

The day of Arba'īn (61 A.H. / 680 A.D.)





■ The Arbaʿīn ceremony is one of the largest peaceful gatherings in the world that annually occurs forty days after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (the third Imam of Shia) and his companions on the day of ʿĀshūrā in Karbalā (Iraq) where the holy shrine of the Prophet Muhammad’s grandson (Imam Hussein) is held in. Every year, Millions of Muslims around the world make their way to this city to commemorate the day of Arbaʿīn. Many of these pilgrims make a journey of 55 miles or so, on their own foot for the love of the Imam despite the terrorist attacks. Why is there such a fervent desire for millions to flock to what would have been an otherwise unknown land and for millions to journey there by foot from all parts of the world?! It was estimated more than 20 million people formed a gathering in the last Arbaʿīn!

It has been said that the household of Imam Hussein, returning from Damascus to Medina, arrived in Karbalā on this day in 61 A.H. / 680 A.D. Also on this day, it is famous that Jābir bin ʿAbd Allah al-Ansarī (one of the sincere companions of the Prophet) was the first one who visited the grave of Imam Hussein so, it is recommended to visit the holy shrine of the Imam in Karbalā or through al-Ziyārah from remote distance; or it could be that this day actually does have some mystical and spiritual importance.

■ In fact, there is spiritual significance to some numbers and this is seen in the Qur'an and the traditions such that the number 40 is repeated in many places of the Qur'an:

﴿وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعَجَلِ مِنَ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ﴾

“And when We appointed a time of forty nights with Moses, then you took the calf (for a god) after him and you were unjust.” (the Quran, 2: 51)

﴿وَ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمَّمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فِتْنَةٍ مِيقَاتِ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ﴾

“And We appointed with Musa a time of thirty nights and completed them with ten (more), so the appointed time of his Lord was complete forty nights, and Musa said to his brother Aaron: Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers.” (the Quran, 7:142)



﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ اأَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ اأَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي دِينِي إِنَّي أَنُتِبُ إِلَيْكَ يَا رَبِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾

“And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents; with trouble did his mother bear him and with trouble did she bring him forth; and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months; until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years, he says, ‘My Lord, grant me that I may give thanks for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases Thee and do good to me in respect of my offspring; surely I turn to Thee, and surely I am of those who submit.’” (the Quran, 46:15)

In addition, there are numerous traditions which mention the number “40” such as the following:

قال رسول الله: «إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَتَبْكِي عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا»

The Messenger of Allah says, *“Indeed the earth laments over the death of a true believer for the period of 40 days.”*¹

قال الإمام الصادق: «إِنَّ السَّمَاءَ بَكَتْ عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا بِالْدَّمِ، وَالْأَرْضُ بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا بِالسَّوَادِ، وَالشَّمْسُ بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا بِالْكَسُوفِ وَالْحَمْرَةَ، وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا...»

Imam Sādiq says, *“The heavens cried for forty days with blood (weeping) over Imam al-Hussein; the earth cried for forty days by being covered with darkness; the sun cried for forty days by being in eclipse and turning red; the mountains were torn apart and dispersed; the seas gushed out and the angles cried for forty days over him...”*²

1. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 2, p. 679.

2. Mustadrak al-Wasā'il, p. 215, chapter 94.



■ In summary, this all points to the reality that there is “something” contained in the visitation to Karbalā 40 days after the tragic massacre of Imam Hussein, as Arbaʿīn that has not been marked for any other Imam nor is it marked for any other Prophets. So, people are advised to make a pilgrimage to Imam Hussein’s sacred shrine on the anniversary of the passage of 40 days since the date of his martyrdom so that they may achieve its lofty blessing. It obvious that this brings his revolution back to memory. It also makes people to recall the cruelty committed by the Umayyads and their followers. Of course, it is one of the essentials of this pilgrimage that the pilgrim, in addition to remembering Imam Hussein's sacrifices and devotion in the way of Allah, the Exalted, observes the teachings of Islam including those related to prayer, hijāb, self-reform, selflessness, moral etiquettes etc. so that his pilgrimage may be a step towards developing and training the soul for accepting these and consolidating their effects until the next pilgrimage. It is only by so doing that attending these ceremonies will be practically the same as attending the lessons of the Imam. Maybe that is why the eleventh Imam (Imam al-Askarī) have said,

«عَلَامَاتُ الْمُؤْمِنِ خَمْسٌ: صَلَاةُ الْإِخْدَى وَالْحَمْسِيْنَ وَزِيَارَةُ الْأَرْبَعِيْنَ وَالتَّحْتُمُ بِالتَّيْمِيْنَ وَتَغْفِيرُ الْجَبِيْنَ وَالْجَهْرُ بِبِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»

“The signs of a real believer are five: to offer a fifty-one units of daily (obligatory and supererogatory) prayer, to visit the shrine of Imam Hussein on the 20th of Safar, to put a ring in the right hand, to place the forehead on dust (in prostration and not on carpet and the like that are not made from the earth), and to recite “Bism-e Allah al-Rahmān al-Rahīm” loudly in his prayers.”¹

Such a statement leads us to the ongoing public custom being discussed. Holding a mourning ceremony for Imam Hussein and holding meetings in his memory are all done by those who are loyal to him and who follow him.

1. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 82, p. 75.

Ziyārah al-Arbaʿīn

It has been reported in *Tahdhīb al-Ahkām* and *Misbāh al-Mutahajjid*, from Safwān al-Jammāl who have said, “My master Imam al-Sādiq, Allah’s blessings be upon him, instructed me to visit Imam Hussein on the day of Arbaʿīn, advisably in the early forenoon, and to say the following words:

Peace be upon the intimate servant of Allah and His most-beloved.

السَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ وَحَبِيبِهِ

Peace be upon the friend of Allah and His elite.

السَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ خَلِيلِ اللَّهِ وَنَجِيِّهِ

Peace be upon the choice of Allah and the son of His choice.

السَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ صَفِيِّ اللَّهِ وَأَبْنِ صَفِيِّهِ

Peace be upon al-Hussein the oppressed and martyred.

السَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ الْحُسَيْنِ الْمَظْلُومِ الشَّهِيدِ

*Peace be upon the captive of agonies
and victim of the shed tears.*

السَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ اسِيرِ الْكُرْبَاتِ

وَقَتِيلِ الْعَبْرَاتِ

*O Allah, I do bear witness that he is verily Your
intimate servant and the son of Your intimate servant,*

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ أَنَّهُ وَلِيُّكَ وَأَبْنُ وَلِيِّكَ

*Your choice and the son of Your choice,
and the winner of Your honoring.*

وَصَفِيُّكَ وَأَبْنُ صَفِيِّكَ

الْقَائِزِ بِكَرَامَتِكَ

*You have honored him with martyrdom,
endued him with salvation,*

أَكْرَمْتَهُ بِالشَّهَادَةِ

وَحَبَوْتَهُ بِالسَّلَامَةِ

*privileged him with legitimate birth,
 made him one of the chiefs,
 one of the leaders,
 and one of the defenders (of Your religion),
 gave him the inheritances of the Prophets,
 and chose him as argument against Your created
 beings and one of the Prophets' successors.
 So, he called to you flawlessly,
 gave advices,
 and sacrificed his soul for You
 to save Your servants from ignorance
 and perplexity of straying off.
 Yet, those whom were seduced by this worldly life,
 who sold their share (of reward) with the lowliest
 and meanest,
 retailed their Hereafter with the cheapest price,
 acted haughtily, perished because of following their
 desires,
 brought to themselves Your wrath and the wrath of
 Your Prophet,
 and obeyed the dissident and hypocritical servants
 of You
 and the bearers of the burdens (of sins) who deserve
 Hellfire—all those supported each other against him.*

وَاجْتَبَيْتَهُ بِطَيْبِ الْوَالِدَةِ
 وَجَعَلْتَهُ سَيِّدًا مِنَ السَّادَةِ
 وَقَائِدًا مِنَ الْقَادَةِ
 وَذَائِدًا مِنَ الدَّادَةِ
 وَأَعْطَيْتَهُ مَوَارِيثَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ
 وَجَعَلْتَهُ حُجَّةً عَلَى خَلْقِكَ مِنَ الْأَوْصِيَاءِ
 فَأَعْدَرَ فِي الدُّعَاءِ
 وَمَنَحَ النَّصِيحِ
 وَبَدَلَ مُهْجَتَهُ فِيكَ
 لِيَسْتَنْقِذَ عِبَادَكَ مِنَ الْجَهَالَةِ
 وَحَيْرَةِ الضَّلَالَةِ
 وَقَدْ تَوَازَرَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ غَرَّتِهِ الدُّنْيَا
 وَبَاعَ حَظَّهُ بِالْأَرْذَلِ الْأَذْنَى
 وَشَرَى آخِرَتَهُ بِالْأَمْنِ الْأَوْكَسِ
 وَتَغَطَّرَسَ وَتَرَدَّى فِي هَوَاهُ
 وَأَسْخَطَكَ وَأَسْخَطَ نَبِيِّكَ
 وَأَطَاعَ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ أَهْلَ الشَّقَاقِ وَالنَّفَاقِ
 وَحَمَلَةَ الْأَوْزَارِ الْمُسْتَوْجِبِينَ النَّارِ

However, he fought against them painstakingly with steadfastness expecting Your reward until his blood was shed on account of his obedience to You

and his dignity were violated.

So, O Allah, pour heavy curses on them

and chastise them with painful chastisement.

Peace be upon you, O the son of Allah's Messenger!

Peace be upon you, O the son of the chief of the Prophets' successors!

I bear witness that you are verily the trustee of Allah and the son of His trustee.

You lived with salvation ,

passed away with praiseworthiness,

and died missed [your rights], oppressed, and martyred.

I also bear witness that Allah shall inevitably fulfill His promise to You,

exterminate those wholeft you alone,

and chastise those who slew you.

I also bear witness that you fulfilled your pledge to Allah

and strove hard in His way until death came upon you.

So, may Allah curse those who slew you.

May Allah curse those who oppressed you.

May Allah curse the people who, when informed about that, were pleased with it.

فَجَاهَدَهُمْ فِيكَ صَابِرًا مُّحْتَسِبًا

حَتَّى سَفِكَ فِي طَاعَتِكَ دَمَهُ

وَاسْتَبِيحَ حَرِيمَهُ

الَّذَهُمْ فَأَلْعَنَهُمْ لَعْنًا وَبِيلاً

وَعَذَابُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَنِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَنِي سَيِّدِ الْأَوْصِيَاءِ

أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ أَمِينُ اللَّهِ وَابْنُ أَمِينِهِ

عِشْتَ سَعِيدًا

وَمُضِيْتَ حَمِيدًا

وَمُتَّ قَبِيدًا مَظْلُومًا شَهِيدًا

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ مُنْجِرٌ مَا وَعَدَكَ

وَهَالِكٌ مَنْ خَذَلَكَ

وَمُعَذِّبٌ مَنْ قَتَلَكَ

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ وَفَيْتَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ

وَجَاهَدْتَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ حَتَّى أَتَاكَ الْيَقِينُ

فَلَعَنَ اللَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَكَ

وَلَعَنَ اللَّهُ مَنْ ظَلَمَكَ

وَلَعَنَ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً سَمِعَتْ بِذَلِكَ فَوَضِعَتْ بِهِ

O Allah, I do ask You to witness for me that I am
loyalist to those who are loyalists to him

and enemy of those who are enemies of him.

May my father and mother be accepted as ransoms
for you, O the son of Allah's Messenger!

I bear witness that you were light in the sublime
loins

and purified wombs;

the impurities of the Ignorance Era could not
object you to filth

nor could its murky clothes dress you.

I also bear witness that you are one of the
mainstays of the religion,

the supports of Muslims,

and the haven of the believers.

I also bear witness that you are the God-fearing,
pious,

pleased, immaculate,

guide, and well-guided Imam.

And I bear witness that the Imams from your
progeny are the spokesmen of piety,

the signs of guidance,

the firmest handle (of Islam),

and the decisive Argument against the
inhabitants of the world.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُكَ أَنِّي وَلِيُّ لِرَبِّكَ وَالْآلَةَ

وَعَدُوِّ لِرَبِّكَ عَادَاءَهُ

بِأَبِي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي يَا بَنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ كُنْتَ نُورًا فِي الْأَضْلَابِ الشَّاحِبَةِ

وَالْأَرْحَامِ الْمَطْهُرَةِ

لَمْ تَنْجَسْكَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةُ بِأَنْجَاسِهَا

وَلَمْ تُنَلِّسْكَ الْمُدَّهَمَاتُ مِنْ ثِيَابِهَا

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ مِنْ دَعَائِمِ الدِّينِ

وَأَرْكَانِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

وَمَعْقِلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ الْإِمَامُ الْبَرُّ الْقَيُّمُ

الرَّضِيُّ الرَّكِيُّ


الْهَادِي الْمَهْدِيُّ

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ الْأَيْمَةَ مِنْ وَدَيْكَ كَلِمَةُ الْقَوِيِّ

وَأَعْلَامُ الْهَادِي

وَالْعُرْوَةُ الْوُثْقَى

وَالْحُجَّةُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا



*I also bear witness that I believe in you all and in your Return,
I have full confidence in the laws of my religion and in the eventual parts of deeds,
my heart is at peace with you all,
all my affairs are based on your commands,
and my support for you all is already all set until Allah permits you.*

*So, I am with you. I am with you,
not with your enemies.*

*Allah's blessings be upon you,
upon your souls, upon your bodies,
upon the present and the absent from you,
and upon the apparent and the invisible parts of you.*

Respond to us, O Master of Worlds!

You may then offer a two-unit prayer, pray Almighty Allah for anything you like, and return.

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
مُوقِنٌ بِشَرَايِعِ دِينِي وَخَوَاتِيمِ عَمَلِي
وَقَلْبِي لِقَلْبِكُمْ سَلَمٌ
وَأَمْرِي لِأَمْرِكُمْ مَتَّبِعٌ
وَنُصْرَتِي لَكُمْ مُعَدَّةٌ
حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ
فَمَعَكُمْ مَعَكُمْ
لَا مَعَ عَدُوِّكُمْ
صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَعَلَىٰ أَرْوَاحِكُمْ وَأَجْسَادِكُمْ
وَسَاهِدِكُمْ وَغَائِبِكُمْ
وَأَظْهَارِكُمْ وَبَاطِنِكُمْ
آمِينَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ