

The Ideals of Human Dignity & Justice: Imam Husayn

Arba'een 2015 - Downtown Islamic Center, Chicago, IL





Honoring the Sacrifice

The remembrance of the tragedy of Imam Husayn (a), the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s), is performed by millions of Muslims worldwide. The focal point of these gatherings, the Imam alongside his family and companions, are those who exemplify the Islamic heritage in their character and their heroic stand against injustice. Those who gather to mourn for these pure souls exhibit an intensity of spirit, love, and grief that creates an emotional bond to the men and women who represent Islam at its very core. The famous tradition of the Prophet summarizes this reality: “Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn.”¹

These gatherings of mourning take on a variety of forms and expressions that differ based on cultural context. America’s diverse Muslim landscape, which includes a variety of immigrant and indigenous communities, has created opportunities to integrate cultural expressions that originated overseas with the inauguration of new forms that resonate with a broader American culture. Our American context also allows for a broader interaction that cuts across ideological-lines for shared social goals and sacred remembrance.

Today’s gathering, titled “Imam Husayn: The Ideals of Human Dignity and Justice”, is a humble attempt to create a space in the city for American Islamic commemorative programs. May Allah (swt) accept our worship and devotion, and may the cause of Imam Husayn inspire us to help create a better future.

[1] Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v4, p. 172

The Tragedy of Karbala: A Synopsis

Fourteen hundred years ago Husayn ibn Ali (a) along with his family and closest companions were martyred. Many throughout history have met a similar fate and others have made noble sacrifices. What is then unique about Karbala and the stand of Imam Husayn? Why is an event that occurred so long ago still alive in the hearts of people of conscience fourteen hundred years later? What is this flame, around which all hearts circle like moths?

Imam Husayn was the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and the son of the Prophet's beloved daughter, Fatima. It is in the laps of these three illuminated personalities where the Imam would form his pious, loving, and justice-seeking personality. It is no surprise then, how the Imam would respond when tyranny took hold of the Muslim government.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah was corrupt and cruel, but what made him uniquely problematic was the blatant pride with which he undertook his corruption and cruelty. Upon his appointment to the Caliphate—illegal and invalid pursuant to treaties signed by his father—he required Husayn to pledge allegiance to him.

Husayn refused, cognizant that the only way to awake the sleeping conscience of his fellow believers and fight injustice was to take a brave stand against Yazid. Regarding these political developments, Imam Husayn is reported to have said: “Do you not see that the truth is not followed and falsehood is not discouraged? The situation is so severe that I would not be surprised should a believer seek to meet Allah by death. And today I don't see death as anything but prosperity, and living with tyrants is nothing but disgrace.”

Husayn was joined by a select few from the Muslim community, mostly from among his family and close companions. The community his grandfather had mentored and developed on principles of justice and ethics failed to support him, the best of his community, against a notoriously corrupt ruler. Be it fear, apathy, misinformation, negligence, or outright hypocrisy that drove their actions, the

community had moved away from the Islam of the Prophet.

Husayn knew his refusal could lead to a confrontation with Yazid. He knew that the community would fail him. He knew that his companions would likely number only a few dozen. And he knew that he and his family would face immeasurable pain. But he also knew that the only way he could reform his grandfather's community and jolt it out of its stupor was by opposing Yazid with a deeply dignified, sincere, and courageous stand. For if someone of Husayn's stature and piety pledged allegiance to someone like Yazid, it would be a final admission that his grandfather's legacy was for naught; a shell of the principled, ethical, and truth-seeking soul from which it began.

Husayn sacrificed so much while facing such hostility and oppression. His sacrifice was sincere, his goals lofty: encouraging his grandfather's community to do good, and forbidding them from furthering evil. It is for this reason that Husayn ibn Ali's stand at Karbala echoes throughout the world thirteen hundred years after its occurrence. This is Husayn, for whom so much of the world has been inspired.

“ Among the faithful are men who are truthful to what they have pledged to Allah. Among them are those whose fulfillment of their pledge has come to pass, and among them are those who anticipate their turn. They have not changed in the least.

- The Holy Qur'an, 33:23

Arba'een Gathering (*Majlis*) of Imam Husayn

Program Schedule

5:00	<i>Maghrib</i> Prayer
5:15	Recitation of the Holy Qur'an (Arabic)
5:20	Recitation of the Holy Qur'an (English)
5:25	Poetry, Prose, and Reflections
6:00	Speech by Sayyid Sulayman Hassan
6:45	Eulogy
6:50	Salutation (<i>Ziyarah</i>) to Husayn and the Martyrs of Karbala
6:55	' <i>Isha</i> Prayer
7:05	Question and Answer Discussion Session
7:45	Dinner

قال رسول الله
صلى الله عليه وسلم
بين وبيننا وبينكم
بين وبيننا وبينكم

A Revolution

This is a revolution of tears.

This is a revolution of love.

This is a revolution of beauty.

Of eternal salvation.

A revolution of evolution.

Of the mind and the soul and the world as a whole.

This.

Is a revolution.

A man making his eternal stand, his sister prostrating onto the sand

The tears, the pain, the chaos—insane; his beard once white and now bloodstained

His family slaughtered, their bodies now scattered,

The faces in front of him: once with him, now hating him.

A promise forgotten, he stood there abandoned, but no despair showed in his prayer

God was his only goal, saving Islam his only role.

With dhikr on his lips and a soul so extolled

The ground trembled when his head fell to the floor.

On that day, the skies wept blood.

“Husayn has been killed” was the cry, Husayn has been killed and this is his blood

Time at a standstill, this was their free-will.

Fire and chains; hunger and thirst.

A mother’s pain, a sister’s hurt.

Even in rags and chains, their dignity could not be taken away.

The walk of her mother; the talk of her father.

Her words raged in their ears, her face showed no sign of fear

They wanted to break her, so they tried to mock her, but all they could do was gawk when she said

“I see nothing except the beauty of God”

She said,

I see nothing but beauty.

And with these tears, nations will rise

And with these words the fire in our enemies dies.

The fire in our hearts over the love of Husayn, should be so strong it can’t be contained.

From the message of Husayn, there’s so much to retain

Justice, truth, and God must all be maintained.

And there is nothing they can do to hurt us, there is nothing they can do to stop us

And this is a revolution.

This is a revolution.

— But this, today, this is not a revolution.

A nation of Apathy, we never get antsy. Our maximum sympathies are lacking humanity

The enemy laughs ever so gladly as we sit by idly doing nothing too fancy
Our gazes are fixed, our minds are Husayn, we want to be by his side,
but our cries slowly subside
Consoling ourselves over the loss of Husayn, we shop till we drop and
buy all these brand names
We think we're okay, the best of mankind, little do we know we're back-
ing war-crimes
We're dancing and laughing, in entertainment immersed.
But there's Occupation frustration hunger and thirst
Oppression, subjection, a killer's galore- the world has become every-
thing deplored.

Another man crying, a prince in disguise, wondering how we can be so
blind
He shakes his head and bides his time, waiting for us to finally realize
That these two men are one and the same, a message sublime, a leader
divine
The lower we fall the higher we'll rise, the brighter the moon the higher
the tide.

— Anonymous Guest, a sample piece from “Imam Husayn: The Ideals
of Human Dignity and Justice”



Program Glossary

Ahl al-Bayt: Literally “The People of the House,” referring to the Family of the Prophet, most commonly defined as Ali, Fatima, Hassan, Husayn & Husayn’s descendants

(s): Short for *ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa ālihi wa sallam*, meaning “May blessings and peace be upon him (the Prophet) and his family”

(a): Short for *‘Alayhi al-salām or as-salām*. “Peace Be Upon Him/Her.” Often used after naming a sacred personality related to the Prophet

Arba‘een: Commemoration subsequent to the fortieth day after one’s death

Imam: Spiritual guide and leader; Divine Guide with reference to the Prophet and his successors

Muharram: First Month in the Islamic (*Hijri*) Calendar

Salawaat: “*Allahumma salli ‘ala Muhammad wa āli Muhammad*” - The Sending of Peace and blessings upon the Prophet and His family

Ziyarah: Visitation to or sending salutations upon the Ahl al-Bayt

Additional Information relating to Imam Husayn, Karbala, and ‘Ashura can be found at:

<http://www.al-islam.org/karbala-and-ashura-ali-husayn-jalali>

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