

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficient, The Merciful

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ
وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالشَّمْرِاتِ^{قُل} وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

In Verse 155 of the 2nd Surah, Al-Baqarah, Allah says:

Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

There was a man who never missed the night long A'maal of Laylatul Qadr. He would stay awake all night at the masjid and all the people were aware of this. They knew that even if they fell asleep, he would, without a doubt, be awake. However, one year on the night of Qadr, he dozed off, and when his eyes opened, he heard the 'Adhaan of Salaatul Fajr. He was extremely upset and wondered how he allowed himself to fall asleep on this particular night, although he had managed to stay awake on that night every single year. He went home in a depressed state, and when night fell, he fell asleep once again. He had a perplexing dream where he was on the plains of Arafaat on the Day of Judgement and there were angels everywhere, handing gifts to all those around him. He asked an angel who these

people were and why they were being handed gifts. The angel replied that these were the noble souls who had annually performed the A'maal of Laylatul Qadr with sincerity and faith. Once again, he was surprised and asked "Why am I with these people? I didn't perform it this year", to which the Angel replied "You may have not performed the A'maal of Laylatul Qadr, but there is one act which you perform daily with which Alla_ (Subhaanahu Wa Ta 'Aalaa) is extremely pleased." Again, this man was shocked and asked what this act was. The angel replied "The way you drink water is extremely pleasing to Alla_ (Subhaanahu Wa Ta 'Aalaa). You always begin with Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim, you always sip your water instead of gulping it down and you always remember the thirst of Imam Hussein ('Alayhis Salaam) and curse his killers".

This anecdote illustrates how important it is just to **remember** Imam Hussein ('Alayhis Salaam) in a simple action such as drinking water which all of us take for granted on a daily basis.

That is why, right before going onto the battlefield to meet with his death, Imam Hussein ('Alayhis Salaam) told our 4th Imam to pass on an important message to his followers. He said "Tell them I say Salaam to them and that they should remember my thirst when they drink water." He said this because water is one of the fundamental necessities of life and he wanted his Shi'as to remember him constantly, as water is something we use everyday, if not for drinking then for Wudhu. By remembering him every time we drink water cements the magnitude of

his sacrifice in our minds and reminds us of our duties towards him and his family with our every breath.

By not gulping down our water and instead sipping it in a civilized manner also inculcates a degree of patience. When we are thirsty, we usually just open the refrigerator and chug down a litre of water without even thinking twice. This usually leaves us panting and short of breath, but still thirsty. Our Prophets and Imams have taught us the proper etiquette of drinking water, by sipping it patiently. These manners were taught to us because patience is not a natural human characteristic. As human beings, we endeavour to practice Sabr, but many times our very imperfect nature causes us to fall short.

However, there is a precious personality in our history books who, we are told, never let her impatience get the better of her. She always remained calm and sensible, and always conducted her duties with the utmost patience. I think by now you have all guessed who I am talking about. I am referring to our beloved Lady Zaynab Binte 'Ali ('Alayhas Salaam) whose patience knew no bounds. Be it on the plains of Kerbala, in the streets of Damascus or in the court of Yazid, we all see a shining display of her patience. Do we understand the extent of her duties and responsibilities? Have we fully grasped her total sense of modesty and humility? I don't think it's possible for our minds to comprehend her particular brand of patience.

When we think of patience, we usually think of waiting for something or enduring a guest for a few days.

Her patience was nothing like that – it was on an entirely different level. She had to endure death after death. She had to endure seeing the heads of her family mounted on spears and paraded around, an act we could not even begin to fathom. When we see something grotesque on TV, we quickly flip the channel so we don't have to look at it, but Lady Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam) didn't have any reprieve from this sort of cruelty. However, to understand how her patience developed and flourished, we have to take a brief look at her life.

Some scholars divide Lady Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam)'s life into 5 phases.

PHASE ONE was from the time of her birth in 5 A.H. to the death of her grandfather, the Prophet of Islam (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wa Aalihi Wa Sallam) in 11 A.H. This was a time of extreme comfort for Sayyida Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam) as Islam was thriving and the Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wa Aalihi Wa Sallam) was still alive, as were all 5 members of the Ahlul Kisaa (Alayhimus Salaam).

She was the princess of the Ahlul Bayt ('Alayhimus Salaam) at that time. If men had any queries, they would approach Rasullulah or Ameerul Mo'mineen ('Alayhimus Salaam). When the women had any problems, they would consult Lady Fatema ('Alayhas Salaam), and when the young boys would have queries they would confer

with Imam Hassan and Hussein ('Alayhimus Salaam). However, Lady Zaynab ('Alayhas Salaam) was assigned the task of answering the problems of the younger females.

This was a relatively happy time for the Ahlul Bayt, when they were all together and there were no great tragedies.

PHASE TWO lasted for 24 years from the death of the Prophet in 11 AH to the time Imam 'Ali (Alayhis Salaam) got his rightful leadership in 35 AH. This was a time when Lady Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam) had to watch her parents being victims of atrocities at the hands of the so-called Khulafa, such as the incident of Fadaq, the murdering of Hadhrat Muhsin in Lady Fatimah (Alayhas Salaam)'s womb and also the captivity of Imam 'Ali (Alayhis Salaam). At the tender age of 7, Lady Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam) had to endure the death of her mother, Fatemat uz Zahra (Alayhas Salaam), and had to assume the duties of her household. She watched as all these atrocities took place, but it did not break her, only made her stronger. During this period, she got married to her cousin 'Abdullah ibne Ja'far-e-Tayyaar, who commented that "Zaynab is the best housewife" and with whom she had 5 children, 4 boys and 1 girl.

THE 3RD PHASE lasted 6 years and it was when Imam Ali (Alayhis Salaam) finally got his rightful position as the Khaleefa, changing his headquarters to Kufa. There, Lady Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam) established a Madrasah for women. The details of

this institution are scarce, but what we do know is that it was extremely organized with scheduled lectures and a defined curriculum. She educated the ladies of Kufa of all the pressing issues of the time and answered any queries that they had. She took her title of “Saniye Zahra” extremely seriously and succeeded in doing what her mother had started out in Medina.

She was extremely intelligent, and Imam Zainul ‘Aabideen (‘Alayhis Salaam) called her “Aalima ghair Mu’alima” which means “She who possesses knowledge without being taught”. However, she was careful to balance her teaching activities with her household duties. When the queries and discussions of the women would be over, she would head home so she could resume her responsibilities as a wife, a mother and daughter.

THE 4TH PHASE of her life ran from 40 AH, the death of Imam Ali (Alayhis Salaam) to 61 AH, the year of the event of Karbala. This was also a time of extreme pressure for Lady Zaynab (Alayhas Salaam) as she had to deal with the deaths of her father and her brother, Imam Hassan (‘Alayhis Salaam). This was a time when the events leading up to the event of Kerbala were transpiring such as the signing of the treaty of Imam Hassan (‘Alayhis Salaam) with Mu’awiyah (La’natullayhi Alayh).

THE 5TH AND FINAL PHASE of her life, as we all know is of course, from the battle of At-Taff (Karbala) to the time of her death. This was the most difficult phase in her

life and also what she had been groomed for her entire life, as she had to deal with the loss of not only her brothers, but her sons, nephews, nieces and many faithful companions of her family. It did not end there as she had to also endure the captivity and humiliation of the women being paraded to and in Damascus without veils and on unsaddled camels. It was a journey which, at the time, usually took 32 days but which this oppressed group completed in a hurry in only 16 days. At this time, Lady Zaynab ('Alayhas Salaam) exerted her authority and took charge of her household. Even her nephew, the Imam of the time respected her authority so much so that he would ask of her opinion before making any vital decisions. This phase was also the one in which she demonstrated her patience for all to see, from being made to wait outside the court of Yazid for several hours, to refraining from food so that the young children could eat the meagre food that Yazid sent to the dungeons of Damascus. As we can see, her whole life was filled with tribulations and atrocities which built up her confidence and her patience.

This is the true role of women in Islam, to rise up when need be. Non-Muslims can not say that women in Islam are oppressed and subservient when we have a shining example of bravery and courage in our own Lady Zaynab ('Alayhas Salaam). They are wrong if they say that Islam suppresses women, and when they do say this, we have to respond by asking them that, if our women are so oppressed and meek, how come Lady Zaynab ('Alayhas Salaam) stood up in front of an entire court of men and proclaimed the wrongdoings of her grandfather's Ummah?

Lady Zaynab (‘Alayhas Salaam) had the characteristics of her entire family – she had the knowledge of her grandfather, the generosity of her father, the modesty and humility of her mother, the patience of her brother Hassan (Alayhis Salaam) and the courage of her brother Hussein (Alayhis Salaam). She witnessed the lives of the Ahlul Kisa (Alayhimus Salaam) and she was present when the last of them left this earth and yet she pressed on with one aim, one goal in mind – to save and revive the religion that each one in her family had given up their lives for.

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