

Lamentation in Muharram and the Fast of *Ashura*

Syed-Mohsin Naquvi

It is only the beginning of the month of Muharram and a huge stream of e-mail messages is already circulating telling us basically two things:

- (1) All this lamentation, dirges and speeches about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn are an innovation, that they have no place in Islamic tradition and Muslims should stay away from such innovations.
- (2) There is great reward for fasting on the Day of *Ashura* (10th of Muharram) and there is no other fasting in the year more glorious than that.

In this article we will discuss both those issues, *insha Allah*.

We have received an email message from a *Mallam Abba Abana* with multiple email addresses: *gonidamgamiri@yahoo.com*, *██████████@gmail.com*, *██████████@yahoo.com*.

As follows:

Baseless Practices There are many baseless practices and customs which people engage in on the tenth of Muharram. Among these baseless customs and practices is mourning over the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (Radiyallahu Anhu). The gruesome martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (Radiyallahu Anhu) was undoubtedly among the most tragic and heart breaking events that occurred in the annals of history. However, despite that, it should be understood that the occasion of *Ashura* and its virtues are not associated with the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (Radiyallahu Anhu). Instead, *Ashura* had received its virtue and auspiciousness even before the birth of Hazrat Husain (Radiyallahu Anhu). Hence the custom of mourning the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (Radiyallahu Anhu) by the Shias has no basis in Islam.

The Sunnah Fast of *Ashura*

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) fasted on the day of *Ashura* and exhorted the Sahaba (Radiyahallahu Anhum) to also observe this fast. The extent of enthusiasm and passion with which the *sahaba* (Radiyahallahu Anhum) upheld this *mubarak sunnah* could perhaps be gauged from the following *hadith*:

“Hazrat Rubayyi’ (Radiyahallahu Anha) reports that the *sahaba* (Radiyahallahu Anhum) observed the fast of *Ashura* and also encouraged their children to observe the fast. The *sahaba* (Radiyahallahu Anhum) used to make toys out of wool for their children and if any child felt hungry during the fast and wept for food, they would give them the toys to occupy them until the time of iftar. (Sahih Muslim, #1136)”

Actually it is a long message. We will just discuss the above two points here.

Our learned writer here says: “the occasion of *Ashura* and its virtues are not associated with the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (Radiyahallahu Anhu).”

Well, Imam Husayn lived in Madinah, he was hounded out of his abode where he was born, had reached adulthood and had come to middle-age, by force of government policies, under threat to life, honor and liberty. He was chased into the desert of Karbala, by a huge army of Yazid. He was surrounded by that army and was forced to surrender or put up a fight. He took the second option. He was brutally killed at Karbala on the 10th Day of Muharram in the 61st year of Hijra. That is how *Ashura* is associated with the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

He then goes on to say: “Instead, *Ashura* had received its virtue and auspiciousness even before the birth of Hazrat Husain (Radiyahallahu Anhu).”

There are no authentic reports about the virtues of *Ashura* in any reliable book of History. Even if there was any significance to that date, after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn on that day,

every other thing pales in its significance as compared to the great sacrifice presented by the martyrs of Karbala. If you have love in your heart for the Prophet of Islam and his family, you would find the passion to remember and commemorate the great sacrifice of Imam Husayn.

See below the Qur'anic reference for the requirement of love for the Ahlul-Bayt. Qur'an IC
COMMAND FOR THE LOVE OF AHLULBAYT

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۖ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ ۖ وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٤٢:٢٣)

Trans: That is (the Bounty) whereof Allah gives Glad Tidings to His Servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say: "No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin." And if anyone earns any good We shall give Him an increase of good in respect thereof: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Ready to appreciate (service). (Qur'an 42:23)

He then goes on to say: "Hence the custom of mourning the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (Radiyallahu Anhu) by the Shias has no basis in Islam."

Remembrance of a great sacrifice, particularly that of an Islamic hero and that too, that of a grandson of the Prophet of Islam is a great virtue for a Muslim.

There is a full chapter in the holy Qur'an where the story of Hazrat Yaqoob and that of Hazrat Yusuf is told. A father wept for his long lost son, so much that his eyes became white with blindness and the Qur'an has remembered him as *kazeem* (Qur'an 12:84). And that son was not dead anyway, Allah had promised the father that He will bring the long lost son back to him. Here, the devotees of Muhammad and Aal-e-Muhammad cry and weep for a martyred grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and someone claims that it is not Islamic!!!!

Really?!

Besides, mourning for the martyrs of Karbala is not exclusive to the Shia, there are a large number of Sunni Muslims who observe the commemoration.

I do not know where our learned writer lives and what kind of schools he has attended and what books of history have been in his studies. We have authentic reports that the martyrdom of Imam Husayn was foretold by the Prophet of Islam himself and he grieved for his grandson in his lifetime.

Very early sources of Muslim literature tell us the story of Adam eating of the forbidden tree and then asking for the forgiveness of Allah. The story tells us that the archangel Gabriel came to him and taught him to pray to Allah asking the intercession of the Five Holy Names (*panjtan*). So Adam asked Allah's forgiveness in the name of Muhammad, since Allah is *Hameed* (most praiseworthy), in the name of Ali since He is *Aala* (Most High), in the name of Fatima since he is the Creator (*faatir*) of heavens, and in the name of Hasan and Husayn since He is *muhsin*, that is, He is the source of all *ihsaan*. As soon as Adam uttered the name of Husayn his eyes were filled with tears. Adam asked the reason for that, of Gabriel. On Allah's command, Gabriel told Adam the story of Karbala. Adam wept still more, he was also forgiven. Since then every great prophet, including Nooh and Ibraheem, was told the story of Karbala and they had all wept for Husayn¹.

The Nawab of Paryanwan² has collected a number of reports from authentic Sunni scholars who have preserved *hadith* reports from the Prophet of Islam giving the news about the event of Karbala that happened in the 61st year of Hijra:

- (1) Shah Abdul Azeez in his *Sirrush-Shahadatayn*.
- (2) Ahmad bin Hanbal in his *Musnad*
- (3) Abu Hatim and Bayhaqi
- (4) Hakim, a report by Ummul-Fadhl
- (5) Ibn Rahwayh, reports from Umm Salama

One day the Prophet of Islam came to the house of Umme-Salama, one of his wives, and wanted to rest. Soon after, Husayn, who was only four years old at that time, came running and

¹ Ayuob, *Redemptive Suffering*; Juwayni, *Faraa-e-dus-Simtayn*

² See the book: TAREEKH-E-AHMADI

wanted to see his grandfather. Umme-Salama tried to stop him lest the Prophet be disturbed. But the Prophet heard Husayn's voice and came out of the apartment, picked up Husayn in his arms and took him with him. After a few moments Umme-Salama heard voices of sobs, she was alarmed and entered the apartment. She saw Husayn sleeping on the Prophet's chest, and he was crying and sobbing. On her inquiry, the Prophet told her that an angel came and told him that this grandson of his will be killed at Karbala in three days of hunger and thirst with eighteen of his other family members. Umme-Salama also wept. Then the Prophet, by a miracle, gave her a handful of dust from the plain of Karbala. He told her that she would still be alive when the tragedy of Karbala would happen. If and when that dust turns into blood, she should then assume that Husayn had been killed. It is reported that Umme-Salama kept that dust in a glass. When Husayn left Madinah in the 60th year of Hijra, she would look at that glass every day. Until on the day of *Ashura* in the following Muharram, the dust did turn into blood and she knew that Husayn had been killed³. This story, with some variations, has been reported by at least thirteen Muslim historians of the early period. Among them are Abul Fida, Ibnul Wardi, Ibn Sa'd, Tabrani, Hakim and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

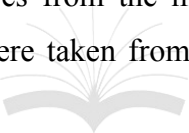
The Prophet then told the story to his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali. They both wept. Then Fatima asked him, who would be there to lament for Husayn when he would be killed. The Prophet said that, he himself, Ali and Fatima would be long gone. But years later, Allah would create a community who would make it their prime purpose in life to lament for Husayn and establish 'aza in his memory. When Fatima heard this last part of the story, she was pacified and reportedly, she prayed for the prosperity of that community in this world and their salvation in the life hereafter.

The devotees of Husayn, therefore, do all the lamentation, weeping and wailing with this belief that they are the manifestation of Fatima's prayer and its fulfillment.

³This report of Umm Salama has been narrated by Anas bin Harith. The significance of the narrator is that he (Anas bin Harith) repeated this story all his life. He ended up at Karbala in the year 61 Hijra and was one of the martyrs who died with Imam Husayn, fighting Yazid's armies. Anas bin Harith's martyrdom at Karbala is confirmed by Suyooti in his *Khasa'is-e-Kubra*.

The devotees of Husayn believe that a tear shed in Husayn's memory washes away hundreds of sins. Numerous sayings of later Imams are in circulation on this. Ali Zaynul Abideen, the fourth Imam, the sole male survivor at Karbala, spent thirty-four years of his life in lamentation, weeping and wailing. So much so that when one of his devotees asked him if he could come to his son's wedding, he said that he would come if there was a *majlis* for the martyrs of Karbala. The friend arranged that. Since then, traditionally, every wedding among the devotees of Husayn is rounded off with a *majlis*.

Until recently, study of Shia Islam was looked at only marginally in the modern academic circles. Only after the Iranian revolution of 1979, Shia studies came into major limelight. The Shia were always considered a marginal Muslim community, and labeled as heterodox, slightly misguided minority. The Sunni majority was taken as the orthodox, rightly guided in all matters of law, ethics and morality. At best, the Shia were taken as a minority group who had separated themselves from the majority on a political issue. All social, cultural, religious and political views were taken from the books of the majority, therefore, they were all highly biased against the Shia.



Mohsena Memorial Foundation
Connecting Communities Through Education

That fallacy was broken and was actually laid to rest by the Ph.D. thesis presented by Husain M. Jafary at the American University of Beirut, in 1972. That was some seven years before the Iranian revolution. Jafary's work is detailed and proved by logical reasoning and references from the original Arabic texts that the Shia are mainstream Islam. That they separated, or, were rather rejected by the majority on the basis of an element of basic Islamic belief, in that they believe that spiritual as well as temporal authority after the Prophet of Islam goes to the Ahlul-Bayt, or the near kin of the Prophet. It was left to the Oxford professor Wilfred Madelung to prove that thesis from the Qur'an in his most celebrated book *Succession to Muhammad*, that was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1987.

However, right after Jafary's excellent work, Mahmoud Ayoub completed his Ph.D. from Harvard under the supervision of professor Anne Marie Schimmel, in 1975. Ayoub's thesis has

been published in book form under the title *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, published by Mouton, The Hague, the Netherlands, in 1978.

Two specific chapters in Ayoub's book are directly relevant to our discussion here. The very first chapter under the title: *The House of Sorrows*, shows the significance of suffering as redemption in a religious setting and then the chapter goes on to depict with references, the sufferings of Fatima Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet. The chapter relates at length the way the tragedy of Karbala was foretold, even from the time of Adam and Noah and continued to the time of the Prophet. In that discussion, the learned author explains the very Islamic basis of lamentation, and the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn at Karbala in 61st year of Hijra. In a latter section under the title: *The Sigh of the Sorrowful*, the theme is further discussed at length, with references from the original Arabic sources of *hadith* and history.



The Fast on the Day of Ashura

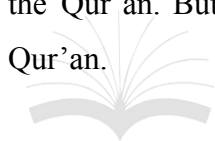
Each and every act of worship that is *wajib* on every Muslim is described in the holy Qur'an. There is no mention of the fast of *Ashura* in the Qur'an. The only fast that is *wajib* on every Muslim is the fasting during the month of Ramadan, which is mentioned in Sura al-Baqara (Qur'an 2:183-188).

That gives us another point to ponder. What is the tradition of the holy Qur'an about the laws of Islam in acts of worship? As we said, a majority of such acts are clearly mentioned in the Qur'an. However, there are certain things which are not mentioned in the Qur'an, but they are practiced by the Muslims as *sunnat-e-mutwatera*, or, a tradition well established by practice in the community from the time of the Prophet. There is one exception to that rule.

What is that exception? If an Islamic tradition is established by way of tradition, which is not mentioned in the Qur'an, and then if a subsequent change to that tradition comes, the whole story is recorded in the Qur'an.

We cite here two examples of this rule.

- (1) From the day the five-times-daily Salat was established in Makkah, the prayers were performed facing *Bayt-ul-Maqdis* in Jerusalem. In the second year of Hijra, the direction of the prayers was *reassigned* towards the *Kaaba* in Makkah. There is no initial order of praying towards Jerusalem in the Qur'an but the order of changing the Qibla towards Makkah is recorded in Sura al-Baqara (verse number 142). That established two things: first, that the *qibla* for prayers was towards Jerusalem up to now, but from this point on the *qibla* will be towards Makkah. If the fasting on the day of *Ashura* was decreed and then after the commandment of fasting in Ramadan was established that fast of *Ashura* became only *mustahab*, it was such a detailed story that it should have been recorded in the Qur'an. But we see that the fast of *Ashura* is not mentioned in any manner in the Qur'an.



Mohsena Memorial Foundation
Connecting Communities Through Education

- (2) It had become a practice among the Muslims in Madinah that they would come and have long conversations with the Prophet privately. That would cause inconvenience for the Prophet and reduce the chances for other people to talk to him. In that midst a verse was revealed that said: If you wish to have a private conversation with the Prophet, first pay *sadaqa* and then do that. Suddenly all such people stopped coming to the Prophet. Imam Ali had six *dirhams* on him. He came to the Prophet, paid two *dirhams* in *sadaqa* and then had his private conference. The next day came and Imam Ali approached the Prophet again, paid two *dirhams* as *sadaqa* and then had his private conversation with the Prophet. The third day came, Imam Ali came again, paid the last of the two *dirhams* in *sadaqa* and had his private conversation with the Prophet. Some verses were revealed at that point which said that the command of the *sadaqa* was henceforth cancelled. This whole story is told in verses numbers 12,13 & 14 of Sura Al-Mujadela⁴ (Chapter 58). We

⁴Mawlana Mawdoodi has discussed this story at length in his *Tafheem-Al-Qur'an*. He has referred to early sources such as Tabari. He adds that Ibn Jareer has said that Imam Ali used to say that there is one command in the Qur'an which only I have followed and no one else could do it, and that was this set of Qur'anic verses from Sura

have taken this story from the *tafseer* of Ibn-e-Katheer. Many other *mufasssireen* have quoted the story in commenting on these verses of Sura Al-Mujadela.

However, the fast of *Ashura* is mentioned in a number of *hadith* reports, the most famous one is as follows:

“When the Prophet arrived in Madinah after the Hijra, he saw that the Jews were fasting on the day of *Ashura* (10th of Muharram). He asked as to the reason of that fast. He was told that the Jews were celebrating the success of Hazrat Musa against the Pharaoh. The Prophet is reported to have reacted by saying: We (the Muslims) are deserving of following Hazrat Musa, so he commanded that the Muslims would also fast on the day of *Ashura*. But in the second year of Hijra when the fasting in the month of Ramadan was decreed, the Prophet said that from now on the fast of *Ashura* would be *mustahab* and not *wajib*.” (This report is found in the Book of Bukhari and others).

First of all, the Hijra took place in the month of Rabi’-ul-Awwal, Muharram of that year had already come and gone. If there was such an event, it must have happened in the second year of Hijra, in the month of Muharram, that was seven months after the event of Hijra.

It becomes so clear here that the people or the institution who fabricated this report did not even know that the Hijra had happened in Rabi’-ul-Awwal. They just thought that the new Islamic year begins with Muharram, the Hijra must have happened in Muharram.

The second thing in this issue is, the Jews never followed any other calendar than their own. They have lived in many different lands, but they have never adopted any other calendar. The whole thing about the Jews fasting on the day of *Ashura* is frivolous. You go and ask any

learned Jew today, “Have you ever fasted on the day of *Ashura*?” He would look at you in total bewilderment.

Another similar report is cited by our learned writer here which says that the Prophet had fasted on the day of *Ashura* before coming to Madinah. This is yet another frivolous report. The only *wajib* act of worship that was decreed before Hijra was the five-times-daily *salat*. No Muslim, including the Prophet, had ever fasted on any day in the days of Makkah.

This second report about the Prophet having fasted in Makkah, puts the whole story of Fasting on the Day of *Ashura* to serious suspicion.

The third point is self-evident in the message posted by our learned writer. According to the report in *Sahih Muslim*, even the children were forced to Fast on the day of *Ashura*, when the children complained of hunger and thirst, their parents would give them toys to distract them. This report is such a travesty and it puts such a black mark on the efficacy of Islamic laws. It shows that the laws are inhuman and harsh. The *wajib* act of fasting in Ramadan is applicable only to grown up adults; children are not forced to fast who would not be strong enough to bear the pain of hunger and thirst. Here our reporter would have us believe that the fast of *Ashura* was being imposed on little children- really?

We will discuss presently, why this report of fasting on the Day of *Ashura* is pushed forward so vehemently by some quarters.

Let us first analyse the text and the *isnad* of the *hadith* of fasting on the day of *Ashura*.

The *Isnad* of the Report of Fasting on the Day of *Ashura*

A *hadith* is the saying or an act of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) which is then forwarded to the larger community by one or more of the Sahaba.

Looking at the report on Fasting on the Day of *Ashura*, we see that there are four original reporters:

- (i) Abdullah ibn Abbas
- (ii) Abu Musa al-Ashari
- (iii) Abu Hurayra
- (iv) Abu Sufyan

Let us take each one of these names in turn and look at their antecedents:

- (i) Abdullah ibn Abbas was born three years before the Hijra had happened. It is certain that when this event took place he was not older than four years. What is the reliability of a statement made by a four-year old, particularly in the science of *hadith*, which forms one of the major elements of making Islamic law?
- (ii) Abu Musa al-Ashari had accepted Islam in Makka. He belonged to the tribe of Banu Ash'ar of Yemen. The Prophet had sent him back to his tribe in Yemen to preach Islam. He wasn't even present in Madinah at the time of Hijra, how could he report about an event at which he was not present? Obviously, this report has been fabricated much later by those who did not know this fact, and even if they knew it, they did not care about it.
- (iii) Abu Hurayra had accepted Islam after the conquest at Khyber by the Muslims, which had happened in the 7th year of Hijra. He was able to be around the Prophet of Islam for a total of two years and seven months. But he has narrated several thousand *hadith* reports

from the Prophet. That itself puts all reports narrated by Abu Hurayra to suspicion. He was definitely not around the Prophet in Madinah at the time the Hijra took place.

- (iv) Abu Sufyan was the head of the tribe of Banu Umayya. He was in the forefront opposing the mission of Islam from day one and he had not let any angle of the opposition to the Prophet of Islam untried and untouched. He was enemy number one of Islam and that of the Prophet of Islam. How could any sensible person think about quoting Abu Sufyan in a matter of Islamic law? He had initiated every major battle that took place between the Muslims and the *kuffar* of Makkah. He had apparently accepted Islam only grudgingly and with a lot of reluctance after Makkah was taken by the Muslims in the 8th year of Hijra. How can we take a report associated with Abu Sufyan about an event that took place at the time of Hijra?
- (v) There is also a fifth name that is mentioned in the report about fasting on the Day of *Ashura*, and that is the name of Abdullah ibn Zubayr. His father, Zubayr was a first cousin of the Prophet, being the son of the Prophet's paternal aunt. Zubayr was a senior companion of the Prophet. He had married Asma, a daughter of Abu Bakr and a real sister of lady Ayesha (one of the *Ummul-Momineen*). Abdullah ibn Zubayr's name comes up in the early history of Islam often. Here in this case his *fadha'el* are pushed forward to claim greater credibility of the *hadith* of the Fast of *Ashura*. A brief biography of Abdullah ibn Zubayr will be found on [this website](#):

There is an interesting story about Ibn Zubayr's birth in this bio. When the Prophet and the early Muslims arrived in Madinah after the Hijra, they first camped at Quba. The Jews came to the Muslims and said that we have done a magic trick on you and there will not be any new birth in your community. At that time, Asma bint Abi Bakr was pregnant. A few months later, Abdullah was born to Asma. When Abdullah was born, his maternal grandfather, Abu Bakr, took him in his arms and showed the infant to everyone; the Muslims were overjoyed and they raised screams of Allahu Akbar. Thus the Jews were proven liars. This is definitely a great glory for Abdullah ibn Zubayr. He was the first Muslim infant born in Madinah. But, even if we give any credibility to the story of the event of Fasting on the Day of *Ashura* (giving it the

benefit of doubt), Ibn Zubayr was only a few months old. What credibility can be associated with that story which is apparently reported (yes, reported) by an infant of a few months?

Anyway, let us complete the story of Ibn Zubayr given in this article. Abu Bakr took the infant and presented him to the Prophet of Islam. The Prophet took him in his arms and asked lady Ayesha to bring a piece of date. It took about an hour for lady Ayesha to bring the date. When she presented it to the Prophet, he chewed it and then put it in the infant's mouth. This is definitely further glory for Ibn Zubayr. Lady Ayesha then requested the Prophet and her elder sister Asma, that the baby should be given to her. The request was granted and thus Ibn Zubayr grew up in the house of the Prophet and lady Ayesha. That once again, adds to the glories of Abdullah ibn Zubayr. But, let us now look at the weaknesses in this report.

According to a report in the same book, the *Sahih* of Bukhari, Lady Ayesha was only seven years old at the time of Hijra. Two years later, when she became nine, she was married to the Prophet and came to live with him. Now consider the audacity of this fabricator who presents this report about Abdullah ibn Zubayr being brought up by lady Ayesha in the house of the Prophet. She was not even married to the Prophet at the time Hijra took place, let alone living with the Prophet. She was only seven years old and she was given charge to raise a child. Can you believe this? But that is how blatantly people have pushed fabrications in the *hadith* literature to prove their own points and have muddled the truth.

All right, let us complete the biography of Abdullah ibn Zubayr. We are doing it here because ibn Zubayr has been presented here as a credible reporter of the Fasting on the Day of *Ashura*. Ibn Zubayr has been presented in this bio as a very brave fighter. Maybe so. But in this whole text, there is no mention of the Battle of Jamal. This is strange because, Ibn Zubayr was a motivational character in the fiasco of Battle of Jamal, in which nearly 10,000 Muslims were killed on both sides. Why is it then that this biographer wants to avoid the mention of the Battle of Jamal in this text? The Battle of Jamal is significant in the early history of Islam because that was the first time Muslims were divided on their personal and selfish reasons in two groups and they came to fight each other with arms. That Battle has caused such a rift between Muslims that sectarianism has taken deep roots and the division continues to increase. The Battle of Jamal happened right after the murder of the third *khalifa* Uthman, when Imam Ali Had been chosen by the community as the fourth *khalifa*. This was the 36th year of Hijra. The Battle occurred in

Basra in Iraq. It was the conflict where Abdullah ibn Zubayr had taken his *khala*, lady Ayesha, to confront the rightly chosen and rightly guided (Rashidoon) *khalifa* Imam Ali⁵.

As this trio of Lady Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr, were rising up against Imam Ali, Lady Ayesha decided to visit Hazrat Umma-e-Salam, another widow of the Prophet and invited her to join the rebellion against Imam Ali. Umme-e Salama, very wisely, advised Lady Ayesha that what she was doing was *fasad fil-ardh*, and that she should stay indoors as the holy Qur'an had advised all the *Ummahat-ul-Momineen* (ref. verses of Sura Ahzab) and that she (Lady Ayesha) had no legitimate right to rise up for the revenge of Uthman, in that, Uthman had belonged to Banu Umayya, and she (Lady Ayesha) had belonged to Banu Taym. While that conversation was in progress, Abdullah ibn Zubayr over-heard it and he shouted at Umme Salama saying: "You have always been against the Banu Taym and Aal-e-Zubayr", he then turned to his own aunt, Lady Ayesha and said: "If you don't come with us to Basra, I will commit suicide." Others present also advised Lady Ayesha to accept what Ibn Zubayr had been saying. All these details are documented by Jamal-ud-Deen Muhaddith in his book *Rawdhat-Al-Ahbab*, further details would be found in the Egyptian author Taha Husayn's book *Al-Fitnat-Al-Kubra* and Tabari's *History*. For English speaking readers, Wilfred Madelung's book *Succession to Muhammad* is a good source of these details. Thus Abdullah ibn Zubayr appears to be a great trouble-maker in Islam and it is because of this that our learned biographer has left out this story out of Abdullah ibn Zubayr's biography. Can you believe this naivety, as if people would forget about the Battle of Jamal.

⁵During the *khilafa* period of Hazrat Uthman, things had gone wrong drastically. Selfish motives, self preservation and nepotism had reached a high point. Under pressure from his tribe of Banu Umayya, Hazrat Uthman had given high positions to his own relatives who had looted and oppressed the community at a very large scale. Eventually unrest took hold of the community. A large number of disgruntled Muslims from Egypt came to Madinah and surrounded the house of Uthman. Hazrat Ali tried to mediate and bring sanity back to the community. But Hazrat Uthman's own intransigence and the intrigues of his near relatives created a disaster. The insurgents raided the house of Uthman and killed him. The rioting crowd and the larger community in Madinah, then forced Imam Ali to accept the leadership of the Muslim community. Even though, at that moment, Imam Ali was reluctant to accept that position, he had to accept it in the interest of peace. Soon afterwards, three people rose to oppose the *khilafa* of Imam Ali as the fourth *khalifa*. The first among them was lady Ayesha, who purportedly rose to avenge the blood of Uthman. The second was Talha ibn Ubayd Allah, a cousin of lady Ayesha, and the third was Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, a cousin of Ali, who was married to Asma, the elder sister of Lady Ayesha. Thus, these four people came together to rise against the fourth *khalifa*, Imam Ali.

We believe we have shown very clearly the legitimacy of mourning for the martyrs of Karbala from the Qur'an and *hadith*. We have also shown by logical reasoning that the *hadith* that the Jews were fasting on the day of *Ashura* and that is why the Prophet adopted it, is totally fabricated. But let us first complete the discussion on the Battle of Jamal and its repercussions.

The Battle of Jamal and its Repercussions

After the riots that killed the third Khalifa Uthman in his own house, were over, the rioting crowds that had gathered from Egypt and other province ran away back to their abodes, sanity returned to the community in Madinah and they hurried to Imam Ali and insisted that he should take charge of the community. Considering what had recently happened in the city of Madinah, Imam Ali refused to accept that offer. The elders of the community would not relent and finally they crowded around the person of Imam Ali telling him that either he accepts the offer or they (the elders) would fight him with arms. Imam Ali's protestations are well recorded in his sermons in Nahjul Balagha.



Once Imam Ali took charge of the community, he set about putting those things right which had gone wrong in the previous administrations.

Imam Ali was greatly aggrieved by the way Uthman was killed. He is reported to have said that Uthman's murder was a thing of the *jahiliyya*.

Several Sunni scholars such as [Ibn Qutaybah](#), Ali Ibn Burhanuddin al-Halabi, Ibne Abi-al-Hadeed and Ibne Manzoor have reported that there were several leading *sahaba* along those who openly opposing and asking Uthman to step down for reasons such as nepotism and a profligate lifestyle. [Talha](#) and [Zubayr ibn al-Awam](#) were among those leading the rebels while [A'isha](#) had even called for Uthman's head with her famous statement "Kill this Na'thal (a Jew) for he has turned apostate" as recorded by several leading historians.

However, now that Uthman was gone from the scene, and Imam Ali was in charge, these same three people turned against him (Imam Ali). Lady Ayesha was returning from Hajj when

she heard that Imam Ali had been accepted as the fourth *khalifa*, she immediately changed her colours and said: Uthman was killed with *zulm*, I will go for his revenge. Talha and Zubayr had come to see Imam Ali immediately after Imam Ali became the *khalifa* looking for some lucrative position in the new government. Imam Ali did not entertain their wishes. They immediately turned around and joined Lady Ayesha's move towards Uthman's revenge.

There was no support for the rebellious triumvirate in Madinah neither in Makkah. So, they moved to Basra. Talha had some land in Basra and he decided to raise manpower from his clients working on that land. Lady Ayesha's cry for the revenge of Uthman had brought sufficient funds and other logistics to materialize the war effort. The community was thoroughly divided. There was the legitimate rule of the *khalifa* on the one hand, who had just taken charge of a tumultuous community which had just gone through a horrendous act of regicide. And on the other side was a widow of the Prophet of Islam, screaming for revenge.

This was yet another shock for Imam Ali. He had to leave the affairs in Madinah, raise a defensive force in a hurry and move to Basra to quell the rebellion.

This was the first time in the early history of Islam that two groups, both Muslims, would come to face each other in a battlefield.

Imam Ali's fast defensive step would probably be rated as a work of military genius if not a miracle in the circumstances. How quickly he was able to raise an effective defensive force, move it to the battlefield and effectively quell the rebellion.

Even though the main characters in the Battle of Jamal were lady Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr, the name of Abdullah ibn Zubayr is very significant. We saw how enthusiastic he was instigating his aunt, lady Ayesha, to proceed to the Battle in opposition to Umm-e-Salama.

The Prophet of Islam had warned lady Ayesha in his lifetime saying: I am concerned about one of my wives at whom the dogs of HAW-AB would bark, while she would be on a misguided march.

As it happened, the caravan of the rebels on its way to Basra stopped by the waters of *haw-ab*. The dogs began barking. Lady Ayesha asked as to what was the name of the place. When she was told that it was *haw-ab*. She screamed in horror and sat down. She was determined to return from there. But it was Abdullah ibn Zubayr, once again, who swore that that was not *haw-ab*. He also managed to bring forty other people who put their hands on the Qur'an and swore that that place was not *haw-ab*⁶.

Finally the rebellious group arrived in Basra. Soon after, Imam Ali also arrived with a contingent of his companions. The first thing Imam Ali did was he took Talha and Zubayr, one by one, in a private meeting and persuaded them to desist from the armed confrontation where a large number of Muslims were going to be killed on both sides. Talha would not relent but Zubayr was persuaded by Ali to desist. At that, Abdullah ibn Zubayr taunted him of cowardice⁷. He was so incensed by his son's taunts that he changed his mind and continued on his disastrous march with lady Ayesha.

Eventually, the Battle of Jamal did take place. Nearly ten thousand Muslims were killed. The rebellious group was thoroughly defeated. Talha was killed by Marwan in the heat of the Battle, even though both of them were fighting on the same side. Zubayr was killed by a stranger at one of the resting places, while he was coming back from the Battlefield. Ayesha was found inside the carriage of her camel. She was crying and weeping bitterly. Imam Ali came closer to the carriage, said a few reprimanding words and then directed her own brother Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr to take her safely back to Madinah.

Imam Ali had absolutely prohibited the looting of the defeated soldiers. No one was allowed to touch their women either – because they were all Muslims. Imam Ali had directed his companions not to do anything even if the women of Basra would open their doors and throw verbal abuse at them.

⁶This was the first time in Islamic history that a false oath was given on the Qur'an. This story will be found in Tabari's *History*, Ibn Katheer, Yaqoobi, and in *Murooj-uz-Zahab* and many other historians in the sources.

⁷The Qur'an has commanded Muslims to be kind and respectful to their parents and not say even the word "Uff", and here a son is taunting his own father for cowardice. And our historians would present such a son as inauthentic and trustworthy reporter of *hadith*. Alas for the self-serving scholars of *hadith*

As we said, the community was thoroughly divided in its opinion as well as in their actions. Not only that, various historians of Islam have been confused, and are still confused as to how to judge the two fighting parties at the Battle of Jamal. Was the *khalifa* of the time correct in confronting the rebels? Was it right for the widow of the Prophet to come into a battlefield and lead an army, in clear opposition to the Qur'anic commandments?

Looks like this confusion will continue to the Last Day. Who is responsible for this? Can we accept such a person as a reliable reporter of *hadith*?

Abdullah Ibn Zubayr In Later Years

Abdullah ibn Zubayr was 3 or 4 years older than Imam Husayn. Both of them were born in Madinah and had grown up there.

Mu'awiya died in the 60th year of Hijra and his son Yazid became the *khalifa* of the Muslim kingdom on his last will. The very first thing Yazid did on his accession was to send a message to the governor of Madinah, Waleed, to round up three people in Madinah and ask them to accept publicly Yazid's legitimacy⁸. The three names were, Husayn ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn Zubayr and Abdullah ibn Umar. Yazid's command also said that if anyone of them refuses his orders, he should be beheaded and his severed head should be sent over to Yazid⁹.

Waleed promptly sent a messenger to Imam Husayn and asked him for a meeting. Imam Husayn came to Waleed, who in turn presented the proposal of Yazid to him. Imam Husayn very diplomatically refused and came back home. Abdullah ibn Zubayr, as soon as heard this, quietly sneaked out of Madinah and ended up in Makkah, thinking that he would be safe in Makkah.

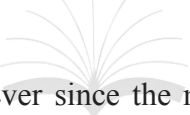
⁸In other words, do Yazid's *bay'a*

⁹Many historians, among them Tabari, Baladhuri and Deenawary, have given details about the last will Mu'awiya wrote for Yazid. It said: I have prepared the grounds for your rule in the community. However, there are three people I fear will oppose you. Husayn ibn Ali, he is a grandson of the Prophet of Islam, deal gently with him and be kind to him; Abdullah ibn Umar, he is a weak person and he would submit with a little arm twisting; Abdullah ibn Zubayr, he is cunning like a fox and blood thirsty like a lion, do not relent with him, as soon as you get an opportunity, have him killed. Tabari's report also includes the name of Abdur Rahman ibn Abi Bakr. But he had died three years before the accession of Yazid. That means, Mu'awiya had prepared the will several years beforehand.

Abdullah ibn Umar quickly accepted to do Yazid's *bay'a* and exhorted others too in Madinah to do the same.

Three or four days later, Imam Husayn left Madinah with a handful of his relatives, including his sons, nephews, brothers and some ladies in the family. This was 28th of Rajab in the 60th year of Hijra. A few days later Imam Husayn arrived in Makkah with his small caravan. Abdullah ibn Zubayr was already there.

Before leaving Madinah, Imam Husayn made speeches in which he declared plainly why he was leaving his hometown. He said that the Muslim community was thoroughly misguided into corrupt ways. Truth and falsehood had been mixed so badly that it had become difficult for an honest and religious minded Muslim to exist peacefully. He was leaving home to correct the ways of the *ummah* of his grandfather. He was neither coveting government nor personal glory or gain. Imam Husayn also left a last will with his half brother, Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah, detailing those claims.



Mohsena Memorial Foundation
Connecting Communities Through Education

Ever since the martyrdom of Imam Hasan in the 50th year of Hijra, Imam Husayn had been receiving a continuous barrage of letters from the people of Kufa. The Kufans were inviting Imam Husayn to come to Kufa, and they, the Kufans, would rise under his leadership to help them get relief from the Umayyad rule's oppression. Three things are certain in this context. One, Imam Husayn kept completely quiet in response to those letters. The Kufans were of the opinion that since Imam Hasan was gone from the scene, the treaty signed between him and Mu'awiya was null and void. Imam Husayn apparently did not agree with that and he felt that he was still responsible to respect that treaty even though Mu'awiya had been violating the conditions of the treaty. Second, now that Mu'awiya was dead, the treaty should be respected in that the community should reconsider the issue of *khilafa*. Mu'awiya, by appointing his son Yazid to *khilafa*, in total contradiction to the treaty, had done the final destruction to the conditions of the treaty. Third, Imam Husayn was now being asked to legitimize the illegal accession of Yazid to the *khilafa*. So, what were his choices? There were no overtures from the local Medinan people to support Imam Husayn. He was being advised only not to go to Iraq. But, there was no call of

saying: You are the grandson of our Prophet, you were born and raised in this city, we will support you, you stay here.

In that situation, Imam Husayn left Madinah and stayed in Makkah. He kept receiving the letters of invitations from the Kufans. But, at the same time, Imam Husayn got the news that hired assassins were being sent to Makkah in disguise of Hajjis, the plan being that Husayn will be killed quietly during the Tawaf of Hajj. When Imam Husayn got this news, he decided to leave Makkah to protect the sanctity of Makkah. At the same time, he sent his cousin Muslim ibn Aqeel on a fact finding mission to Kufa. Abdullah ibn Zubayr was still around in Makkah while all this was going on.

Muslim ibn Aqeel was brutally killed in Kufa on the 8th of *Dhul-Hijjah* of the 60th year of Hijra. Husayn was halfway through towards Kufa.

Imam Husayn arrived in Karbala on the 2nd day of Muharram 61st year of Hijra. He camped with his small caravan at the banks of the river Euphrates. The next day Umayyad armies started to assemble at Karbala. First of all, Imam Husayn was forced to remove his camps a couple of miles away from the river bank. On the 7th day, he and his caravan were denied water from the river. The riverbank was heavily protected by armed cavalry. A battle took place on the tenth day of Muharram. Imam Husayn and all his male companions, including boys, were brutally killed by the Umayyad army. His women and little children and his only surviving son, Ali Zayn-ul-Abideen, were taken prisoners and presented to Yazid in Damascus after a time.

Abdullah ibn Zubayr stayed in Makkah all that time.

After nearly a year the prisoners were released from Damasus and they travelled back to Madinah. In the 63rd year of Hijra the event of HARRAH took place. Yazid had dispatched Muslim ibn Uqba to Madinah with a contingent of the Syrian forces. They ravaged the city of Madinah thoroughly. Schools, hospitals and other public buildings were destroyed. The mosque of the Prophet was used as stables for horses by the Syrian invading forces. Thousands of

Muslim women were raped by Syrian soldiers. The citizens of Madinah were thoroughly humiliated and looted, many were killed¹⁰.

Muslim ibn Uqba then moved towards Makkah. He was only midway when he died. But the Umayyad contingent moved to Makkah anyway and put a siege on the city. Abdullah ibn Zubayr was hunkering down in Makkah while all that was going on. The siege was in force under the command of Husayn¹¹ ibn Numayr. Suddenly news came that Yazid had died. This was the beginning of the 64th year of Hijra. The Umayyad army had to lift the siege and run back to Damascus. Abdullah ibn Zubayr remained in Makkah.

Yazid's son Mu'awiya II refused to accept the position of the ruler of the Muslim kingdom¹². He was poisoned to death.

Abdullah ibn Zubayr still stayed in Makkah. In fact, he took advantage of the political turmoil in Damascus and declared himself Khaleefa in Makkah. The rule of the children of Abu Sufyan ended in Damascus. However, Marwan took over and Marwan and his children's rule started; Umayyad rule continued in Damascus and all over the Muslim kingdom.

The people of Madinah also accepted Abdullah ibn Zubayr as *khalifa*. Thus, the Muslim kingdom was divided between two *khalifas*. Mecca and Madinah as well as Egypt were held by Abdullah ibn Zubayr while the rest of the Muslim kingdom was under the control of Umayyads at Damascus.

Some time later, Abdul Malik ibn Marwan fought and took over Egypt. As Abdul Malik ibn Marwan became a little more stable he fought further and took away more area from ibn Zubayr. Finally, Abdullah ibn Zubayr found himself imprisoned in the city of Makkah. The city was put under siege once again. All imports of food and other everyday needs were blockaded. The citizens of Makkah began starving. People started to leave the city of Makkah and abandon Ibn Zubayr. Finally, Abdul Malik ibn Marwan sent Hajjaj ibn Yusuf to attack Makkah, which he

¹⁰ See for details of this event: *Jazb-al-Quloob* by Muhaddith Dehlavi and Tabari and other books of history

¹¹ This name Husayn is spelled with a SWAD not SEEN (Arabic letters)

¹² For details, see: the book *Hayat-ul-Haywan* by Dimyari

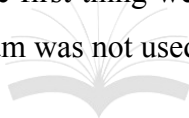
did. Abdullah ibn Zubayr was killed inside Makkah in the year 72 Hijra. His dead body was hung on the gate of the city of Makkah. His mother, Asma bint Abi Bakr was still alive at age 100. People asked *Hajjaj* to let down the remains of ibn Zubayr. But Hajjaj said that if Asma comes and makes a request he would let the corpse down, but Asma refused.

Finally, Hajjaj relented and the dead body of Abdullah ibn Zubayr was taken down.

Conclusion

We have shown very clearly from Qur'an, *hadith* as well as from modern research at academic level, that the lamentation in Muharram to commemorate the tragedy of Karbala is undoubtedly based on Islamic traditions.

We will now conclude our discussion on the Fasting on the day of *Ashura* in a similar way. The first thing we have to realize is that the word *Ashura* for the tenth day of the month of Muharram was not used as such during the time of the Prophet, as we use it today.



Mohsena Memorial Foundation
Connecting Communities Through Education

In fact, this little detail is sufficient proof to the falsity of the report on the fasting of the day of *Ashura*. But let us go on.

The people or institution who fabricated the report did not even know that the Hijra had taken place in the month of Rabi'ul-Awwal. They saw that Islamic calendar began in Muharram, then they (incorrectly) assumed that Hijra must have happened in the month of Muharram. So, they fabricated a report that, as soon as the Prophet arrived in Madinah, he saw (ten days later) that the Jews were fasting on the day of *Ashura*. So, the prophet said that we will also fast on the day of *Ashura*.

Hadith books which were published in India and Pakistan in later times realized that the report could not be true. So, such books carry a note with this report saying that this report must belong to the Muharram of the second year of Hijra.

However, the fabricators did not realize what a serious blame they were placing on the mission of the Prophet of Islam by fabricating the *hadith*. The Qur'an claims that it has come with a new law of Allah and it is therefore, surpassing all old laws of *shari'a*. The Prophet's mission was to give that new law to the community, not to copy the Jewish law in any manner whatsoever.

There are many more weak points in this *hadith*:

- (1) The Jews did neither fast on the day of *Ashura* in the 6th century nor do they do it today. Associating the date of the tenth of Muharram with the Jewish religious culture is untenable and actually totally stupid. Only a person who is absolutely ignorant of the Jewish history would fabricate such a report. The Jews have lived in many parts of the world over the centuries, but they have always used their own calendar. See the website shown [here](#) for the Jewish calendar.



Mohsena Memorial Foundation
Connecting Communities Through Education

- (2) The high point of the Jewish calendar is that the months are lunar but the year is solar, in that, they either add a few days or a month to complete the year to 365 days for the year. Consequently, the Jewish religious festivals do not change over the year in different months as is the case with the Islamic calendar.
- (3) The Jews fast on Yom Kippur, which is the day Hazrat Musa came back after his stay of forty days on the Mountain of Sinai. During that time Samari had built a golden calf and had misguided the Bani Israel to worship it. Hazrat Musa destroyed the golden calf and saved the Bani Israel from idol worship once again¹³. Yom Kippur is the Eid of that salvation. This festival always falls in the month of September or October. Yom Kippur happens on the tenth day of the month of Tishri (the seventh month of the Jewish

¹³ This story is told in the Bible book of Exodus. The holy Qur'an describes it in verses 148-152 of Sura Al-Baqara (chapter 2) with slight differences

calendar).

- (4) Yom Kippur cannot be connected with the *Ashura* of Muharram by any stretch of the imagination or logical reasoning.
- (5) According to the most authentic historical reports, the Prophet of Islam left Makkah on the first day of Rabi-ul-Awwal and arrived in Quba after Hijra on the 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal. That date is found to be the 20th of September of 622 A.D. That was the day of Yom Kippur of the Jewish year number 4383. Once Yom Kippur had happened during the month of Muharram 38 years before the Hijra. And the second time it had happened in the 28th year after the Hijra. This year in 2018 A.D., Yom Kippur fell on the 9th of Muharram (1440th year of Hijra). The Muharram of the year of the actual Hijra had fallen in the month of July. As we said, that Muharram had come and gone before the Hijra. Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to connect Yom Kippur to the day of *Ashura*.



Logical Reasoning

After considering all these details, it becomes crystal clear that there is no credibility of the report on the fasting on the day of *Ashura*. This is all propaganda by the Umayyads and their partisans. It is obvious that the massacre of Karbala was such an egregious crime, both from the religious as well as purely human considerations that the Umayyads were out to cover up their crime by any means possible. A very obvious way to obfuscate the truth was to declare the day of *Ashura* as a day of celebration. They began such frivolous reports in the oral traditions, from the very early days. But the community knew all about it. That is why we do not see any documented evidence of this report until the time the *hadith* books known to us as the Sahih of Bukhari and Muslim became popular.

That has happened because the extensive writing of the Islamic law and history did not really begin until the Umayyads were overthrown and the Abbasids came to power. That had happened in the year 132 Hijra.

There is no mention of the fast on the Day of *Ashura* in any of the writings of the four Imam of Fiqh: Abu Haneefa (d.150), Malik ibn Anas, the author of Muwatta (d. 179). Imam Shafi'i (d. 204), Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.241).

Bukhari comes in the 3rd year of Hijra. His year of death is 259. Then comes Muslim(d.261) and then the other four authors of the *Sahah Sitta*.

It was not until the Anti-Umayyad fervor had died down in the Abbasid period that Bukhari came and mentioned the *hadith* of the fasting on the Day of *Ashura* and then Muslim followed him. There is no mention of any such *hadith* before the time of Bukhari. Finally the agents of Banu Umayya became successful in bringing the *hadith* of the fast of the Day of *Ashura* into mainstream Islam. The larger Muslim community took the *hadith* to heart because it is mentioned in the Book of Bukhari, without realizing that it is a political ploy and a propaganda by the Umayyad agents, to obfuscate the truth.

One has to look at it from a neutral point of view and see why this one Mustahab fast is shouted about so vehemently from every pulpit. Why not any other Mustahab Fast?

The story of the sacrifice by Imam Husayn and his companions was being propagated by the lamentation and commemoration of dirges, which was started by Imam Husayn's sister Zaynab bint Ali right after the event. The message has been popularized over the centuries based on human compassion, sympathy and love towards the *mazloom* and hate and disgust towards the *zalim*.

It becomes very clear that the twin messages of the propaganda that the lamentation and commemoration of the martyrs of Karbala has no Islamic basis and the push for the fast of the day of *Ashura* have one common purpose and goal- obfuscation of truth and covering up of the greatest crime in history – the massacre of the family of The Prophet of Islam at the hands of the Umayyad tyrants, who claimed to be Muslims themselves.