

THE LESSONS FROM THE SACRIFICE OF IMAM HUSSAIN (RA)

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We owe it to our children and youth born and being raised in the west , that we tell them the story of one of the greatest sacrifices in the history of mankind and the lessons learned from it.

Muhurram, the first month of the Islamic Calender, which marks the concept of emigration (Hijra) in the cause of Allah (SWT) is also sacred for many other reasons. It was the tenth of this month that Prophet Noah (P) sailed his arc, and it was this day that Prophet Moses (P) led Israelites to the exodus from Egypt. Jews used to fast on this day but Prophet Muhammad (P) advised Muslims to fast both ninth and tenth of Muhurram.

However, it is the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain and seventy one members of his family and associates which took place of this day at Karabala that we Muslims remember most. Caliph Muawiya called for appointing his son Yazid to follow him. After Muawiya's death his son Yazid declared himself the caliph starting an unprecedented tradition.

He demanded allegiance from Hussain, son of Aliibn Talib (Prophet's cousin, son-in-law, and the fourth caliph). At that time, Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic religion symbol living at that time. The people of Kufa (the capitol of Iraq) did not like the rule of Muawiya or his son Yazid because of their oppressive policies and deviation from Islam. So they invited Hussain to come to Kufa to talk Yazid out of Caliphate. Thus Imam Hussain set out to Kufa at the invitation of the people on a mission of peace, along with his family and associates. He should have rebelled and declared himself the caliph in Medina, but he did not. On his way to Kufa, it became evident to Imam Hussain that war was the being forced upon him, when the army of Yazid stopped him at Karbala. He made an offer of peace in asking

- a) he be allowed to return to Medina
- b) be taken to Yazid for a direct one to one talk
- c) be sent to a Muslim land.

Hur bin Yazid, with 20,000 men strong did not accept any of his orders from the governor of Iraq, Abdullah bin Ziyad to his mistake and defected to the side of Hussain just before the starting of war.

For ten days, while Hussain and his caravan camped at Karbala, they were surrounded by the hostile force and deprived of food and water. On the tenth day, orders to force Hazrat Imam Hussain to accept allegiance or to kill him were given to Shamir, commanding 5000 to 10,000 soldiers. All male members of Hussain's family and close associates were killed. He was last to be killed and beheaded. He had sixty-seven wounds on his body. A seven month old infant son of Hussain was also killed by an arrow while in Hussain's lap who was asking for some water for the baby. Their bodies were run over by horses or desecrated and then left to decompose. Seventy-two heads were taken of Kufa at the tip of spears and presented to the court of Ibn Ziyad, then across the desert to Damascus to face Yazid. The prisoners of war were mostly women and children and one man in his twenties Zainul Abedin who was very sick in the tent, thus spared.

Lessons from the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain.

A. Islam is not a religion of compromise. Living with peace with forces of oppression is wrong. If Imam Hussain had pledged allegiance to a tyrant ruler, he could have saved his neck, and would have most likely given a high post by the Caliph who would have allowed him to do his prayer, fasting, and other ritual acts of worship. But he was the grandson of a prophet who said, "One of the greatest jihad is to stand up to a tyrant ruler, and say a word of truth."

Therefore, Imam Hussain in one of his speeches on the way to Karbala said,

"To live with an oppressor is a crime in itself"

He also knew Quran, and knew that striving in the cause of Allah brings immense reward,

" Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might in Allah's cause, with their goods and their people, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah, They are the people who will achieve Salvation. (9:20)

"O you who believe! Shall I read you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous penalty? That you believe in God and in his messenger, and you strive in the cause of Allah with your property and your people, that will be the best for you if you knew it. 11(69:10-11) "And strive in the cause of Allah as you ought to strive". (22:76) And those who strive in our cause - we will certainly guide them to Our Path. For verily Allah is with those who do good" (29:69)

B. The second lesson is the concept of ownership of life and giving it to the cause of the owner. Our body and life belong to our Creator, and should be spent on His cause.

Even if we do that, all we are doing is returning it to the original owner. There is a great reward for martyrdom. A martyr is next to Prophets in heaven.

"And if you are slain or die in the cause of Allah, Forgiveness and Mercy from Allah are far better than they could amass, and if you die or are slain, lo it is unto Allah that you are brought together". (3:157-158)

"Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah and are then slain or die, on them Allah will bestow good provision. Truly Allah is He who bestows the best provision." (2:58-59)

C. The third lesson, is standing up to trial when we are called. This has to be a criterion for entering into Heaven. Allah says:

Do you think you will enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) as come to those before you." (2:214)

"Allah has purchased of their believers their persons and their goods. For theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise). (9:111)

All of the prophets had tests of their own. Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) had many tests, including being thrown into fire.

D. The fourth lesson we learn from the story of Imam Hussain (RA) is that of sacrifice.

To give life in the cause of Allah is the ultimate Sacrifice. Can we sacrifice our money we love so much for charity, our precious time for the education of our children, can we sacrifice our false pride in our race, color, language, and national origin, and of our sect, and accept other Muslims as brothers and sisters?

Now let us ask ourselves what are we mourning and why are we mourning?

If we are mourning the death of Imam Hussain, Quran tells us that Martyrs are not dead.

"And do not call those who die in the way of Allah as "Dead", no they are living, only you do not see them. (2:154)

If we are mourning his defeat, certainly if he would have surrendered to Yazid and pledged allegiance to him, he would have been defeated, but he did not, in fact his Sacrifice prevented Kingdom and Monarchy to establish a form of Government in Islam, and Caliphate continued for hundreds of years. It is this death of Yazid's ideology which the poet mentions.

In the Murder of Hussain,

In deed is the death of Yazid.

Each Karbala revives Islam.

Muhurram is not just for ten days, and then going back to the business as usual. For a Muslim who stands up to fight in the cause of Allah, for him the place is Karbala, the month is Muhurram, the day is Ashura. He is Imam Hussain and his opponent is Yazid.

Muhurram is not just for Shia but for all Muslims.