

# السلام عليك يا زين العابدين و سيد الساجدين

IMAM AL-SAJJĀD <sup>[AS]</sup>

امام السجاد (ع)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 5

## Imam al-Sajjād (as)

### Objectives >>>

#### Students should:

- Briefly discuss the historical environment in which the Imam lived after Karbala and the reasons for the Imam's grief
- Discuss the importance of building a strong relationship with Allah by discussing and analysing excerpts from the Imam's du'as

Imam al-Sajjād (as) was the son of Imam Ḥusayn (as) and his wife, Shahzanaan, the daughter of the past king of Iran. Imam al-Sajjād (as) was the only son of Imam Ḥusayn (as) to survive the battle of Karbala. The Holy Imam lived for about thirty-four years after his father. He was poisoned in 95AH after thirty-five years of Imamate. In this lesson we will briefly outline some of the many aspects of the Holy Imam's life.

### HIS WORSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE

Imam al-Sajjād's (as) holy name provides a synonym for the perfect worshipper. Like his grandfather Imam 'Alī (as), he prayed 1,000 rak'āt every day and night. His constant prostration in worship earned him the titles of al-Sajjād (The one who constantly prostrates), Zainul'Abidīn (The adornment of the worshippers), and Ḍul Thaaafenāt, referring to the calluses which every year formed on, and fell off his skin in the spots touching the ground in prostration.

The knowledge and piety of this Holy Imam was matchless. His knowledge of Allah (SWT) was so perfect, that whenever he sat for ablution for prayers, the complexion of his face would change and when he stood at prayer his body was seen trembling. When asked why this was, he replied, "Don't you know before whom I stand in prayer, and with whom I hold discourse?" The Prophet (saw) said;

“On the day of Judgement a caller will call, “Where is the adornment of the worshippers (Zainul-Ābidīn)?” and it is as if I am looking at my son Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn emerging from between the rows”<sup>1</sup>

### HIS CHARITY

Like his grand-father Imam 'Ali (as), Imam al-Sajjād (as) used to carry bags of flour and bread for the poor and needy families in Medina on his own back at night and in this way maintained

hundreds of poor families in the city. His son, the fifth Imam (as) says:

“Verily he used to provide for one hundred households from among the poor of Madina. He liked for the orphans, the needy, the disabled, the poor and the destitute to be present at his food spread. He served them with his own hands. If anyone among them had a family, he used to take the food to their household. He never ate any food but that he first gave charity from it”<sup>ii</sup>



## DURING & AFTER KARBALA

During Karbala, the holy Imam was 22 or 23 years of age and by the wisdom of Allah (SWT) he was extremely ill and thus unable to physically fight in the battlefield. In this way his holy life was saved and Imamatus (divine leadership) continued.

After the gruesome day of 'Ashurā', the brutal forces of Yazīd's army took the ladies and children as captives, carrying them seated on the bare back of the camels. The Holy Imam, although sick, was put in heavy chains with iron rings around his neck and his ankles, and was made to walk barefooted on the thorny plains from Karbala to Kufah and to Damascus. When the Imam's caravan finally arrived at the court of the

tyrant, Yazīd, in Damascus, the Imam despite his physical exhaustion and emotional pain was able to deliver an eloquent sermon reminding the people who he was and of all his virtues. The effect of the speech was so powerful that everybody in the court began to weep and blame Yazīd. Yazīd was afraid that if Imam continued his speech, there would be a revolution and revolt.

Below is an excerpt from the sermon:

"Whoever recognizes me knows me, and whoever does not recognize, let me tell him who I am and to what family I belong..... I am the son of Mecca and Mina; I am the son of Zamzam and al-Şafa; I am the son of the one who carried Zakāt in the ends of the mantle; I am the son of the best man who ever put on a loincloth and clothes..... I am the son of the man whose body lies alone on the ground in Karbala, surrounded by angels and the jinns for whom all the wild animals even cry"<sup>iii</sup>

## IMAM'S STRATEGIC METHOD OF PREACHING

When the Imam was returned to Madina for the second time, he retired from an active public life in order to avoid any suspicion from his enemies. He strategically was in contact only with the elite among the Shi'ites such as Abu Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, Abu Khālid al-Kabulī and the like. On one hand he trained these elite in the sciences of Islam and asked them to spread it, and on the other he recited several supplications which contained comprehensive Islamic teachings in theology, ethics and spirituality. In this way Shi'ism spread considerably and showed its effects during the Imamatus of the Fifth Imam.

Among the works of the fourth Imam is a book called al-Şahifah al-Sajjādiyyah. It consists of fifty-seven supplications. The spiritual richness contained in these supplications demonstrates the lofty status of the Imam and his close proximity with Allah (SWT). We, followers of the Ahlul Bayt possess a treasure in these supplications. An excerpt from one of these supplications follows:

“My God, who can have tasted the sweetness of Your Love, then wanted another in place of You? And who can have become intimate with Your nearness, then sought removal from You?

Oh God, place us among those whose habit is rejoicing in You and yearning for You, whose time is spent in sighing and moaning!”<sup>iv</sup>

## **THE IMAM'S GRIEF**

Several accounts are related concerning Zayn al-Abidin's grief over the tragedy of Karbala. It is said that for twenty years whenever food was placed before him, he would weep. One day a servant said to him, 'O son of Allah's Messenger! Is it not time for your sorrow to come to an end?' He replied:

"Woe upon you! Jacob the prophet had twelve sons, and Allah made one of them disappear. His eyes turned white from constant weeping, his head turned grey out of sorrow, and his back became bent in gloom, though his son was alive in this world. But I watched while my father, my brother, my uncle, and seventeen members of my family were slaughtered all around me. How should my sorrow come to an end?"

The Imam (as) also showed his grief so that the Muslims would never forget the values demonstrated by Imam Ḥusayn and his companions in Karbala, and remain motivated to establish true Islam.

## **RESPECTING THE MOURNERS**

One of Imam's companions invited the Imam (as) to his house on the occasion of his daughter's wedding. The Imam (as) politely requested to be excused from attending as since his father's martyrdom he never attended wedding ceremonies. The companion of the Imam was very saddened by this and told the Imam that he would do anything that would make the Imam attend. The Imam requested to have a short majlis for his father (as) and the companion happily obliged.

On the day of the occasion, the companion of the Imam was restlessly awaiting the presence of his dear Imam. He kept looking around for the Imam but he could not find him. He thought to himself: 'It is impossible for my Imam to promise me

something and not fulfil it'. So he went out of the house to look for the Imam. To his surprise and utter embarrassment, he saw the holy Imam on his knees arranging the shoes of all the visitors. The companion could not see this and burst out into tears rushing to stop the Imam from doing so. "Oh Son of the Messenger of Allah, *you (of all the people) are arranging the shoes?!!*"

The Imam replied "You do not understand the high and lofty status of those who attend the majlis of my father"!

## **Review Questions**

### **1. The title of the Imam, Zainul 'Ābidīn, means?**

- a. The peak of eloquence
- b. The adornment of the worshipper
- c. The one who prostrates

### **2. The Imam was ill during Karbala so that:**

- a. His life would be saved and the Imam after Imam Ḥusayn could continue
- b. He could protect the women and children after Karbala
- c. He could bury the martyrs of Karbala

### **3. The Imam of the Imam lasted 35 years, and in this time he:**

- a. Strategically spread the message of Islam
- b. Trained special companions with Islamic sciences
- c. Recited supplications which were rich in Islamic principles
- d. All of the above

<sup>i</sup> Bihar Al Anwar Vol.46 pg3,No.1

<sup>ii</sup> Al Manaqib Li Ibn Shahr Ashub Vol 4, Pg 154

<sup>iii</sup> For the full sermon, please visit

<http://english.almaaref.org/essaydetails.php?eid=2082&cid=245>

<sup>iv</sup> Munajat Muhibbeen (Whispered prayers of the Lovers)