

# مشابهت Doubts

Study of Doubts/ Discourse Formation and Response

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The Center for Studying and Answering Doubts (Hawzah 'Ilmiyah)

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## The Gathering of Shiites in a Global Congress

Fulfillment of the Supreme Leader's -50 Year Prediction about the Global Arbaeen Congress



Fifty years ago—when the Arbaeen pilgrimage had not yet taken shape in its current grandeur—on Esfand 24, 1352 SH (corresponding to Safar 20, 1394 AH), Ayatollah Khamenei delivered a comprehensive historical analysis on the significance of the Arbaeen pilgrimage, during a session held at Imam Hassan (May peace be upon him) Mosque in the holy city of Mashhad. Part of his remarks reads as follows:

Do you know that one of the signs of faith is visiting on Arbaeen?... Shiites were a dispersed group; a community that did not live in one place. They were in Medina, in Kufa, in Basra, in Ahvaz, in Qom, in Khorasan, and in various corners of the lands. Yet, there was one spirit flowing through this scattered body, one thread tying all the beads of this prayer strand together. What was that thread? The thread of obedience and devotion to the center of Shia leadership—the Imam. All those threads connected there. It was a heart that commanded all the limbs.

Thus, Shiism was an organized and structured entity. Two individuals might not have known each other's circumstances, but there were those who knew the situation of all. Their obedience and loyalty were deliberate; their outcries were by instruction; their silence was according to plan—everything was calculated. The

only flaw in their work was that they seldom met each other. The people of one city, the Shiites of a certain region, of course saw one another; but what was needed for the Shiites of the Imams' era was a global congress. This global congress was appointed; its time was appointed as well. They said: at this designated time, anyone who can, should attend. That time is the day of Arbaeen, and the venue is the land of Karbala.

Because the spirit of Shiism is the spirit of Karbala and Ashura. Within the body of the Shiite, the pulse of the day of Ashura is evident. Wherever the Shiite may be, they follow in the footsteps of Hussain's Ashura. And what you see—these pulses manifesting throughout Shiism—originate from that pure shrine; they are flames

risen from that sacred, pure soul and from that noble soil, which have reached hearts and spirits, turning people into burning bullets, striking at the heart of the enemy...

Arbaeen means the meeting place of Shiites in an international and global congress, held in a land that is itself full of memories; a land of remembrance—majestic memories, profound memories; the land of martyrs and the graves of those who were slain in the path of God. Here, the followers of Shiism gather and renew their bonds of brotherhood and pledge loyalty. This is Arbaeen...

**Arbaeen means the meeting place of Shiites in an international and global congress, held in a land imbued with memories—memorable land; magnificent memories; profound memories—the land of martyrs and the graves of those who were slain in the path of God. Here, the followers of Shiism gather to strengthen their bonds of brotherhood and renew their pledge of loyalty. This is Arbaeen...**



# I don't deserve the pilgrimage to Arbāeen!

I couldn't take another step. The heat had worn me down. But when I caught sight of the sign for Karbala along the way, everything changed. The thought of reaching Karbala gave me renewed strength. The hope and feeling of arrival washed away my exhaustion. Yet somehow, my feet felt ashamed to walk into Karbala with shoes. It was as if I felt embarrassed before the family of the Imam. It was around six thirty in the evening. I took off my shoes and entered the courtyard. I saw some pilgrims had tied their shoes to their bags. I remembered Hurr—the one who, when he wanted to apologize to Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) for all his wrongdoings, filled his boots with dust and stones, lowered his head, and walked toward his master. That's exactly how I feel now. I stared at my shoes hanging from my neck and said: I hope they accept me too...

In the midst of that crowd, I made my way to the shrine and beneath the dome of the master, I began to shed tears and offer prayers. After the visitation, I decided to sit in one of the rooms facing the shrine, to gaze from afar at the dome, courtyard, and sanctuary of my master, so that an image as vast as the sky would be etched in my mind. I noticed one of the rooms had a table and chair, and no one was inside. I entered and sat down. Then, one by one, pilgrims started coming into the room. What was going on? They looked at me and assumed I had placed the table there to answer their religious questions and doubts. They began asking me about religious and legal issues, and I held my ground. I assumed the posture of a learned cleric and said, "Please, go ahead."

One of the pilgrims, a young Iranian man, said: "Haj Agha! Before coming here, I called my friend and said, 'This year, get ready—we're going to walk together for Arbāeen.' With a choked voice, he replied, 'I don't have the honor to go this year. Last year, I promised Imam that after Arbāeen, I wouldn't go back to sin. But I don't know why I slipped again. That's why I'm ashamed to go. If my eyes fall on the dome of the Imam, what will I say to him? You're going to Karbala—give my salam to him and tell him I'm sorry I couldn't keep my promise. I feel like this walk and mourning don't benefit me at all. I'll never change.'"

I was really saddened that my friend wouldn't be with me this year. I looked at his curly hair and said: "Sometimes, our view of something is based on the expectations we have from it. But the important question is whether that expectation is valid and appropriate. You see, your expectation from mourning is the cultivation of insight—and if mourning doesn't bring that insight, then it's not useful at all."

He said, "Sorry, Haj! I'm not that sophisticated—can you tone it down a bit so that I can understand?"

I replied, "Look, maybe you've heard about the reward for composing poetry for Imam Hussein—how much merit there is if someone, through poetry, moves themselves and

others to tears. According to the narrations, transformation is what matters; a person may not reach a profound level of understanding in that transformation, but even then, their soul establishes a connection with the Imam. That, in itself, is an important matter.

Sometimes we have an expectation from mourning rituals that doesn't align with what's been passed down to us, not that it's

against it, but it's an excessive expectation. Of course, we say since this emotional state has emerged, make use of this atmosphere to gain insight as well, because the knowledge gained in such a state penetrates hearts deeply.

But it's not the case that if you don't reach a specific kind of insight during a gathering, then it's useless. We have to adjust our expectations about this matter."

The highest value in Islam is ma'rifah (spiritual insight), but it's not the case that if insight—as we mentally define it—isn't attained, then mourning rituals are useless. It's narrated that a young man, yet still committed sins, from the Ansar prayed with the Prophet. When this was brought to the Prophet's attention, he replied, "Wait patiently; the very prayer you see as ineffective is what will save him."

From a religious perspective, mourning will certainly have its impact—even if that effect hasn't yet appeared. But we must adjust our expectations. Our ears are attuned to the words of the Ahl al-Bayt, who instructed us to uphold mourning.

If someone attends mourning ceremonies for years but hasn't visibly become a better person, we shouldn't analyze the situation and conclude, "So it must not have benefitted him!" Maybe that person simply needs more time. After all, do we have knowledge of their inner state?

It's possible they sin—but has it truly left no impression on them? Maybe they used to sin without concern, but now they feel disturbed deep within. There's a narration from Imam al-Sadiq that says: regret after sin is better than self-congratulation after a righteous deed.

For instance, someone might sin after attending a mourning ceremony, yet afterward feel deeply regretful, thinking to themselves: "What have I done?"

Pardon me, dear friend! The call to prayers is being heard. If you'd like, we can continue the discussion after the prayers.

**I promised Imam that after Arbāeen, I wouldn't go back to sin. But I don't know why I slipped again. That's why I'm ashamed to go. If my eyes fall on the dome of the Imam, what will I say to him? You're going to Karbala—give my salam to him.**



# Step by step, toward the shrine

Authentic Islamic narrations highlight the emphasis placed by the religious leaders on keeping alive the memory of the sacrifices made by the martyrs of Karbala.<sup>1</sup> The narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt regarding the virtues of visiting Imam Hussein (peace be upon him), whether from afar or nearby, carry the weight of spiritual consensus. A narration attributed to Imam al-Askari (peace be upon him) describes the visitation on Arbāeen as one of the marks of recognizing the true followers of the Shi'a.

The pilgrimage to Karbala with the intention of visiting Imam Hussein (peace be upon him) is not confined to the Shi'a; many Sunnis and followers of other divine faiths also take part in this ceremony. In what follows, we will highlight one of the effects of the Arbāeen pilgrimage.

## A symbolic exodus to a friend of God

Careful attention to the form and meaning of religious rites reveals that a large portion of religious practices carry symbolic significance. The movements performed during prayer, the rituals of Hajj, and many other religious behaviors are symbolic acts, signifying humility and obedience to the Almighty God. Spiritual walking along a designated path also exists in some non-Islamic religions and sects.<sup>2</sup> In the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt, knowing the Almighty God is dependent on knowing the Imam.<sup>3</sup> Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) is the manifestation of God's mercy, guidance, and deliverance.<sup>4</sup> The Imam is the caliph of God on earth and the guardian of the believers.<sup>5</sup> Presence before the Imam, pledging allegiance to him, and declaring loyalty to his ideals and values are conditions for reaching the realm of faith and divine guardianship. One who walks from Najaf to Karbala, concluding the journey at the shrine of the Imam and declaring allegiance to him, is in fact presenting a symbolic migration from self toward God. Visiting the friends of God—whether during their earthly life or after their passing—holds no essential difference.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the movement toward the shrine of Imam Husayn is a symbolic reconstruction of migration from self-centeredness

toward God-centeredness and placing the hand of allegiance and obedience into the hand of God—just as the migration from Mecca to Medina during the time of the Prophet was regarded as a migration toward God.<sup>7</sup> Through symbolic

**Therefore, the movement toward the shrine of Imam Husayn is a symbolic reconstruction of migration from self-centeredness toward God-centeredness and placing the hand of allegiance and obedience into the hand of God. Through symbolic behavior, the pilgrim inwardly forms a migration toward the divine friend, which deeply influences all dimensions and realms of their being making them ready for voluntary obedience and sacrifice in the path of God, under the command of God's representative.**

behavior, the pilgrim inwardly forms a migration toward the divine friend, which deeply influences all dimensions and realms of their being—intellectual, emotional, and behavioral—making them ready for voluntary obedience and sacrifice in the path of God, under the command of God's representative. If the Husayni pilgrim, during their walk toward the shrine of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him), pays attention to this aspect of their action, their journey and the bodily hardships they endure will spiritually prepare them to enter the domain of divine guardianship. It directs their thought, emotion, and action toward obedience to God and reception of perfect divine guidance—radiating from the light of Imam Husayn's being.

■ Ahmadrida Dardashti

## Footnotes:

1. See: Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Ibn Quluyyah, Kamil al-Ziyarat, 628563/<https://www.hamshahronline.ir/news>.
2. Saduq, Ilal al-Shara'i, Vol. 1, p. 9.
3. Muhaddith Qummi, Safinat al-Bihar, Vol. 1, p. 257 and Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 36, p. 205.
4. Kulayni, al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 200, H. 1.
5. Majlisi, Jame' al-Akhbar, Vol. 1, p. 20.
6. An-Nisa, verse 100: Sha'iri

## Doubts

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# The Tale of Love and Longing

"From Ashura to Arbaeen" is the title of a 153-page work compiled by Hamidreza Jafari, presenting the insights of five seminary scholars from the School of Doubt Studies under the same title, published in 1401 SH (2022 CE).

The contributors include: Ustad Mohsen Faqihi on "A Jurisprudential Review of the Arbaeen Walk" Ustad Seyyed Sajad Izdehi, on "Arbaeen, Identity Formation, and Social Capital" Ustad Hossein Soozanchi, on "Requirements and Boundaries in Mourning Ritual Pathology" Ustad Zabihollah Na'imian, on "Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) as a Role Model for Today's Society" Ustad Hasan Zia Touhidi, on "Examining Wahhabi Objections to Pilgrimage and Tawassul". This page offers a portion of that written compilation.

## Claim of Innovation in Seeking Blessings from the Graves of the Ahl al-Bayt

**Objection:** In addition to visiting being considered an innovation, kissing the doors, walls, and shrine lattice is also regarded as polytheism and innovation. Why should one kiss wood, iron, and metal?

**Response:** The answer to this objection lies in the fact that the Wahhabis have understood neither the meaning of polytheism nor that of innovation. The philosophy behind kissing is very clear: when a person loves someone, for example, their child, they kiss them, or when they love their parents, they kiss their hands, or their mother's forehead.

Muslims, because of their love and affection for the Prophet, if they had been present during the outward life of the Prophet, would have kissed his hand and anything affiliated with him—even his clothing.

Examples of kissing the Prophet's blessed hand are mentioned in this report:

"The Messenger of God, on a hot summer day, went out toward the city of Batha. He performed ablution and offered the noon and afternoon prayers in shortened form. Then the people rose and, seeking blessing, approached the Prophet. They would take his hands and rub them on their faces. The narrator says: I too took the hand of the Prophet and placed it on my face—hands colder than snow and more fragrant than musk." Now that they no longer have an apparent physical life, in continuity with that love toward the holy figures, when believers enter their shrines, they kiss the walls and doors of the sanctuary. The clarity and cultural normativity of this

act is such that even in Arabic poetry, describing metaphorical love, this practice is referenced.

"I pass by Layla's land and kiss this wall and that wall—not because my heart is captivated by her dwelling, but because of the one who lives within it who has enchanted me."

Although wood and metal abound throughout the world,

Muslims never kiss them in their raw state. But when that same wood or metal becomes part of the shrine of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him), they kiss it. Don't the Wahhabis themselves kiss the cover of the Qur'an? Does this kiss express love for the paper, plastic, or leather of the cover? Of course not. The reason is clear: since the Qur'an resides within, the cover gains sanctity out of reverence for its contents.

Likewise, when Muslims kiss the walls and doors of the shrine, it's not out of love for wood, stone, or metal—but because these elements have become associated with a noble personality, and in their love for him, they express it through these symbols.

Take this example for better understanding: A piece of land, until it is designated as a mosque through endowment, does not carry special rulings. If it becomes impure, there is no obligation to purify it, and a person with a ritual excuse may enter without issue. But from the moment that land is endowed as a mosque, specific rulings apply. If it becomes impure, it must be washed immediately. Though it is the same soil, once it is attributed to God, it is referred to as a mosque—the house of God and a place of worship—and thus gains reverence.

From that point onward, someone with a ritual excuse, like needing to perform a full-body purification, is not permitted to stay there even briefly.

Similarly, wood, doors, walls, and such—once they become associated with the Prophet or one of the noble religious figures from the Ahl al-Bayt—gain reverence through their connection.

Therefore, seeking blessings (tabarruk) and kissing the shrine lattice, walls, or sanctuary of the Prophet and Imams bears no problem and is neither innovation nor polytheism.

**Footnote:**

1. Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 4, p. 188.

2. Tawsiq al-Mas'eel (Imam Khomeini), p. 200, issue 882





# International Capacities of Arbaeen

The capacities of Arbaeen can be examined across various categories. One group includes a range of capacities related to the event of Karbala, Ashura, the personality of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him), and his movement. In reality, Arbaeen is a special occasion for the Islamic world, wherein the spiritual and cultural capacities rooted in Husayni and Ashura heritage ought to be identified.

Arbaeen may be considered the greatest preaching platform in human history—not only because the largest human gathering in a defined time frame takes place during Arbaeen, but also because it features the most diverse assembly of people. Someone might argue even Buddhists in India have managed to gather 10 to 20 million participants. Yet Arbaeen remains unique, as it is truly diverse and universal.

Buddhist ceremonies are purely intra-religious and might even lack participants from other faiths within India itself—they may represent just one religious branch. But if we also include the political-social dimensions and thematic diversity, Arbaeen possesses characteristics that no other human gathering can match. It is regrettable that the Islamic Ummah has not yet succeeded in organizing a Hajj pilgrimage with the capacities and magnitude of Arbaeen. Ideally, no congress in the Islamic world—or even across humanity—should rival Hajj in its grandeur and impact. Yet, various obstacles have hindered the realization of such a vision.

The profound challenge lies in how, in every era, we might recreate the human-building and society-shaping doctrines of Imam Hussain (peace be upon him). Can we speak of a "Hussaini contemporaneity"? That is, can there be an interpretation of Imam Hussain's movement that adapts to each era, or even to every specific time?

What must be done so that this potential becomes a driving force for the fundamental transformation of contemporary humanity?

Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) sought to offer a universal way of life for mankind. His masterpiece was in embodying the totality of monotheism in every dimension of his movement. This form of living is complete and all-encompassing, and it must be conveyed to the world: that Imam Hussain (peace be upon him), along with his intellectual and ethical system, represents a salvific ensemble—a kind of global liberation theology.

The most complete liberation theology in the world, after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Imam Ali (peace be upon him), is found in the movement of Imam Hussain. He liberates: the intellect from misguidance, the soul from base desires, the people from oppressive rulers. The Arbaeen movement is in need of a global and human-centered leadership.

Arbaeen must be liberated from the confines of factions and groups.

Just as the legacy of Imam Ali (AS) allows for the reconstruction of Islamic sects, so too does the event of Ashura. In other words, a new intellectual map of thought schools can be drawn—within both the Islamic world and the broader scope of humanity.

**The Arbaeen Movement Needs Global and Human-Centered Leadership. Arbaeen must be liberated from factional constraints. Just as Islamic sects have been renewed under the legacy of Imam Ali (May peace be upon him), Ashura too enables the reimagining of intellectual schools within Islam—and even across humanity.**

does not matter whether one is Shi'a or non-Shi'a. The Karbala movement is a movement for the salvation of the Islamic world.

Imam Hussain (May peace be upon him) said: I have come to enjoin good upon everyone. This means that he is a commander of good and forbiddance of evil for the Sunni community as well. Therefore, we must say to our fellow Muslims: Dear brothers! We honor a noble personality whose dignity we all uphold. Together, we call him "The Master of the Youth of Paradise." So let us all listen to his words together.

We say that this noble Imam seeks to reform the nation of his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It should never be said that he belongs to us Shia; rather, it is more correct to say that we belong to Imam Hussain (May peace be upon him). He is our shared father. The Prophet (May peace be upon him) said: "I and Ali are the fathers of this nation." They are the spiritual fathers of the entire Islamic ummah. Our Sunni brothers should also embrace this truth.

The movement of Imam Hussain (May peace be upon him) can be a powerful means through which the millions of pilgrims complete the mirror image of the Islamic world.

After recognizing the spiritual capacity of Imam Hussain (May peace be upon him), we must—under the shade of Arbaeen—study the potential of contemporary humanity. We are members of one unified system, one shared body. These pilgrims serve as bridges connecting our cultural discourse to the world.

We must create conditions such that when someone wants to understand what is happening in the Islamic world, they are told: "You must attend this year's Arbaeen pilgrimage to truly witness the pulse of the Muslim world." For during Arbaeen, countless groups from near and far gather, carrying messages and concerns. Each individual who participates in Arbaeen should experience, first and foremost, an encounter with the state of the Islamic world.

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■ Mohammad Ali Mirzaei

# Three Common Doubts About Arbaeen

## Responses to Critiques of the Arbaeen Walk

### Doubts

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#### First Objection: Self-Harm

Visiting the divine saints—especially the Prophet Muhammad and the Immaculate Imams (May peace be upon them)—is regarded as being in their presence during their earthly lives. Among these, the visit of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) has consistently entailed danger, hardship, and fear. Pilgrims have repeatedly been killed, imprisoned, or tortured near his sacred grave, and the burial sites of martyrs have been destroyed. Mentioning such matters is meant to highlight the hardship of visiting Imam Husayn, as insecurity has always pervaded this path. Therefore, in authentic Shia narrations, the reward for visiting him has been equated with multiple accepted pilgrimages of Hajj and 'Umrah.

However, in discussing the issue of self-harm, the concept must first be clarified. Self-Harm refers to harming the body, compromising health, or causing injury—actions that are explicitly prohibited and deemed forbidden in Islamic law.

There is no documented evidence of individuals suffering harm due to the Arba'een pilgrimage walk. Merely walking does not constitute harm. In fact, many participants recount this journey as the most enriching experience of their lives. Physical and psychological ailments have, in some cases, found healing along this path.

From a medical standpoint, walking is widely regarded as the best form of exercise, never forbidden by medical science. It has been shown to alleviate numerous illnesses. While Islam strictly prohibits self-harm, the Arba'een walk doesn't fall into that category—it is voluntary, inspired by love and sincerity, not obligation or coercion.

The biographies of the Ahl al-Bayt reflect a similar ethos. Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (peace be upon them) are reported to have walked to the Ka'bah twenty-five times. Likewise, pious scholars, sages, and faithful residents of Karbala and Najaf maintained this virtuous practice.

Self-harm only applies when one imposes suffering upon oneself to fulfill material gains or private whims—like making wagers involving extreme physical feats. The Arba'een walk shares none of these traits. It is an act of love, chosen freely by those who participate. Every step is taken with devotion, not duress.

#### Second Objection: The mingling of men and women

The mingling of men and women takes on meaning in enclosed environments, while in open and free spaces

where movement occurs, mingling does not apply. Every individual participates in this magnificent gathering alongside their family and womenfolk, with full Islamic hijab and complete modest attire, accompanying their spouse and children. This is not mingling; it is a splendid assembly conducted with adherence to religious guidelines. The entrance to the holy shrine for women is separate, and the shared pathway does not signify mingling nor constitute mingling in one place.

This form of mingling is not considered religiously prohibited, and the esteemed jurists of both past and present have not issued rulings forbidding it. Mingling that arises from crowding—such as during Hajj ceremonies, Friday prayers, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayers, and walking pilgrimages to visit Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him), or the congestion within the holy shrine—is not inherently forbidden. Rather, jurists emphasize avoiding mingling that leads to unlawful conduct. The Arbaeen walk pursues a legitimate goal and a sacred destination, and it remains pure and free from non-religious improprieties.

#### Third Objection: High financial costs of the pilgrimage and the needs of the poor

Throughout the year, millions of overseas trips from Iran are taken for leisure, incurring exorbitant expenses. Even domestic travel within the country involves considerable costs. Yet, some raise objections to the Arbaeen pilgrimage—despite being undertaken with minimal expense and on foot—offering various pretexts. In contrast, this majestic gathering brings profound spiritual, political, and international benefits to the Islamic world and Muslims. It neutralizes many of the conspiracies and schemes devised by the enemies of Islam and, in the age of media, conveys a powerful message to all of humanity. A significant portion of the Arbaeen pilgrimage is entirely grassroots and spontaneous, with no government budget allocated for it. In fact, during this massive event, citizens aid the government, and the governments of Iraq and Iran compensate for their shortcomings through contributions collected from the public and benefactors. Moreover, the event generates economic blessings for the people of Iran, Iraq, and neighboring countries. Within this unparalleled religious gathering in history, no portion of the resources allocated for the poor is spent. On the contrary, through careful planning, coordination by officials of both nations, and intelligent leadership, this enormous gathering proves beneficial and promising even for the impoverished.

■ Amir Ali Hasanloo

# Arbaeen:

## A Ray of Light in Today's Dark World

The astonishing, impassioned, and majestic phenomenon of the Arbaeen pilgrimage—an embodiment of Islamic and Shiite strength on the world stage—has become a thorn in the side of Islam's adversaries, nullifying their widespread media campaigns and Islamophobic strategies. Initially, Western media attempted to diminish its impact through a blackout and deliberate silence; yet when that failed, they resorted to tactics of sowing discord between Iranians and Iraqis, spreading rumors and doubts in an effort to defame the movement. But they overlooked a fundamental truth: twigs and thorns cannot withstand the force of a raging flood.

The Arbaeen discourse possesses an immense, civilization-shaping capacity, rooted in the essence of freedom-seeking and resistance against oppression and domination. This identity is inseparable from Arbaeen itself. Reducing it to a mere religious ritual—whether out of naiveté or hostility—is a misstep that leads away from its true nature.

How can the pursuit of justice and defiance against domination be separated from this majestic movement? The struggle against oppression and injustice lies at its very core. The mindset that, under the guise of safeguarding tradition, seeks to depoliticize mourning gatherings and religious ceremonies—thereby ignoring the true essence of Imam Husayn's uprising—consciously or unconsciously echoes a secular worldview and pours water into the mill of Islam's adversaries. Their aim is to strip Arbaeen of its political dimension, yet they fail to recognize that politics is intricately woven into the fabric of Islam and cannot be untangled. Such efforts will ultimately lead nowhere.

Sometimes, the Islamic Republic is accused of turning Arbaeen into a tool for its governance—while in reality, a movement of this magnitude cannot be engineered by any government. It is the fruit of the sacred blood of the Master of Martyrs and the lamentations of Lady Zaynab (May peace be upon her), a ray of light piercing today's dark world. It heralds a resurgence of values and spirituality across the globe and foretells the demise of injustice and tyranny, and the end of secular hegemony.

Although Arbaeen originates within the Shiite tradition, it does not belong exclusively to Shiites. Like Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) and his uprising, it transcends sectarian and religious boundaries, appealing directly to human nature and conscience. His call of "Hayhat minna al-dhilla" —far beyond denominational identity—targets the awakened and free human soul, regardless of religion or creed. As he proclaimed himself: God has not ordained humiliation for us, nor for the Prophet, nor for the believers. Pure lineages, noble honor, and families of virtue and dignity never permit obedience to the ignoble to be preferred over honorable death."<sup>1</sup>

The participation of other Islamic sects and even non-Muslims in the magnificent Arbaeen gathering demonstrates its trans-religious dimensions and manifests unity among faiths and denominations. The central point of contention in the Arbaeen discourse is opposition to oppression and tyranny—precisely what unsettles hegemonic powers. Just as Imam Husayn's (May peace be upon him) uprising, its messages and values transcended time and place to reach human nature and conscience, the Arbaeen movement likewise targets humanity beyond religion and sect, seeking to spread this spark of light across the world.

The Supreme Leader beautifully described this grand pilgrimage: Arbaeen has become global and will become even more global. The blood of Husayn ibn Ali (May peace be upon him), even after 1400 years, is still boiling—growing fresher and more alive day by day. This is the same message of Ashura, issued from the throats of Aba Abdillah and Lady Zaynab in the utmost isolation and solitude; today it has enveloped the world—and will continue to do so. Husayn (May peace be upon him) belongs to humanity."

We, as Shiites, are proud to be followers of Imam Husayn; yet Imam Husayn does not belong to us alone. All Islamic sects—Shi'a and Sunni alike—gather under his banner. Even those who do not subscribe to Islam take part in this great pilgrimage, and this bond will, God willing, continue. It is a great sign that the Almighty is revealing.

In an age where enemies of Islam and the Muslim Ummah employ every tool—wealth, politics, weapons—against it, God the Almighty grants sudden and immense grandeur to the Arbaeen march; He manifests it with such majesty. This is a mighty divine sign—a testament to God's will to aid the Muslim Ummah. It shows that the divine will of God is aligned with the triumph of the Ummah.<sup>2</sup>

### Subtitle

Sometimes, the Islamic Republic is criticized for allegedly turning Arbaeen into an instrument of government. Yet such critics overlook a fundamental truth: a movement of this magnitude cannot be orchestrated by any government. This vast procession has flourished by the blessing of the pure blood of the Master of Martyrs and the cries of Lady Zaynab al-Kubra (May peace be upon her).

Ali Mojtaba Zadeh

### Footnote

1. Al-'Allāma al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 45; p. 8

2. Statements by the Supreme Leader of the Iranian Revolution during a meeting with a group of Iraqi Mawkib leaders. September 18, 2019

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# Arbaeen of Husayn

Question: What day is Arbaeen? Is the visitation (ziyarah) on Arbaeen and the pilgrimage for it considered recommended?

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Arbaeen of Husayn marks the fortieth day after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him), who was martyred on the 10th of Muharram, 61 AH. Shia communities commemorate this day annually with mourning and remembrance. The visitation to Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) on Arbaeen is highly encouraged.

Some historical sources state that on Arbaeen day, the captives of Karbala visited Imam Husayn's grave. This view has been critiqued by certain historians and scholars, including Martyr Motaahhari. Historical records also mention that Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari, a companion of the Prophet, visited Imam Husayn's grave on the first Arbaeen. As such, Arbaeen holds special significance for Shi'a Muslims, and mourning as well as pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) have become part of Shi'a religious practices. There are also narrations regarding the virtue and spiritual reward of walking to visit the shrine of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him).

### The Return of the Captives of Karbala on the First of Arbaeen

The return of the Karbala captives on the first Arbaeen, and their presence at the grave of Imam Husayn, remains a point of scholarly debate among Shi'a researchers in recent centuries. While some cast doubt on this occurrence, others have worked to refute such skepticism and affirm the historical truth of the first Arbaeen.

Many classical sources state that on this day—the 20th of Safar—the severed head of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) was reunited with his blessed body. Some scholars, like Shaykh Bahae, believe this date marks the arrival of the Imam's family—the caravan of captives—from Damascus to Karbala.

Sayyid Ibn Tawus, later in his life, wrote a critique on this claim. Prominent scholars including 'Allama Majlisi, Mirza Husayn Nuri, Shaykh 'Abbas Qummi, Abu al-Hasan Sha'rani, Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, and Shahid Mutaahhari, are among those who reject the historicity of this account.

On the other hand, Shaykh Tusi and Shaykh Mufid explicitly state in their writings that the Ahl al-Bayt, after captivity, traveled from Damascus to Madinah—not to Karbala.

The deniers of this occurrence argue that, considering Ibn Ziyad kept the captives in Kufa for some time—and factoring in the duration of their stay, the journey to Damascus, the month-long stay there, and the required time for return—it is unlikely that the Ahl al-Bayt (family of Imam Husayn) could have reached either Medina or Karbala by Arbaeen.

Sayyid Muhammad Ali Qadhi Tabatabai, in his book *Investigation into the First Arbaeen of Sayyid al-Shuhada*, argues that the arrival of the captives from Damascus to Karbala on the first Arbaeen is not improbable. Some researchers maintain that, based on cumulative evidence and indicators, it is plausible to accept the entry of the Ahl al-Bayt into Karbala on Arbaeen day, and that their meeting with Jabir ibn Abdullah and his companions, accompanied by mourning rituals, is a credible account.

In response to concerns about travel distance, Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi asserts that if an army of 100,000 could reach Kufa in ten days, then a small caravan reaching Karbala within twelve days poses no issue.

### The Recommendation of Visiting on Arbaeen

Among the traditions of Husayni Arbaeen among Shi'a Muslims is the visitation of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) on that day. The most important source regarding Arbaeen is a narration from Imam Hasan al-Askari (May peace be upon him), in which he identifies five signs of a believer—one of which is the visitation on Arbaeen. This hadith is the only independent textual evidence that, apart from the supplicatory texts which include the Arbaeen ziyarah, explicitly refers to Imam Husayn's Arbaeen and its commemoration.

Shaykh Tusi notes that visiting Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him) on this day is recommended. Another reason for this recommendation stems from a narration by Imam Sadiq (May peace be upon him), wherein he taught the Arbaeen visitation formula to Safwan ibn Mihran Jammal, explicitly emphasizing the significance of Arbaeen.

Allama Majlisi observes that the narrations do not clearly state the rationale behind the recommendation of Arbaeen ziyarah. One additional factor contributing to the sanctity of this day is the reunion of Imam Husayn's blessed head with his body—performed by Imam Sajjad (May peace be upon him)—as well as the return of the other martyrs' heads to their bodies.

### Arbaeen Pilgrimage on Foot

Numerous narrations emphasize the reward and importance of visiting the shrine of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him). In the book *Kamil al-Ziyarat*, many traditions highlight the virtue of undertaking this pilgrimage on foot—although specific mention of walking during Arbaeen itself is not found.

One hadith in the book states: "Whoever walks to visit the grave of Imam Husayn (May peace be upon him), Allah Almighty will record one thousand good deeds for each step he takes, erase one thousand sins, and raise him one thousand ranks."

Walking to visit the shrine during Arbaeen—especially the route from Najaf to Karbala—has been the practice of various religious scholars. Scholars such as Muhaddith Nuri, Sayyid Muhsin Amin Amili, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Gharawi Isfahani, and Mirza Naeeni are among those who personally participated in this ceremony. While some sources speak of a type of walking pilgrimage during the lifetime of the Imams, the more widely accepted view traces the institutionalized practice of this rite to the mid-13th century AH, with Shaykh Murtada Ansari—one of the eminent Shia scholars—regarded as one of its main originators.



## Doubts

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