandon it. Likewise you have no excuse to abandon whatever is not in the Book but there is a tradition about it from me. And when there is no tradition about something from me, then take whatever my *ashab* say.

For surely the example of my *ashab* among you is like the example of stars (*kamathal al-nujum*), from whosoever among them advice is taken, guidance is achieved; therefore whichever statements of my *ashab* you take, you would get guided; and frequenting my *ashab* is a mercy for you. The Holy Prophet (S) was asked: **'O Apostle of Allah, who are your *ashab*? He (S) said: 'My progeny'**.15

Here the meaning of *ashab* is used very aptly because the essence of the human being is in his spirit and not his body. The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) being in the heights of perfection and united in the Muhammadan Spirit, truly accompany the Holy Prophet (S) even if the confines of time and place were to separate them. Hence they really are stars perpetually radiating light.

The aforesaid discussion was to illustrate the meaning of *ashab* when Imam al-Husayn (AS) said:

إِنِيْ لا اَعْلَمُ اَصْحَاباً اَوْفَى وَلا خَيْراً مِنْ اَصْحَابِيْ

‘Surely I do not know companions more faithful and better than my companions’16

Here the Imam (AS) is not merely referring to their physical presence, but also alludes to their spiritual sanctity. In fact their apparent presence in the ranks of Imam al-Husayn (AS) in the plains of Karbala and their physical company depicted nothing but their spiritual company as well. This is because it required exalted spirits to remain steadfast in the ranks of the Imam (AS) despite the knowledge about their ephemeral end.

2. The Most Loyal Companions (al-awfa)

As earlier mentioned, the Imam clearly said:

إِنِيْ لا اَعْلَمُ اَصْحَاباً اَوْفَى وَلا خَيْراً مِنْ اَصْحَابِيْ

‘Surely I do not know ***companions more loyal*** and better than my companions’17

Here the word *awfa* is employed thus showing that they were the most loyal of all companions. Whenever loyalty is talked about, there is always a pledge behind it. Perhaps the best expression of their state is conferred by the following verse of the Qur`an:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنينَ رِجالٌ صَدَقُوا ما عاهَدُوا اللّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضى نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَ ما بَدّلُوا تَبْديلاً

Among the faithful are men* who fulfill what they have pledged to Allah. *Of them are some who have fulfilled their pledge, and of them are some who still wait, and they have not changed in the least. (33:23)

One of the places where the loyalty of the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) was radiantly manifested was on the night of ‘Ashura’ when Imam al-Husayn (AS) said to them that the enemies were after him and that they were free to leave. All of the loyal

companions in unison expressed their loyalty and said that they would never leave the Imam (AS) and were ready to be martyred with him.

3. Intense Lovers of Allah (‘Ushhaq)

The Holy Qur`an says:

...وَالّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّهِ...

...and those who believe are more intense in their love for Allah... (2:165)

It is narrated from Imam al-Baqir (AS):

خَرَجَ عَلِيّ يَسِيْرُ بِالنّاسِ حَتّى إِذَا كانَ بِكرْبَلاءِ عَلىَ مَيْلَيْنِ اَوْ مَيْلٍ تَقَدّمَ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ حَتّى طافَ بِمَكانٍ يُقَالُ لَهَا الْمِقْذَفَانِ فَقَالَ قُتِلَ فِيْهَا مِائَتَا نَبِيّ وَمِائَتَا سِبْط كُلّهُمْ شُهَدَاء وَمَنَاخُ رُكّابٍ وَمَصَارِعُ عُشّاقٍ شُهَدَاء لا يَسْبِقُهُمْ مَنْ كانَ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلا يَلْحَقُهُمْ مَنْ بَعْدَهُمْ

[Imam] ‘Ali (AS) went out with some people until he reached a place one or two miles near Karbala’, whereupon he went forward and circumambulated around a place known as *al-miqdhafan*, and said: ‘This is the place where two hundred Prophets and their grandsons were killed, all of who were martyrs; and it is the halting place of horsemen and the battle ground of intense lovers (*‘ushshaq*) and martyrs, whom neither those who came before them or will come after them can prevail [in status].18

The word عُشَاق *‘ushshaq* that is employed in the above tradition is worthy of consideration. It is the plural of the word *‘ashiq* (passionate lover), which is known to be derived from عَشَقَة *‘ashaqa* a plant that coils around a tree from its roots to its branches, and thus envelops it the way passionate love embraces one’s entire heart19. Ibn ‘Arabi translates *‘ishq* as follows:

ثم العشق وهو التفافه بالقلب مأخوذ من العشقة اللبلابة المشوكة التي تلتف على شجرة العنبة وأمثالها فهو يلتف بقلب المحب حتى يعميه عن النظر إلى غير محبوبه

Then comes *‘ishq* which is when love coils the heart; it is gotten from *al-’ashaqa*, which is

the thorned convolvulus (or bindweed), that, twisting in a spiral, wraps around the grapevine and other similar plants. In this way, blinding love (*'ishq*) wraps around the heart of the lover, blinding him so that he can see no one other than his beloved.20

In the well-known *Ziyarat al-Shuhada'* we address the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) as follows:

اَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَآ أَوْلِيآءَ اللهِ وَأَحِبّآءَهُ

Peace be unto you, O friends and **beloveds of Allah**21

This verse has so much to reveal. The word *ahiba'* is the plural of the word *habib*, which is commonly translated to mean *mahbub* (beloved). However, its linguistic form *fa'il* (فعيل) can confer both the meanings of an active participle (فاعل) and a passive participle (مفعول), which means we can employ the word *habib* either to means 'the lover'22 or 'the beloved' or both. If we only take the common meaning, however, and translate the word *habib* as *mahbub*, the result is the same. This is because whosoever is the beloved of Allah, is necessarily His lover.

The Holy Qur`an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَن يَرْتَدّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزّةٍ عَلَى الْكافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيل اللّهِ وَلاَ يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لآئِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاء وَاللّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

O you who believe! whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people,* He shall love them and they shall love Him, *lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. [5: 54]

Furthermore the linguistic pattern *fa'il* (فعيل) is both a hyperbolic form *(sigha mubaligha*), which gives the connotation of abundance and, an assimilate epithet23 (*sifa mushbiha*), which confers the sense of continuity. Therefore, the companions of the Imam (AS) were abundantly and perpetually in love of Allah.

If we try to study the origin of the word *habib*, we may be able to unravel other noteworthy secrets. Expounding on the etymology of the word *'hubb'* Sayyid al-Jaza'iri in his ethical masterpiece *al-Anwar al-Nu'maniyya* says:

سمّي الحب حبا لوصوله إلى حَبّة القلب التي هي منبع الحياة، وإذا اتصل بها سرى مع الحياة في جميع اجزاء البدن واثبت في كل جزء صورة المحبوب

The infinitive noun '*hubb*' (lit. love) was called *hubb* because it reaches the *habbat al-qalb* (the seed of the heart), which is the source of life. And when it reaches the seed of the heart it penetrates with life to all the parts of the body and leaves the picture of the beloved in every part.24

And the only Master who plants, splits, and makes germinate the seed of love is the *Faliq al-habbi wa al-nawa* ***(the Splitter of the grain and the pit- 6:95*****),** and it is He alone who rears this love and leads it to its perfection, for it is He alone who is *Rabb al-falaq* ***(the Lord of splitting- 113:1).***

Another interesting expression we employ when we address the companions is the following:

اَلسّلاَمُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَصْفِيَاءَ اللهِ وَأَودّاءَهُ

Peace be unto you, O chosen ones of Allah and His **lovers**25

The word *awidda'* is the plural of وَدِيْد *wadid*26 in the linguistic pattern of *fa'il* (فعيل) which, as discussed above, gives the connotations of permanence and abundance. In addition, it also confers the meaning of both the active participle (*fa'il*) and the passive participle (*maf'ul*), which means that there is constant mutual love between the lovers and the Beloved. Also, the origin of the word *wadid* and other words of the same family, is *watad* (nail), which confers the meaning of stable and constant love.

Ha'iri in his *Muqtaniyat al-Durar* says:

وأصل الودّ من الوتد وهو أثبت من المحبّة

...and the origin of *al-wudd* is *al-watad* (nail) and it is more firm than *al-mahabba* (germinal love)...27

And in his *Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan* Haqqi says:

الود أثبت فى أرض القلب من المحبة لاشتقاقه من الوتد

Al-wudd is more firm in the earth of the heart than *al-mahabba*, because it is derived from *al-watad* (nail)...28

Having known that the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) were among the intense lovers of Allah, let us briefly look at the origin of their intense love. What actually makes one a lover for another?

Every sound conscience will agree that knowledge for perfection would reap love and attachment for the same. So long as one is ignorant of another, one cannot develop love for him. It is after acquiring knowledge about the perfect qualities of a certain person that one develops love and attachment for the beloved.

Furthermore, love requires the lover to be naturally inclined to the qualities of the beloved, otherwise the knowledge of the attributes of the beloved would not reap love. If a person, for example, has no inclination towards physical beauty, despite his knowledge of the physically beautiful, he would not develop love for the physically beautiful. It is when the heart naturally loves and appreciates beauty that when the beautiful is beheld, the spark of love is ignited and a raging fire follows.

The noble companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS), having retained their innate nature, were natural lovers of Absolute Perfection (*al-kamal al-mutlaq*) and also enjoyed the *ma'rifa of Almighty Allah,* and that is what made them crave to meet their Only Beloved.

Knowledge of Allah is sometimes classified into two:

• Conceptual & Acquired Knowledge (*al-'ilm al-husuli*)

• Presential & Divinely Endowed Knowledge (*al-'ilm al-hudhuri*)

Conceptual knowledge is very limited and a kind of narration of what is behind the curtain. Presential knowledge, on the contrary, is to lift the curtain from the face of the Beloved29. In clearer terms, it is to beautify oneself with the attributes of the Beloved. Between the conceptual appreciation of the Beloved and lifting the veil of the Beloved there is utter remoteness. It is the presential knowledge of Allah that makes one perpetually an amorous lover. Such a lover manifests the love of the Only Beloved in every move he makes. Expressions like the following reveal how intense was the love that glowed in the hearts of the Imam (AS)'s companions:

وَقَامَ إِلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ يُقَالُ لَهُ زُهَيْر بن اَلْقَيْن اَلْبَجلِي، فَقَالَ : يَا بْنَ رَسُوْل الله، وَدَدْتُ اَنّيْ قُتِلْتُ ثُمّ نُشِرْتُ، ثُمّ قُتِلْتُ ثُمّ نُشِرْتُ، ثُمّ قُتِلْتُ ثُمّ نُشِرْتُ فِيْكَ وَفِي الّذِيْنَ مَعَكَ مِائَةَ قَتْلَة

A man called Zuhayr bin al-Qayn al-Bajli came to the Imam (AS) and said: 'O son of the Apostle of Allah, I wish I would be martyred and then resurrected and again be killed and resurrected, and again be killed and resurrected in your way and in the way of those who are with you, a hundred times.30

All this fervor shows nothing but passionate love for Almighty Allah, for sacrificing oneself

for al-Husayn (AS) who is a manifestation of Allah's Attributes is nothing but to sacrifice oneself for Allah, the Only Beloved.

The following verse of the Holy Qur`an also depicts the reality of which we have so far spoken:

قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (3:31)

We should remember that it is only after embellishing ourselves with the Attributes of Allah, that our actions would be according to what Allah and His messenger wants.

4. Sharp Inner Vision (Kushifa lahum al-Ghita')

The Holy Qur`an says:

لَقَدْ كُنتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطاءكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

Certainly you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp. (50:22)

Ibn 'Amara reports from his father who reports:

قُلْتُ لَهُ اَخْبِرْنِيْ عَنْ اَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَإِقْدَامِهِمْ عَلَى الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ: إِنّهُمْ كُشِفَ لَهُمُ الْغِطآءِ حَتّى رَاَوْا مَنَازِلَهُمْ مِنَ الْجَنّةِ...

I asked Imam al-Sadiq (AS): Tell me about the companions of al-Husayn (AS) and how they would advance to their death, and he said: '**Indeed the curtain was unveiled for them**, until they saw their dwellings in Paradise...31

In one of the *ziyarat*, we address the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) in the following manner:

...أَشْهَدُ لَقَدْ كَشَفَ اللهُ لَكُمُ الْغِطآءَ...

...I bear witness that most surely Allah unveiled for you the curtain...32

Sharp inner vision is attainable by every human being who purifies his spirit. The reason why many of us do not enjoy this kind of vision, is the murkiness of our hearts. Following is a tradition narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) worthy of reflection:

لَوْلا تَكْثِيْرٌ فِيْ كلامِكُمْ وَتَمْرِيْجٌ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ لرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَرَى وَلسَمِعْتُمْ مَا أَسْمَعُ

Was it not for your loquaciousness and confusion in your hearts, you would have surely seen what I see, and you would have surely heard what I hear.33

In fact the faithful human being is required to behold the kernel of the universe. Almighty Allah says:

أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا في مَلَكُوتِ السّماواتِ وَ الأَرْضِ وَما خَلَقَ اللّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَأَنْ عَسى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَديثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Have they not contemplated the dominions of the heavens and the earth, *and whatever things Allah has created, and that maybe their time has already drawn near? So what discourse will they believe after this?! (7:185)*

6. Immersed in God (Rabbaniyyun)

The Holy Qur`an says:

وَلـكِن كُونُواْ رَبّانِيِّينَ

But be godly people...(3:79)

And in one of the salutational recitals we address the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) in the following way:

اَلسّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ ايّهَا الرّبانيّون

Peace be unto you, ***O Rabbaniyyun***...34

This verse talks about the great spiritual status of the noble companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS). *Rabbaniyyun* is the plural of *Rabbani*, which according to some lexicographers like al-Turayhi denotes ‘one who is perfect in both knowledge and action’35 Others translate ‘*Rabbani*’ more accurately and say:

الربّانِي هو المنسوب الى الرّب وزيادة الالف والنون فيه تدل علي المبالغة فِي النسبة فتكون المعنى: من كان شديد الاختصاص بالرب وكثير الاشتغال بعبوديته وعبادته، ويجوز ايضا ان يكون منسوبا الى الرّب بمعناه المصدرى فيدل علي المبالغة فِى تربية الناس وتدبيرهم...

Rabbani رَبّانِيْ is one who is attributed to الربَ‘the Lord’ and the additional ‘*alif*’ and ‘*nun*’ in the word is to denote intensification in attribution, and hence the meaning of the word would be: One who is intensely attributed to the Lord and absorbed in His submission and worship; and the word can also be related to الربّthe Lord in its infinitive)*masdar*) sense, so that it would mean intensity in training the people and controlling their affairs...36

And both the meanings can be true together.

7. Spiritual Sovereignty

The Holy Qur`an says:

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلاَمًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ

We said: O fire! be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim! (21:59)

Jabir narrates from Imam al-Baqir (AS):

قَالَ الْحُسَيْنُ بْن عَلِيّ لاَصْحَابِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُقْتَلَ: إِنّ رَسُوْلَ اللهِ قَالَ: يَا بُنَيّ إِنّكَ سَتُسَاقُ إِلَى الْعِرَاق، وَهِيَ أَرْضٌ قَدْ اِلْتَقَى بِهَا النّبِيُّوْنَ، وَأَوْصِيَاءُ النّبِيّيْنَ، وَهِيَ أَرْضٌ تُدْعى "عَمُوْرَا" وَإِنّكَ تُسْتَشْهَدُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَشْهَدُ مَعَكَ جَمَاعَةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِكَ لا يَجِدُوْنَ أَلمَ مَسّ الْحَدِيْدِ، وَتَلا: قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُوْنِيْ بَرْدًا وَسَلاَمًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيْم تَكُوْنُ الْحَرْبُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَيْهِمْ بَرْدًا وَ سَلاَمًا

Before his martyrdom, Imam al-Husayn bin ‘Ali said to his companions: Indeed the Apostle of Allah (S) said [to me]: O my dear young son, surely you will be led to ‘Iraq; it is a land where Prophets of Allah and Successors of the Prophets have met; It is a land called ‘Amura. And indeed you shall be martyred there together **with a group among your companions who would not sense the pain of the touch of iron**. Then Imam al-Husayn (AS) read the verse***: ‘O Fire, be cool and peaceful for Ibrahim’ (21:59).*** The war will be cool and peaceful on you and them.37

Explaining this situation of the Imam, the grand Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli says:

ووفقا لرواية الامام الباق فإن جنود الحسين يوم عآشوراء لم يكونوا يستشعروا آلام الضرب والطعن و الجراح إلا بما تولده القرصة من ألمٍ... لماذا؟ لأن الروح هي مصدر الألم والفرح. يصوم احدهم فيشعر بوطأة الظمأ و الجوع...و يصوم الآخر فلا نرى فيه إلا النشاط والابتهاج...اليست الظروف الفيزيائية متساوية للاثنين...فلماذا يتعذب الاول و ينطلق الآخر؟! لانّ الروح لدي الثانِي مشدودة الى نقطة بعيدة عن الظروف المادية. و لقد كان ابطال كربلاء من تلك الروح العظيمة المبهورة بالغيب...

According to a tradition from Imam al-Baqir (AS) the army of al-Husayn (AS) did not feel the pain of the blows and wounds on the ‘Ashura’ day save a pinch...why is that? This is because the spirit is the origin of pain and happiness. One of you may fast and feel the pangs of hunger and thirst...whereas another would fast but we would find in him nothing but happiness and high-spiritedness...aren’t the physical conditions similar for both? So why is the first in torment while the second does not feel anything? This is because the spirit of the second is attached to a realm distant from the material conditions. Indeed the gallant warriors of Karbala’ were among those great spirits overcome by the unseen plane of existence.38

8. Worshippers through Awareness (al-’Ubbad)

The Holy Qur`an says:

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاء عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاء بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِم مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الإِنجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى

سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Tawrat and their description in the Injeel; like as seed-produce that puts forth its sprout, then strengthens it, so it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem, delighting the sowers that He may enrage the unbelievers on account of them; Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward. (48:29)

Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus al-Hasani (may Allah elevate his noble spirit) in his well-known *maqtal*, *al-Luhuf 'ala Qatla al-Tufuf* narrates:

وَ بَاتَ الْحُسَيْنُ وَ أَصْحَابُهُ تِلْكَ اللَّيْلَةَ وَ لَهُمْ دَوِيٌّ كَدَوِيِّ النَّحْلِ مَا بَيْنَ رَاكِعٍ وَ سَاجِدٍ وَ قَائِمٍ وَ قَاعِدٍ...

'Al-Husayn and his companions were awake the whole night [of 'Ashura'] and **their environment resembled an area permeated with the sound of the humming of bees**. **[In other words all of them were busy in the remembrance of Allah and the sound of their whisperings permeated the entire environment.] Some were in the state of *ruku'*, others in the state of *sujud*, some standing and others sitting...** 39

And al-Qazwini narrates from the History of *al-A'tham al-Kufi*:

إنه ما نام في تلك الليلة الحسين ولا احد من اصحابه واعوانه إلى الصبح.

Surely that night neither al-Husayn nor anyone of his companions and supporters slept until morning.40

Worship is undoubtedly a merit when it is not reduced to mere actions and recitals. The companions of al-Husayn (AS) were men who worshipped Almighty Allah out of awareness and knowledge. Their appellations such as *ahibba'Allah (Divine lovers)*, *'ushshaq (intense lovers)* and *kushifa lahum al-ghita (the curtains were unveiled for them)*, all demonstrate their knowledge and deep insight. This is because such qualities are essential corollaries of knowledge, without which they carry no meaning. It is such kind of worship that is natural and praiseworthy.

Expression of utter humility near the Absolute Perfect Being can only come about naturally after one realizes whom he is infront of. Such realization is in stages. Sometimes one has conceptual knowledge about the Creator and thus he maintains a degree of humility in prayer, but that cannot be compared to one who has presential knowledge of Allah. It is such knowledge about which Imam ‘Ali (AS) talks in a conversation with a *rabbi*:

عَنْ اَبِي الْحَسَن الْمَوْصَلِي عَنْ اَبِيْ عَبْدِ اللهِ قالَ: جَاءَ حِبْرٌ إِلى اَمِيْر الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ، فَقَالَ: يَا اَمِيْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ هَلْ رَاَيْتَ رَبّكَ حِيْنَ عَبَدْتَهُ؟ قَالَ: فَقَالَ: وَيْلَكْ لَمْ اَكُنْ لأَعْبُدَ رَبّا لَمْ اَرَه، قَالَ: وَكَيْفَ رَاَيْتَهُ؟ قَالَ: وَيْلَكْ لا تُدْرِكُهُ الْعُيُوْنَ فِي مُشَاهَدَةِ الاَبْصَار وَلكِن رَاَتْهُ الْقُلُوْبُ بِحَقَائِقِ الإِيْمَان.

Abu al-Hasan al-Mawsali narrates from Abi ‘Abdillah [al-Sadiq (AS)] who said: A rabbi came to Amir al-Mu’minin (AS), and said: ‘Ya Amir al-Mu’minin, did you see your Lord when you worshipped Him? Imam (AS) said: ‘Woe unto you! Eyes do not comprehend Him in their ocular vision, but hearts see Him through the realities of conviction.41

Worship without knowledge and awareness, on the contrary is insignificant and sometimes dangerous too. Consider the following traditions:

a. Imam ‘Ali (AS) says:

اَلاَ لاَ خَيْرَ فِي عِبَادَةٍ لاَ فِقْهَ فِيْهَا

Indeed there is no good in that worship that is without understanding.42

b. Imam Zayn al-’Abidin (AS) says:

لاَ عِبَادَةَ إِلاّ بِالتّفَقّهِ

There is no worship save with understanding43

c. Imam ‘Ali (AS) says:

سَكّنُوْا فِيْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ مَعْرِفَةَ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ، حَتّى يَنْفَعَكُمْ مَا تُحَرّكُوْنَ مِنَ الْجَوَارِحِ بِعِبَادَةِ مَنْ تَعْرِفُوْنَ.

Settle in your hearts the knowledge of Whom you worship so that the members that you move in worship of Whom you know can benefit you.44

d. Imam ‘Ali (AS) says:

لاَ خَيْرَ فِيْ عِبَادَةٍ لاَ عِلْمَ فِيْهَا

There is no good in that worship which accompanies no knowledge.45

It is interesting to note that the expression ‘They had the humming as the humming of bees’ لَهُمْ دَوِيّ كدَوِيّ النّحْل that has come for the noble companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) has also come with regard to the Khawarij, who were adamant in their ignorant stance and ready to fight against Imam ‘Ali (AS) in the battle of Nahrawan. Jundub bin Zuhayr al-Azdi narrates:

When the Kharijites separated from Imam ‘Ali (AS), he set out to fight against them and we set out with him. I reached their camps, and found that their environment was covered with the sound of the recitation of Qur`an. [The words used in the tradition is *lahum dawiyyun kadawiyy al-nahl* (they had the sound of the humming of bee)]. Among them were those who wore burnoose and had calluses on their foreheads. When I saw that, doubt crept my heart; so I separated myself from them, descended from my horseback, fixed my lance on the ground, and kept my shield, and placed my armor over it.

And I stood in prayer while I cried: “O Allah if fighting against them is according to Your desire, then show me something by which I know that it is the truth; and if it is not according to Your desire, then divert me from the battle. Suddenly Imam ‘Ali came and descended from the horse of the Apostle of Allah, and stood in prayer, and then suddenly a man came and said: ‘They [the Kharijites] have crossed the river. Then another one came and firmly tied his mount, and said: They crossed it and left. Thereafter Amir al-Mu’minin (AS) said: ‘They have not crossed the river, nor will they cross it, and they surely will be killed near it; this has been informed to me by Allah and His Apostle.’

The Imam (AS) [then] said: ‘O Jundub, do you see that hill?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘Surely the Apostle of Allah (upon whom be peace) narrated to me that they would fight near there.’ As for us, we would first send a messenger unto them, who would invite them to the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Prophet, and they would shoot at his face with arrows, and he would be killed. Jundub says: We went towards them and saw them still in their army not yet departed or left. So the Imam (AS) called his men and gathered them, then he came near their ranks saying: ‘Who will take this Qur`an and walk towards these people and call them to the Book of Allah and the Sunna of the Prophet (S)? One who does so, would be killed and attain Paradise. None save a youth from Banu ‘Amir bin Sa’sa’a responded to this call.

The Imam (AS) however, on observing his young age, said: ‘Return to where you stood.’ Then he made the same announcement again, and none save the same youth responded positively to his call. So the Imam (AS) said: ‘Take it [the Qur`an], but mind you that you would be killed.’ So he walked with it unto them until he came to a place where they could hear him. He called them, and they shot at him with arrows, and he returned to us, while his face resembled a porcupine (for he was surrounded with arrows). So ‘Ali (AS) said:

Attack them! So we attacked them. Jundub says: The doubt [that had crept my heart earlier) came out, and I [fought] and slew...'46

Therefore the yardstick to judge the truly worshipful nature of a person is not by the quantity of his worship, but the quality of his worship. The Holy Qur`an says:

الّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ

...Who created death and life that He may try you-- which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. (67:2)

Ample traditions explicitly say that the value of one's worship is according to one's understanding and intellect. Observe the following:

a. The Holy Prophet (S) addressing a people who praised a man [for his worship] said:

كَيْفَ عَقْلُ الرّجُل؟ قَالُوا: يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ نُخْبِرُكَ عَنْ اِجْتِهَادِهِ فِي الْعِبَادَةِ وَاصْنَافِ الْخَيْر، وَتَسْالنَا عَنْ عَقْلِهِ؟ ! فَقَالَ: إنّ الاحْمَقَ يُصِيْبُ بِحُمْقِهِ اعْظَمَ مِنْ فُجُوْر الْفَاجِر، وَإنّمَا يُرْتَفَعُ الْعِبَادُ غَدًا فِي الدّرَجَاتِ وَيَنَالُوْنَ الزّلْفَى مِنْ رَبّهِمْ عَلىَ قَدَر عُقُوْلِهِمْ.

How is the man's intellect? They said: O Apostle of Allah, we inform you about his struggle in worship and good actions, and you ask us about his intellect? Thereupon the Prophet (S) said: Indeed an idiot (*ahmaq*) due to his silliness can perform something graver than the crimes of criminals; **and surely the servants [of Allah] would only be elevated tomorrow in stations and reach the proximity of their Lord according to their intellects.**47

b. Muhammad bin Sulayman al-Daylami reports from his father who said:

قُلْتُ لأَبِي عَبْدِ اللّهِ فُلاَنٌ مِنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَدِينِهِ وَفَضْلِهِ فَقَالَ كَيْفَ عَقْلُهُ قُلْتُ لا أَدْري فَقَالَ إنّ التّوَابَ عَلى قَدْر الْعَقْل...

I informed Imam al-Sadiq (AS) about the *'ibada* and religiousness and merits of a certain person. **Thereupon he asked me: how is his intellect/understanding?** I said: I do not know. So he said: 'Surely reward is according to one's intellect/understanding.'48

c. The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

اَلْعِلْمُ إِمَامُ الْعَمَل، وَالْعَمَلُ تَابِعُهُ

Knowledge is the leader of action and the action is its follower.49

Although the Khawarij were well known for their excessive worship and recitation of Qur`an, their ignorance never allowed them to benefit from their worship or recitation. Perhaps the following verse of the Holy Qur`an aptly describes their example:

الّذِينَ ضَلّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا أُولَئِكَ الّذِينَ كفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

Those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of the world, while they suppose they are doing good.' They are the ones who deny the signs of their Lord and the encounter with Him So their works have failed. On the Day of Resurrection We will not set for them any weight. (18:104-105)

They struggled to station themselves in the surface of religion, but were deprived of that too. They had not understood the Holy Qur`an and thus were ready to fight against the very epitome of the Qur`an. When Imam 'Ali (AS) tried to explain to them the deception that had entangled them, they thought they understood religion more than one who was literally chosen by the Holy Prophet (S) as his *wasi* (vicegerent).

So wild had their attitude become that they had the audacity to slaughter a sincere companion of the Holy Prophet (S) who was loyal to his teachings, and slit the womb of his expectant wife. The latter's crime was merely loyalty to Imam 'Ali (AS).

Although this is past history for us, the Khariji trend has remained up to this day. The Wahhabis, due to their identical attitude, can aptly be known as the 'neo-Kharijites'.

What is interesting is that even Westerners have likened the Wahhabis with the Khawarij. For example, Jon Kyl, a Republican Senator from Arizona writes in the *Front Page Magazine*:

Islamic extremism as an ideology is hardly new with the first movement that resembles today's phenomenon, known as the Kharijites, appearing shortly after the birth of Islam in the 7th century.

Later it was expounded on by various Islamic scholars, such as Ibn Taymiya in the 13th century, but it did not become institutionalized until the mid-18th century when the theories promulgated by the radical cleric Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab were accepted and imposed as the state religion of his realm by the founder of the House of Saud. 50

Esposito, in his Islam and Politics writes:

"Religious zeal and military might merged in a religiopolitical movement that waged holy war with a zeal reminiscent of the early Kharijites, viewing all Muslims who resisted as

unbelievers. The tribes of Arabia were subdued and united in the name of Islamic egalitarianism.”51

The apparently worshipful attitude of the Kharijites, both present and past, should not lead one to surmise that worship in great quantity is not praiseworthy. Those who have attained realization would naturally be pulled towards constant worship. They would, in terms of a tradition, be ‘amorous lovers’ of worship. Consider the following tradition:

عن أبي عبد الله قال: قَالَ رَسُوْلُ اللهِ: اَفْضَلُ النّاسِ مَنْ عَشِقَ الْعِبَادَةَ فَعَانَقَهَا وَاَحَبّهَا بِقَلْبِهِ، وَبَاشَرَهَا بِجَسَدِهِ وَتَفَرّغَ لَهَا، فَهُوَ لاَيُبَالِي عَلى مَا اَصْبَحَ مِنَ الدّنْيَا عَلىَ عُسْرٍ اَمْ عَلى يُسْرٍ؟

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) says: The Apostle of Allah (S) said: The best of people is one who intensely loves worship (*‘ashiqa al-’ibada*), embraces it, loves it through his heart, and performs it with his body and occupies himself with it; Thereafter he does not care about the situation he faces in the world, whether it be difficult or easy.52

If we reflect on some historical accounts of the Holy Prophet (S) and his Infallible Progeny (AS) we would come to realize how abundantly they engaged in worship. It was their exalted state that made them constantly absorbed in prayer. It is reported about Hadhrat Zahra’ (AS) that she would stand in prayer so much that her feet would get swollen53. And concerning Imam ‘Ali (AS) Imam al-Sadiq (AS) narrates:

وَلقَدْ دَخَلَ اَبُو جَعْفَرٍ عَلىَ اَبِيْهِ فَإِذَا هُوَ قَدْ بَلَغَ مِنَ الْعِبَادَةِ مَا لَمْ يَبْلُغْهُ اَحَدٌ، وَقَدْ اِصْفَرّ لَوْنُهُ مِنَ السّهْرِ، وَرمضت عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْبُكاءِ، وَدَبّرَتْ جِبْهَتُهُ مِنَ السّجُوْدِ، وَوَرّمَتْ قَدَمَاهُ مِنَ الْقِيَامِ فِيْ الصّلاَةِ. قَالَ: فَقَالَ اَبُو جَعْفَرْ: فَلَمْ اَمْلِكْ حِيْنَ رَاَيْتُهُ بِتِلْكَ الْحَالِ مِنَ الْبُكاءِ فَبَكَيْتُ رَحْمَةً لَهُ، وَإِذَا هُوَ يُفَكّرُ، فَالْتَفَتَ إِلَيّ بَعْدَ هَنِيْئَةٍ مِنْ دُخُوْلِيْ، فَقَالَ: يَا بُنَيّ اَعْطِنِيْ بَعْضَ تِلْكَ الصّحُفِ الّتِيْ فِيْهَا عِبَادَةُ عَلِيّ، فَاَعْطيْتُهُ، فَقَرَاَ فِيْهَا يَسِيْرًا ثُمّ تَرَكَهَا مِنْ يَدِهِ تَضَجّرًا وَقَالَ: مَنْ يَقْوَى عَلىَ عِبَادَةِ عَلِيّ بْنِ اَبِيْ طالِب؟!

Surely Abu Ja’far came to his father, while he had worshipped Allah so much that none would equal him, and due to night vigil his complexion had turned pale; his eyes had become sore out of weeping, and his forehead had sunk in due to a lot of prostration, and his legs became swollen out of standing in prayer. Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: [Seeing this] Abu Ja’far [al-Baqir (AS)] said: I could not control myself from weeping when I saw him in that state; so I wept in mercy for him. And suddenly he lay contemplating. Then after a little

while, he faced me, and said: ‘O my dear little son, give me some of those manuscripts that speak about the worship of ‘Ali (AS); so I gave him, and he read from it a little, and then left it in dissatisfaction and said: ‘Who can worship like ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (AS)’?54

These and many other incidents show how absorbed were the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) in the worship of Allah. Their worship, however, was out of insight and knowledge of the worship and the Worshipped One. So absorbed were they, that when an arrow is removed from the feet of Imam ‘Ali while he is in prayer, he does not sense any pain whatsoever.

In conclusion, it should be realized that the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) were worshippers who worshipped Allah as a natural outcome of their knowledge and vision. If such worship is done constantly and in abundance, it is highly recommended and praiseworthy. But if it is performed without knowledge, it has very little or no value at all.

9. Strangers (Ghuraba’)

The Holy Qur`an says:

رجَالٌ لا تُلْهيهمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْر اللّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصّلاَةِ وَإِيتَاء الزّكاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالأَبْصَارُ

Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of poor-rate; they fear a day in which the hearts and eyes shall turn about. (Holy Qur`an, 24:37)

The Holy Prophet (S) was once asked about *ghuraba’* (strangers in the real sense of the word), and he (S) said:

اَلّذِيْنَ يُحْيُوْنَ مَا اَمَاتَ النَاسُ مِنْ سُنّتِيْ

They are those who will revive what the people ruined from my Sunna.55

Sacrificing themselves for the revival of religion, the companions of Imam al-Husayn (AS) steadfastly stood against the enemies. Earlier Imam al-Husayn (AS) had permitted them to leave if they wished to, but they never dared to even think of deserting him. Among the rest of the Muslims, they were truly the *ghuraba’* whose stations others never appreciated.

Imam al-Husayn (AS), however, was even more *gharib* then them, for he occupied a station that even his companions never comprehended. It is therefore correct to call him *Gharib al-ghuraba’* (The stranger among the strangers (his companions)). In one of the salutational recitals we address Imam al-Husayn (AS) as follows:

اَلسّلاَمُ عَلىَ خَامِسِ اَصْحَابِ اَهْلِ الْكِسَاءِ، اَلسّلاَمُ عَلى غَرِيْبِ

الْغُرَبَاء...

Peace be unto you O the fifth member of the people of the cloak, Peace be unto you, **O stranger of the strangers**...56

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2. Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 133
3. Al-Isfahani, Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur`an, p. 392
4. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, Sharh al-Man³uma, v.5, p. 113
5. Kamal Kharrazi, Mulla Sadra's Idea of Soul-Body Relation and its Consquences in Psychology, http://www.mullasadra.org/New_Site/English/Paper%20Bank/Anthropology/kam... [13]
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8. Shaykh al-al-Tabrasi, Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, v.1, p. 190
9. Mulla Hadi Sabzawari, Sharh al-Asma' al-Husna, v.2, p. 51
10. Ibn Qulawayh, Kamil al-Ziyarat, pp. 175-176
11. Al-Mashhadi, Al-Mazar, p. 426
12. Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-Irshad, p. 43
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14. Al-Tha'labi, Tafsir al-Tha'labi, v.3, p. 334
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16. Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-Irshad, p. 43
17. Ibid.
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20. Ibn 'Arabi, al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya, v.4, p. 259
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25. Al-Shahid al-Awwal, al-Mazar, p. 129
26. Al-Zubaydi, Taj al-'Arus, v.5, p. 306
27. Ha'iri, Muqtaniyat al-Durar wa Multaqatat al-Thamar, v.12, p. 115
28. Haqqi, Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan, v.10, p. 393
29. In more accurate terms, the Beloved has no veil. We are full of veils. We must therefore struggle to eradicate the veils from our side so that we can vision the face of the Only Beloved.
30. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.44, p. 316
31. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.44, p.297
32. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v. 45, p.70
33. 'Allama al-Tabataba`i, Tafsir al-Mizan, v.5, p. 270
34. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.4, p. 574
35. Al-Turayhi, Tafsir Gharib al-Qur`an, p. 100
36. Ayatullah Sayyid Mahmud Taleqani, Partuwi az Qur`an, v.5, p. 185
37. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi, al-Khara'ij wa al-Jarayih, v.2, p. 848
38. Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli, Thawrat al-'Ishq al-Ilahi, p. 232
39. Sayyid Radhi al-Din bin Tawus, al-Luhuf 'ala Qatla al-Tufuf, p.91

40. Al-Imam al-Husayn wa Ashabuhu, v.1, p. 264
41. Al-'Amili, al-Fusul al-Muhimma fi Usul al-A'imma, v.1, p.180
42. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.1, p. 36
43. Shaykh al-Rayshahri, Mizan al-Hikma, v.3, p. 1798
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. al-Rawandi, al-Khara'ij, v.2, p.755
47. Ibn Shu'ba al-Bahrani, Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 54
48. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, v.1, p. 11
49. Shaykh al-Rayshahri, Mizan al-Hikma, v.3, p. 2035
50. Jon Kyl, Terrorism: Growing Wahhabi Influence in the United States, http://www.FrontPageMagazine.com [14], July 3, 2003
51. Esposito, Islam and Politics, page 36.
52. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.2, p. 83
53. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.43, p.84
54. 'Allama al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, v.46, p.75
55. Al-Azhari, Mu'jam Tahdhib al-Lugha, v.3, p. 2646
56. Al-Mashhadi, al-Mazar, p. 497

Chapter 8: Upon you all I invoke the peace of Allah forever, as long as I live and the night and day subsist

عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي جَمِيعًا سَلَامُ اللّهِ أَبَدا

مَا بَقِيتُ وَبَقِيَ اللّيْلُ وَالنّهَارُ

Upon you all I invoke the peace of Allah forever, as long as I live and the night and day subsist

Commentary

عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي جَمِيعًا سَلَامُ اللّهِ

Upon you all I invoke the peace of Allah

In this phrase the predicate *‘alaykum...* (upon you...) is brought before the subject ‘*Salamullah*’, thus conferring the meaning of restriction (*hasr*)1. In simple words, the *za’ir* is trying to say, “*Only upon you all I invoke* the peace of Allah...”. This means that it is only for the likes of Imam al-Husayn (AS) and his noble companions that the *za’ir* invokes *salam*. In other words, they represent those who are worthy of such invocation.

The preposition *‘ala* ,(على) as we came to know earlier, confers the meaning of encompassment. Hence we are in reality praying for Allah’s peace to *encompass* and *envelop* Imam al-Husayn (AS) and his loyal companions.

This sentence is a nominal sentence (*jumla ismiyya*) too, which means that our invocation is perpetual and permanent. A nominal sentence confers the connotation of continuity (*al-dawam*).

عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي

Upon you, I invoke...

In the phrase *minni* (from me) the first person pronoun ياء *ya’* is attached to the preposition مِنْ *min* implying that the *za’ir* is the one who invokes the *salam* of Allah for the *mazur* (the visited one).

عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي جَمِيعًا

Upon you all I invoke...

The word *jami’an* (altogether) is a circumstantial expression (*hal*)2 for the second person plural pronoun “*kum*” in عَلَيْكُمْ *‘alaykum* (upon you). Hence the meaning is ‘Upon you *altogether* I invoke...’. Some commentators have also given the probability of another variable. They say that since a believer is a group in himself3, the word *jami’an* is not a circumstantial expression for the second person plural pronoun *kum* (you all) but rather for the first person4 singular pronoun *ya’* affixed to the preposition *min*. It is as if the *za’ir* says, “Upon you I invoke *with all the elements of my being,* the peace of Allah*...*”

عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي جَمِيعا سَلامُ اللّهِ

Upon you all I invoke the peace of Allah

Annexing the name Allah to *salam* either means that we are invoking a higher level of peace from Allah or the Absolute Peace that belongs to Allah.

Another intricacy worthy of consideration is that the Name Allah being the all-

comprehensive name (*al-ism al-jami'*) of God, when annexed to *salam* implies that we are seeking *salam* (protection and freedom from imperfection) in all the perfect attributes of Imam al-Husayn and his loyal companions, who are manifestations of the all-comprehensive name Allah.

أَبَدا مَا بَقِيتُ وَبَقِيَ اللّيْلُ وَالنّهَارُ

…forever, so long as I live and the night and day subsist.

Here the *za'ir* implicitly tries to say that he would always remain steadfast in his love and devotion for Imam al-Husayn (AS). He says that his invocation of *salam* for the Imam (AS) and his loyal companions is perpetual. It does not matter whether he is alive in this material world or not. Expressing this kind of statement is in reality declaring one's firm and perpetual stance of loyalty to Imam al-Husayn (AS). This, therefore, presumes the *za'ir's* solidified unwavering resolution.

Shaykh Mufid (may Allah elevate his status) narrates a tradition in the seventeenth assembly of his work *al-Amali* that may enlighten us more about the meaning of having an unwavering resolution of attachment and devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (AS):

Abu Muhammad, brother of Yunus b. Ya'qub narrates from his brother Yunus, who said:

كُنْتُ بِالْمَدِيْنَةِ فَاسْتَقْبَلَنِيْ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمّدٍ فِي بَعْضِ أَزقّتِهَا فَقَالَ اِذْهَبْ يَا يُوْنُسُ فَإنّ بِالْبَابِ رَجُلاً مِنّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ قَالَ فَجِئْتُ إِلىَ الْبَابِ فَإذا عِيْسَى بْنِ عَبْدِ اللهِ جَالِسٌ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ مَنْ أَنْتَ قَالَ أَنَا رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ قُمْ قَالَ فَلَمْ يَكُنْ بِأَسْرَعِ مِنْ أَنْ أَقْبَلَ أَبُوْ عَبْدِ اللهِ عَلىَ حِمَارٍ فَدَخَلَ عَلىَ الْحِمَارِ الدّارَ ثُمّ اِلْتَفَتَ إِلَيْنَا فَقَالَ اُدْخُلا ثُمّ قَالَ يَا يُوْنُسُ أَحْسَبُ أَنّكَ أَنْكرْتَ قَوْلِيْ لَكَ إِنّ عِيْسَى بْنِ عَبْدِ اللهِ مِنّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ قَالَ قُلْتُ إِيْ وَاللهِ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ لأَنّ عِيْسَى بْنِ عَبْدِ اللهِ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ قُمْ فَكَيْفَ يَكُوْنُ مِنْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ قَالَ يَا يُوْنُسُ عِيْسَى بْنِ عَبْدِ اللهِ رَجُلٌ مِنّا حَيّا وَ هُوَ مِنّا مَيّتًا

I was at Madina, when Ja'far bin Muhammad (AS) met me in one of its lanes. He said: "O Yunus, go to the door, for a person from us the Ahl al-Bayt is at the door." He said: "I went towards the door and found '«sa bin 'Abdillah sitting there. So, I said: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am from Qum." He said: "No sooner than he had said that, Abu 'Abdillah appeared on a donkey and he entered the house riding the donkey. Then attending to us, he said: "Come through." Then he said: "O Yunus, I believe you were not convinced when I

said that «sa' bin 'Abdillah is from us, Ahl al-Bayt?" I said: "It is so, may I be your ransom. For 'Isa bin 'Abdillah is from people of Qum, how can he be one of you Ahl al-Bayt?" He said: **"O Yunus, 'Isa bin 'Abdillah is from us as long as he lives, and he shall be from us after he has died**."[5]

1. One of the grammatical rules of the Arabic language is that if the predicate (khabar) of a sentence is brought before its subject (mubtada'), it confers the meanings that the 'predicate' is exclusively for the subject.
2. Mawla HabibulLah al-Kashani, Sharhu Ziyarat 'Ashura`, p. 52
3. This refers to a well-known tradition that says 'a beliver is a congregation in himself.'
4. Mawla HabibulLah al-Kashani, Sharhu Ziyarat 'Ashura`, p. 52
5. Shaykh Mufid, Al-Amali, 17th Assembly, p. 140.

Chapter 9: O Aba 'Abdillah…

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ لَقَدْ عَظُمَتِ الرّزِيّةُ وَجَلّتْ وَعَظُمَتِ الْمُصِيبَةُ بِكَ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ الإِسْلامِ وَجَلّتْ وَعَظُمَتْ مُصِيبَتُكَ فِي السّمَاوَاتِ عَلَى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ السّمَاوَاتِ

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

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ...

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*.

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ لَقَدْ عَظُمَتِ الرّزِيّةُ

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...).

لَقَدْ عَظُمَتِ الرّزِيّةُ

By Allah, the loss is great.

The letter '*lam*' لَ) (in لَقَدْ *laqad* is employed for taking an oath. And since the particle قَدْ '*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*' (رَزِيّة) is the word *razi'a* (رَزِيْئَة) with a *hamza* (ء) 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:

إِنّ الرّزِيّةَ كُلّ الرّزِيّة مَا حَالَ بَيْنَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ صَلّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلّمَ وَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ...

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

The verb رَزَءَ *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:

مَا رَزِئْتُهُ بِالْكسْر مَا نَقَصْتُهُ

Ma razi'tuhu means I have not lessened5

Therefore *laqad '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 Ahl 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:

فَكُلّمَا عَظُمَ قَدْرُ الشّيْءِ الْمُتَنَافَس فِيهِ عَظُمَتِ الرّزِيّةُ لِفَقْدِه

...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):

اِنّ يَوْمَ الْحُسَيْنِ اَفْرَحَ جُفُوْنَنَا وَاَسْبَلَ دُمُوْعَنَا وَاَذَلّ عَزِيْزَنَا، بِاَرْضِ كرْبٍ وَبَلاءٍ، وَاَوْرَثَتْنَا الْكرْبُ وَالْبَلاءُ اِلى يَوْمِ الانْقِضَاءِ، فَعَلى مِثْلِ الْحُسَيْنِ فَلْيَبْكِ الْبَاكُوْنَ، فَاِنّ الْبُكاءَ عَلَيْهِ يَحُط الذّنُوْبَ الْعِظَامَ

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:

فَلَئِنْ اَخّرَتْنِي الدُّهُوُرُ،وَعَاقَنِيْ عَنْ نَصْرِكَ الْمَقْدُوْرُ،وَلَمْ اَكُنْ لِمَنْ حَارَبَكَ مُحَارِبًا، وَلِمَنْ نَصَبَ لَكَ الْعَدَاوَةَ مُنَاصِبًا، فَلأَنْدُبَنّكَ صَبَاحًا وَمَسَاءً، وَلاَبْكِيَنّ عَلَيْكَ بَدَلَ الدّمُوْعِ دَمًا، حَسْرَةً عَلَيْكَ وَتَأسُّفًا عَلَى مَا دَهَاكَ وَتَلَهُّفًا، حَتّى اَمُوْتَ بِلَوْعَةِ الْمُصَابِ وَغُصّةِ الاكْتِيَابِ

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

لَقَدْ عَظُمَتِ الرّزِيّةُ

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 كانَ فِيْنَا بَاذِلاً مُهْجَتَهُ، مُوَطنًا عَلى لِقَاءِ اللهِ نَفْسَهُ فَلْيَرْحَلْ مَعَنَا فَإنّيْ رَاحِلٌ مُصْبِحًا إنْ 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

وَجَلّتْ وَعَظُمَتِ الْمُصِيبَةُ بِكَ عَلَيْنَاوَعَلى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ الإِسْلامِ

...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 جَلّتْ ‘*jallat*’ 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 greatness10. 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:

لا يَوْمَ كَيَوْمِكَ يَا اَبَا عَبْدِ الله

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

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

وَهَذِهِ الرّزِيّةُ الّتِيْ لا مِثْلهَا رَزِيّةٌ.

...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):

إِنّ يَوْمَ قُتِلَ الْحُسَيْنُ اَعْظَمُ مُصِيْبَةً مِنْ جَمِيْعِ سَائِرِ الاَيّامِ...

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

وَعَلَى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ الإِسْلامِ

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 attachment14. 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:

وَنَحْنُ مَوَاضِعُ الرّسَالَةِ وَنَحْنُ الدِّيْنُ...

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

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

يَا دَاوُدَ نَحْنُ الصّلاَةُ فِي كِتَابِ اللّهِ عَزّ وَجَلّ وَنَحْنُ الزّكاةُ وَنَحْنُ الصِّيَامُ وَنَحْنُ الْحَجّ وَنَحْنُ الشّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ وَنَحْنُ الْبَلَدُ الْحَرَامُ وَنَحْنُ كعْبَةُ اللّهِ وَنَحْنُ قِبْلَةُ اللّه...

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.

وَجَلّتْ وَعَظُمَتْ مُصِيبَتُكَ فِي السّمَاوَاتِ عَلَى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ السّمَاوَاتِ

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:

وَلَقَدْ بَكتِ السّمَاوَاتُ السّبْعُ وَالأَرَضُونَ لِقَتْلِهِ...

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:

إِنّ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّهِ الْحُسَيْنَ: لَمّا قَضَى بَكتْ عَلَيْهِ السّمَاوَاتُ السّبْعُ وَالأَرَضُونَ السّبْعُ وَ مَا فِيهِنّ وَمَا بَيْنَهُنّ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبُ فِي الْجَنّةِ وَالنّارِ مِنْ خَلْقِ رَبّنَا وَمَا يُرَى وَ مَا لاَ يُرَى

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:

فَما بَكتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السّماءُ وَالأَرْضُ وَما كانُوا مُنْظَرينَ

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:

لَمْ تَبْكِ السّمَاءُ عَلىَ أَحَدٍ مُنْذُ قُتِلَ يَحْيَى بْنِ زَكريّا، حَتّى قُتِلَ الْحُسَيْنُ، فَبَكتْ عَلَيْهِ

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:

مَا بَكتِ السّماءُ عَلىَ أَحَدٍ بَعْدَ يَحْيَى بْنَ زَكريّا، إلاّ عَلىَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيّ، فَإِنّهَا بَكتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِيْنَ يَوْمًا

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.

وَجَلّتْ وَعَظُمَتْ مُصِيبَتُكَ فِي السّمَاوَاتِ عَلى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ السّمَاوَاتِ

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:

وَلقَدْ نَزَلَ إِلى الأَرْضِ مِنَ الْمَلائِكةِ أَرْبَعَةُ آلافٍ لِنَصْرِهِ فَوَجَدُوهُ قَدْ قُتِلَ فَهُمْ عِنْدَ قَبْرِهِ شُعْثٌ غُبْرٌ إِلى أَنْ يَقُومَ الْقَائِمُ فَيَكُونُونَ مِنْ أَنْصَارِهِ وَشِعَارُهُمْ يَا لَثَارَاتِ الْحُسَيْنِ

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-Sadiq (AS) tells a companion called Fudhayl:

مَا لَكُمْ لا تَأْتُونَهُ يَعْنِي قَبْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ فَإِنّ أَرْبَعَةَ آلافِ مَلَكٍ يَبْكُونَ عِنْدَ قَبْرِهِ إِلى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

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 إِلى وُلْدِ الْحُسَيْنِ أَتَانِي مَا لا أَمْلِكُهُ بِمَا أَتَى إِلى أَبِيهِمْ وَآلِهِمْ يَا أَبَا بَصِيرٍ إِنّ فَاطِمَةَ لَتَبْكِيهِ وَتَشْهَقُ...فَلا تَزَالُ الْمَلائِكةُ مُشْفِقِينَ يَبْكُونَ لِبُكائِهَا وَيَدْعُونَ اللّهَ وَيَتَضَرّعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِلى أَنْ قَالَ قُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ إِنّ هَذَا الأَمْرَ عَظِيمٌ قَالَ غَيْرُهُ أَعْظَمُ مِنْهُ مَا لَمْ تَسْمَعْهُ ثُمّ قَالَ يَا بَا بَصِيرٍ أَ مَا تُحِبّ أَنْ تَكُونَ فِيمَنْ يُسْعِدُ فَاطِمَةَ فَبَكَيْتُ حِينَ قَالَهَا فَمَا قَدَرْتُ عَلى الْمَنْطقِ وَمَا قَدَرْتُ عَلى كَلامِي مِنَ الْبُكاءِ.

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 □), 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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