

الزيارة الاربعين

Ziyārat al-Arba'īn:

**A Renewed Pledge of Loyalty to
Imam Ḥusayn (a)**



Islamic Education Department

22nd August 2024

16th Safar 1446

Introduction

As lovers of Imam Ḥusayn (a) assemble to mourn and visit his grave on the occasion of *Arbaʿīn*, Shīʿī Muslims throughout the world, will recite the *Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn*, one of the well-known *ziyārāt* ('salutations') which they hold in high esteem. The Imāmī Shīʿa continue to recite it, as a natural reflection of their connection to Imam al-Ḥusayn (a), acknowledging his lofty status before Allah (SWT), and will proclaim their love and loyalty to him, recognise the salvific role he played, analyse the causes of atrocities by his oppressors, and disavow how the oppressors treated him. Their tyranny deeply wounded the hearts of the believers and lovers of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), and the memory of his tragedy is renewed every year with expressions of grief and pledges to uphold his godly values, and to oppose oppression everywhere, even in our times.

Authenticity and Legitimacy of Ziyāra

It is well worth our time to ponder on the teachings enshrined in the *ziyārāt* and the profound meanings they contain, as this reflection was recommended to the *zuwwār* when they visited the Grand Marja' (may Allah grant him a long, healthy life). It is worth noting that the Holy Quran sends *salāms* on many holy messengers,

including Prophet Nūḥ,¹ Ibrāhīm,² Mūsā, Hārūn,³ Ilyās,⁴ and in fact on all messengers.⁵ Although, it is noteworthy that the Almighty Lord orders us to send a special *salām* upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw),⁶ which in the narrations reported by both Sunni and Shia books, includes sending *salām* upon his progeny (a) as well.⁷ On the other hand, narrations reported from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (a) which expound the virtues of performing pilgrimage to the grave of al-Imam al-Ḥusayn (a) are so numerous that they reach the level of *tawātur* ('widely and successively narrated'). In other words, there are so many independent reports to this effect that there can be no doubt that this is something that the Imāms (a) taught their followers to do. Therefore, there is no need to study individual chains of narrators to establish this general principle.

A typical tradition would be like the one narrated from Muthannā al-Ḥannāṭ about the spiritual rebirth effect of *ziyāra* that a sincere pilgrim should aspire for, where Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (a) said: "The least reward a pilgrim to the grave of Abū ʿAbdullāh (a) on the banks of the Euphrates, if they recognize his status, sanctity,

¹ The Holy Quran: 37:79.

² The Holy Quran: 37:109.

³ The Holy Quran: 37:120.

⁴ The Holy Quran: 37:130.

⁵ The Holy Quran: 37:181.

⁶ The Holy Quran: 33:56

⁷ See: Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, narration no. 5880.

and authority, will receive is that they will be forgiven for all of their sins, old and new.”⁸ If the pilgrim pledges to diligently follow the godly-purified Ahlul Bayt (a),⁹ their purified lifestyle will influence the pilgrim in developing purified thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Recommendation of Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn by Marājiʿ

The specific recommendation for the Ziyāra of Arbaʿīn is established through a narration with a complete chain of transmission that can be authenticated in more than one way, based on the methodology of Ayatollah Sistani, which is discussed in detail elsewhere. However, there are also several widely accepted jurisprudential principles that can also be invoked to confirm the permissibility of reciting this ziyāra in case some narrations may be deemed weak. Hence, our Grand Marājiʿ (h) opine that it is permissible to recite this ziyāra with the intention of it having originated with the infallible Imāms (a) (*niyyat al-ṣudūr*) themselves and with the aspiration to be generously rewarded by the All-Gracious Lord, based on the

⁸ *Al-Kāfī*, v.4, pg. 582, Hadith 8.

⁹ See: The Holy Quran: 33:33 (*Verily, Allah's Will is to remove away (all kinds of) impurity from you, the people of the Messenger's Household (i.e., the exclusive group under the Cloak) and to purify you with a thorough purification*).

Principle of Evidentiary Leniency for Supererogatory Acts (*al-tasāmuḥ fī adillat al-sunan*).

We quote Grand Ayatollah Zanjānī (h):

"The *ziyāra* of Imam Ḥusayn (a) has been mentioned in numerous traditions, to the extent that some traditions deem it one of the obligatory acts. Some scholars, such as al-ʿAllāma Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī and his father Al-Muḥaddith Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī, leaned towards the view that if one attains the ability to perform his (a) *ziyāra* even once in their life, it is obligatory upon them to do so. As for today, this walk has turned into one of the Islamic symbols and a source for spreading the religion, hence it is an instance of venerating the symbols of Allah (*taʿzīm shaʿāʾri-llāh*)." ¹⁰

This recommendation is supported by the narration of al-Shaykh al-Tusi (r) in his book '*Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*' from Imam Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (a): 'The signs of a believer are five: *ṣalāt al-khamsīn* (offering fifty units of prayers [daily]; i.e. the daily *wājib* and *mustaḥabb* prayers, which total to approximately 50

¹⁰ Official website <http://www.zanjani.ir> – see article:

(بررسی جایگاه پیاده روی اربعین در گفتگو با آیت الله العظمی شبیری زنجانی)

units of prayer)¹¹, the *Ziyāra* of *Arbaʿīn*, wearing a ring on his right hand, prostrating on the dust of the ground, and reciting the *Bismillāh* loudly.¹²

Evidence Recommending *Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn* from Grand Marjaʿ

Ayatollah Sistani (h)

In authenticating a narration, a jurist must look beyond just the chain of reliable transmitters, whereby His Eminence, the Supreme *Marjaʿ* Ayatollah Sistani advocates - amongst other factors - the studying of the environment and social atmosphere (time and place) wherein the reports were issued to better appreciate their meaning. As an example, Ayatollah Sistani (h), explained to one of his senior students the legitimacy of *Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn*, by citing the narrations about the *ziyāra* of Imam Ḥusayn (a) after he was martyred, when the Shias from Kufa, Basra, Yemen, etc. began to visit his holy grave, individually and in groups. But because they faced persecution, they would visit the grave secretly at night, and these

¹¹ Fifty-one units of prayer to be precise; thereat, this seems to be an approximate reference to it, with the main focus of the Imam being to explain that a believer is one who prays the obligatory and *mustahabb* prayers, daily, rather than wanting to explain the exact number, which can be found in other narrations.

¹² *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, v.6, pg. 52. See also: *Iqbāl al-aʿmāl*, pg. 66; *Miṣbāḥ al-zāʿir*, pg. 329; Mashhadī, *al-Mazār al-kabīr*, pg. 352; *al-Kafʿamī*, *Miṣbāḥ*, pg. 570 fn.; *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa*, v.14, pg. 478.

narrations were issued to encourage and mobilize them to visit, despite the threats, so as to keep his revolution and message alive. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the *Ziyārat of Arbaʿīn* as we observe it today. In fact, even if Jabir or Lady Zainab (a) did not visit the holy grave on the fortieth of 61AH, the Shias from nearby cities were already secretly visiting the Imam's holy grave!¹³

Return of the Caravan of released Captives for *Ziyāra* on *Arbaʿīn*, in 61 AH

A source of emulation for *ziyāra* on *Arbaʿīn* would be the visit to Karbala by Imam al-Sajjād (a) and the captives after their release from Damascus. But some argue that the caravan of captives could not have travelled from Karbala to Kufa, then to Damascus and back to Karbala in a mere 40 days after *ʿĀshūrā*. However, the late Shahīd Sayyid Muhammad Ali Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabāʾī cites numerous cases of individuals and caravans who travelled similar or even longer distances in history, in a period shorter than 40 days. Some instances that can be cited to demonstrate that the return of the Holy Caravan on *Arbaʿīn* (20th Safar 61AH) is not far-fetched are as follows:

¹³ See: *Al-Qalam Journal*, issue no. 1, pg. 77-78, *Methodology of Jurists in Authenticating Narrations*, Sayyid Muneer al-Khabbaz. (This proof was communicated to him by Sayyid Sistani (h) in a private gathering during the days of *Arbaʿīn* in November 2016).

- 1) Imam Ḥusayn (a) travelled a distance of 450 km from Madina to Mecca in 5 days. He departed on the 28th of Rajab, 60 AH, and arrived on the 3rd of Shaʿbān, 60 AH.

- 2) He again travelled with his caravan from Mecca to Kufa on the 8th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah 60 AH, covering a distance of approximately 2090 km. During this leg of his journey, he was not travelling at the fastest pace, especially considering that he paused at various intervals engaging in communication with many groups of people on the way. Despite the prolonged journey though, he (a) arrived at Karbala on the 2nd of Muḥarram – a journey of some 24 days. Considering that the distance between Mecca to Karbala is much greater than the distance between Damascus to Karbala (approximately 1100 - 1500 km, using the ancient routes), it would have been possible for the Caravan to return to Karbala by 20th Safar 61 AH, especially taking into account that according to historians, they left on 11th Safar, and a caravan would travel at an average speed of approximately 150-160 km per day, and sometimes they would travel faster.¹⁴ Furthermore, the speed at which they travelled from Damascus to Karbala may have been faster than the speed at which they were brought from Kufa to Damascus. To add, the ill

¹⁴ See: Shaykh Fawzī Āl Sayf, “*The Caravan of Captives in Kufa after Karbala*”, 14th Muḥarram

1442 AH, <https://www.al-saif.net/?act=av&action=view&id=2375>.

Sayyida Sākīna (a), who may have slowed down the Caravan due to her health, was tragically no longer with them. Even regarding Imam al-Sajjād (a), it is not reported that he remained sick till then.

- 3) More importantly, was the reuniting of the holy heads of Sayyid Shuhada (a) and of other martyrs to be buried with their bodies in Karbala once the heads were returned to the captives. This could not have been delayed till the following year.
- 4) The aggrieved family of the Imam (a) also would have sought to have the space and freedom to mourn at the Holy grave, rather than proceed to Madina straight from Damascus, on being released.
- 5) Lastly, they met Jabir bin ‘Abdullah al-Anṣārī (r), who as per reports arrived around *Arbaʿīn* with his companion ‘Aṭīya al-‘Awfī.¹⁵

Walk towards the *Ẓuhūr* of the 12th Imam (a.j.) via the Holy Grave of Imam Ḥusayn (a)!

¹⁵ Shaykh al-Tusi, *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid*, pg. 730.

Congratulations to the pilgrims who have been blessed with the opportunity to join the great *Arbaʿīn* Walk. There are numerous traditions, which recommend walking for *ziyāra*; for instance, the 6th Holy Imam (a) is reported to have said: “O Ḥusayn ibn Thuwayr, whoever leaves his house intending to visit the grave of Ḥusayn ibn Ali (a), if he goes walking, Allah will write a good deed and erase a sin for him for every step he takes, until he arrives at the *Ḥāʾir* (i.e. the grave), whence he will be registered among the virtuous and the felicitous. And when he intends to return home, the Angel will announce:

“Restart afresh your deeds, as all your sins have been pardoned.”¹⁶

The Appearance of the Awaited Savior (aj.) needs preparation by the virtuous servants of Allah¹⁷, who get trained during this Great Walk through the godly virtues and values which they experience, and through which they interact with each other. These noble virtues include generous hospitality, selfless service, communal sharing, savings by the poor to be sacrificed for visitors who may even be non-Muslims, respect and compassion toward all, irrespective of age, colour, creed, social or educational status.

¹⁶ *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p132; *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, v.6 pg. 43, narration no. 89.

¹⁷ See: Holy Quran: 21:105 (*And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the Earth shall (eventually) be inherited by My righteous servants*).

Hence, Imam al-Zamān (aj.) prays for the zuwwār!

We expect the Living Imam (aj.) will be praying for the dear pilgrims, as did the Sixth Holy Imam (a), according to what was reported by Muʿāwiya ibn Wahb, who listened to him as he supplicated secretly to his Lord.

The Imam (a) prayed:

“O He who singled us out for [His] favour, singled us out for successorship (*waṣīyya*), promised us the power to intercede (*shafāʿa*), granted us knowledge of what has passed and what is yet to come, and made peoples’ hearts incline to us, forgive me, my brethren, and those who visit the grave of my forefather [Abū ʿAbdullāh] al-Ḥusayn (a), who spend their wealth and go forth with their bodies for our sake, hoping to attain Your reward through maintaining their bonds with us, and out of the happiness they bring to Your Prophet (saw), their rallying to our cause, and the anger they inspire in our enemies.

They seek Your satisfaction through this, so reward them with Your Satisfaction for our sake, watch over them day and night, and look after the families and children they leave behind in the best way. Be with them always, and suffice them against the evil of every arrogant tyrant and of any of your creatures, whether weak or mighty, and the evil of the devils amongst humankind and jinn. And grant them the best reward that can be anticipated from You for their estrangement from their homelands, and the priority they have given to us over their own children, families,

and relatives. O Allah! Our enemies revile them for coming out, but that does not prevent them from coming to us or from opposing those who oppose us. So have mercy on those faces that the sun has changed, those cheeks that are placed one-after-another on the grave of Abū ʿAbdallāh [al-Ḥusayn] (a), those eyes that shed tears in sympathy with us, those hearts that break and burn for us, and on the laments made for us. O Allah! I entrust to you those souls and bodies until we meet them face-to-face at the Pool [of Paradise] on the Day of Thirst.¹⁸

May Allah Grant us all the *tawfīq* to meet the Living Imam (aj.) face-to-face even before meeting him at the Pond of al-Kawthar!

¹⁸ *Al-Kāfī*, v.4, pg. 582, narration no.11.