

Section One

أَسْلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، أَسْلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، أَسْلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَنَ
أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَأَبْنِ سَيِّدِ الْوَصِيِّينَ، أَسْلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَنَ فَاطِمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَاءِ
الْعَالَمِينَ

“Peace be upon you O’ Aba ‘Abdillah; Peace be upon you O’ son of the Messenger of Allah; Peace be upon you O’ son of the Commander of the Faithful and the son of the leader of the inheritors (of the Prophet); Peace be upon you O’ son of Fatimah, the leader of the women of the entire Universe.”

One of the etiquettes and traditions which is seen in all civilizations is the act of greeting one another at the time of meeting and departing. As we know, each culture greets in their own specific manner. The manner of those in the “West” is that of shaking hands; the far East cultures greet one another by slightly bending at the waist; yet others would remove their hat or at least tip the rim of the hat to greet another person. One of the traditions of the Arabs was to say “May Allah keep you alive”, however with the dawn of Islam, the greeting, as the Qur’an itself mentions is the saying of “As-Salam Alaikum” or “Peace be upon you”.

The true meaning of “As-Salam Alaikum” is not a mere “Hi”, “Hello”, “How are you” as we are accustomed to using today – it has a much deeper meaning than just a standard greeting. In actuality, there are three meanings for this greeting:

1. As-Salam, as we know, is one of the names of Allah. Thus, when we say “As-Salam Alaikum” we are actually saying that may the trait of Allah (as-Salam or peace and tranquility) be upon you and may He protect you;
2. As-Salam is also in the meaning of submission or surrender. Thus, when we say “As-Salam Alaikum” we are actually saying that we submit to what you would like for us to do (obviously within the limits of

the Shariah.);

3. As-Salam is also in the meaning of protection or safety. Thus in this meaning, when we greet another believer with “As-Salam Alaikum” we are actually guaranteeing our believing brother or sister protection from any evil from ourselves and that we will not do a single thing to harm them – either physically or even spiritually. Not only would we not harm them with our hands, but we will also not cause them grief with our tongue...

Thus when we address Abi ‘Abdillah and say “As-Salamu Alaika Yaa Aba ‘Abdillah” we are saying that: ‘May the peace and tranquillity which Allah bestows upon His creations also be showered upon you. Truly, we submit to your mission and commandments and whatever you ask us to do. In addition, we shall not do a single thing to hurt you – either your physical presence or more importantly, your feelings.

In actuality, we are promising the Imam that we shall not break the laws of Allah (since our Imam grieves when he sees us doing this) nor will we do anything to trample on the sacred goals and objectives which he laid down his life to protect.

Literally, Abillah means the ‘worshipper of Allah’ and the literal meaning of Aba ‘Abdillah is the ‘father of the worshipper of Allah’.

The custom of the Arabs was that if a person possessed a specific characteristic, they would then refer to him as the ‘father’ of that trait. Thus we see that Abu Jahl was known as such not because his son was Jahl (ignorant) or named Jahl, rather it was due to the fact that he best personified ignorance and it can be said that he was the “father (leader)” of ignorance!

Similarly, one who had a strong love and affection for cats would be referred to as Abu Hurairah – not that he is the father of a cat, rather, since he loved and liked to play with cats he developed this title!

Thus, had Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) not risen and sacrificed his life on the plains of Karbala’, today Allah would not have been worshipped as He should be – the Shariah of Muhammad would have been replaced with the Shariah of Yazid and his likes – thus, none of us would have been worthy of the name ‘Abillah’.

With the murder of Imam Husayn, he gave life to the title ‘Abillah’ and ensured that we could worship Allah as He has required us to.

Thus for this reason too, he is known as the ‘father of the worshipper of Allah’. Therefore, any person who is blessed to be able to worship and submit to Allah has been given this blessing through the blood of the 3rd Imam.

It is for this reason that we are told, “Were it not for him (Imam Husayn) no one would have worshipped Allah, and were it not for him, no one would have gain cognizance of Allah.”

In this first line of the Ziyarat we greet the Imam by recalling one of his greatest titles and also by

mentioning his lineage (his father and mother) and his grandfather – thus, we keep alive the mention of these personalities at a time when people want us to forget them and to think of others! We also guarantee these four personalities that we shall not transgress their teachings nor shall we do anything to cause them spiritual harm and grief...

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