

How to make the most of Ziyarah of the Ahlul Bayt (a)

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The present booklet is a summarization of a lecture delivered in Qum, it explains the meaning and the manners in which Ziyarah should be performed. It also outlines the etiquette of performing Ziyarah and the many blessing that come from performing such an act.

How to make the most of Ziyarah of the Ahlul Bayt (a)

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Outline of class delivered on this topic in July, 2008 in the Holy City of Qum, Islamic Republic of Iran.

Definitions

Ziyarat

What is the definition of ziyarah? Some people will say that it means to read something. Others will say that it means to go in person to visit someone. The reality is that ziyarah is an action of the heart, and involves turning to someone with his heart. We can do ziyarah of people like the ma'asumeen (a). We can also do ziyarah of Allah, and in some du'as we refer to the zuwwar of Allah (swt) (اللهم اجعلني من زوارك)

Mazoor

One who is being turned to in *ziyarat*

Zaair (plural=Zuwwaar)

One who performs ziyarat

Before the ziyarah

Feeling special

Feel special that you have been invited to perform ziyarah of the mazoor. Ulamaa of akhlaq tell us that no one can come for ziyarah without a personal invitation of the mazoor. Not everyone has been given this invitation.

How many people from your country do you know who are having a mundane day today, while you have been given such an amazing opportunity? It is due to the mazoor's invitation that you are going for ziyarah. Even though it may seem that you did all the work of getting a visa, buying a ticket, packing your bags, etc., these were just formalities. They were the ones who made the arrangements that made it possible for you to go. Special note for visiting Imam *Ridha* (a): As a foreigner here he has special attention on you because he is the *ghareeb*.

Remember the mazoor

Constantly remember the mazoor from the moment you leave and even on your way back home. Know that his particular attention is on you during this whole time. They have attention on you from city to city as you travel to him. Let us not be afflicted by *ghaflat* either in the journey or especially when we enter the haram. There are many interesting sights to see on the way into the haram that could easily distract us, such as people from countries around the world. Leave those aside and focus on what's important.

Gain ma'rifah or awareness of the mazoor

The task of needing to remember the mazoor obviously requires us to know who the mazoor is. For example, how we can remember *Hadhrat Fatima al-Ma'sumah* (a) without knowing anything about her? That is why we need to find out more about who they were. One of the best ways of doing so is to read the text of the ziyarah of these personalities to learn their outstanding characteristics and the reverence that later Imams had for them. But sometimes it is difficult for us to find out specific information about this particular mazoor. In that case we can remember the outstanding characteristics of the Ahlul Bayt (a) as a whole and their role in being the medium for all the blessings of Allah (swt) to reach us.

Take care of worldly needs

In the upcoming spiritual experience, don't let yourself be distracted by physical needs, such as hunger, sleep, or going to the bathroom. Many people who come for camps in particular don't get enough sleep at night and as a result they are too weak to be able to summon the necessary spiritual attention to the mazoor.

During the ziyarah

Observing etiquette

Be aware of and adhere to the etiquette (*adaab*) of ziyarah such as:

- o Ghusl
- o Taharah (be in wudhu + ensure your body and clothing are *taahir*)
- o Recite *idhn al-dukhoor*

Lecture of Agha Siddiqi 3/ 18/06: Narrating from Ayatullah Behjat with comments of his own: When you go for ziyarat to the haram, pause at the gate / door / entrance and seek permission to enter. If then, tears come to your eyes, know that you have been accepted as a زائر. If not, then it's not that you shouldn't go, since you can go as a سائل and the Ahlul Bayt (a) who embody all of the آيات of the Qur'an including و أما السائل فلا تنهر won't turn you away (in fact they don't turn away non-Muslims). And according to Behjat, if tears don't come to you, you should pretend to cry (do تباكي).

- Enter the haram calmly and purposefully.
- Walk humbly with short steps and your head down.
- Keep your focus on your task at hand (*huzoor-e-qalb*).
- If possible, enter with tears in your eyes.
- Kiss the doorstep.
- Even though they are aware of your needs (*haajaat*), still state your needs to the mazoor.

Pay attention to the mazoor

- Know that he is alive. It is as if you are visiting them in person. There is no difference between when they are alive and when they are dead.

A ahadith say *Whoever does our ziyarat after we die is as if he did so when we were alive*

من زارنا في مماتنا كأنما زارنا في حياتنا

Think of it as if you are going to visit them in their home.

- Soften your heart
- Ponder the greatness of the personality who lies within. Gaze upon the physical greatness and beauty of the shrine within which they lie and know that this is just an incomparable fraction of the greatness which he possesses.
- Envision that he sees and hears you. Imams (a) can hear us greet them and say salaam to them even if there are many people taking their attention at the same time, as they have manifested the attribute of Allah, لا يشغله شأن عن شأن (no affair distracts Him from

attending to any other affair). The gist of the following passage is contained in many of the idhn-e-dukhoos we recite at the gate of the harams:

اللهم و إني أعتقد حرمة نبيك في غيبته كما أعتقدها في حضرته و أعلم أن رسلك و

خلفاءك أحياء عندك يرزقون يرون مكاني هذا في وقتي هذا و يردون علي سلامي و

أنك حجبت عن سمعي كلامهم و فتحت باب فهمي بلذيت مناجاتهم

O Allah! And I believe in the sanctity of your Prophet (s) in his inaccessibility as I believe in it in his presence. And I know that your Prophet and your successors are alive, close to you, and are being sustained. They see my position here and now and they hear my words in here and now. They respond to my salaam, but you have veiled their words from my hearing, and [instead] you have opened the door to my understanding [their response] with the pleasure of secret conversation with them.

- Recall how much love the Ahlul Bayt (a) have for their shi'as and their zuwwaar
- How much have we and do we continue to hurt them by turning away from their guidance with our evil deeds
- How much we owe them. They are the source of all goodness in creation.
- Establish a spiritual connection with the mazoor.
- Be in a state of *du'a*: Some people think of *du'a* as something that needs to be read. But the higher form of *du'a* is a state of the heart and is a state of calling upon Allah through the appropriate channels for help. We need to have that state of need and wanting about us in order to feel the response of the mazoor to our ziyarah.
- Sometimes we will perform ziyarah and not feel that special connection with the mazoor. That might be due to inexperience and will insha' Allah be rectified with continued effort. It also might be due, *na'udhu billah*, to a lack of *sinkhiyyat* (compatibility) between us and the mazoor. How can there be a connection between two things which have very little in common? How can we claim the love the Ahlul Bayt and yet act in a way that is opposite to the way they want us to act?
- Know the meaning behind salaam. Meanings of *al-salaamu 'alaykum*:
 1. May the salaam of Allah be on you. Here salaam means free from imperfection. In the infinite journey of the finite to the infinite, we are praying for the exaltation of the mazoor. This is not however with the expectation that the mazoor needs our prayer, as he is far exalted beyond that, and Allah (swt) Himself will be attending to the mazoor's affairs.
 2. May my salaam be on you, meaning that I am not at war with you when it comes to my thoughts and

deeds.

Pay attention to the zaireen

- Respect and honor the *zuwwar* who are around you. If someone pushes you, not only should you not get mad at them, but rather consider it to be nothing. Smile politely and say *khaaesh mee kunam* and let them go forward. Know that many of them are uneducated and know no better etiquette. Also many have the mistaken belief that they need to touch the encasing in order for their ziyarah to be accepted. We have ahadith that when there would be large crowds, the imams would salute the black stone from afar. Similarly, although it is *mustahab* to kiss the *zareeh*, it is not necessary and sometimes it can be much better to avoid doing so for your own safety (both physical and spiritual) and for those around you.
- From a lecture by Agha Siddiqi: When one of the contemporary '*urafaa* kisses the *zareeh* he actually sucks it (*mukeedeh*). He is not sucking the *zareeh* nor kissing Bibi Fatima Ma'sumah but rather getting something from Allah.

After the Ziyarah

Gift to the mazoor

Recite a two *rak'a* prayer for Allah (swt) and after the prayer gift the reward of that prayer to the mazoor. Why?

- Best type of gift to give: a) something we know that the recipient likes and b) something that will please the recipient the most. Main purpose of Ahlul Bayt (a) is *tarbiyyat-e-nufoos* (to educate and nurture our souls). What pleases them more than to see us do something that will tarbiyyat ourselves?
- What happens when we give them a gift?
 - a) They will accept it. Part of the etiquette they have taught us when it comes to receiving gifts is to accept them.
 - b) They will respond with something even better. See the verse of the Qur'an:

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا

When you are greeted with a salute, greet with a better one than it, or return it; indeed, Allah takes account of all things. (Al Nisaa ' , 4:86).

Special two rak'a prayer

Once during the ziyarah trip, find a good time and place within the haram where you can have proper

attention, and recite a two rak'a prayer. After the recitation, address the mazoor, saying, "I deposit my iman with you until my death –and I ask you to return this deposit to me at that time." We do this with the intention of wanting the mazoor to be present with us at the time of our death and to strengthen us with our faith on our deathbed when the Shaytan attempts a last effort to steal it away from us. Only the presence of a m'asum will be able to stop him from succeeding. The m'asum will keep his promise unless we commit a major sin.

Be a better person

Upon arriving back home, you will feel like a different person. Things that previously occupied your mind and heart will seem alien to you, and your experience in the *shi'a* homeland that you visited will be imprinted upon yourself. See that you do not do anything to lose this state.

Return often for ziyarah and to renew the spiritual connection

Do ziyarah from afar

Although physical presence is the best since the holy souls of the *ma'asumeen* have the most attention to the physical area surrounding their graves, it is not required. See the definition of ziyarah above. This attention can be done from anywhere and in any state and can be as simple as saying:

السلام عليك يا ابا عبدالله

Story about Ziyarat

Once a lover of the Ahlul Bayt who was a poet went to perform ziyarat of Imam Ali (a) in Najaf and asked Imam Ali (a) for help with something. He then felt it appropriate to compose a line of poetry. Because Imam Ali (a) is known as *Abu Turaab*, the first part of a line of poetry came to him, which said that if only Imam Ali (a) were to pay attention to me the amount of one grain of sand I would indeed gain a lot:

به ذره گر نظر لطف یو تراب کند

He then attempted to complete the line but however hard he tried he couldn't come up with an appropriate ending. That night in his dreams he saw Imam Ali (a) and he recited for him the first half of the line of poetry. Imam completed the line for him and said:

به آسمان رود و کار آفتاب کند

Meaning that if they pay attention to us for even just a moment, one *zarreh* (particle of dust that is visible only in sunlight) with all of its lowliness will do the work of the sun. Many of the *'ulamaa* who are people of *qalam* attained their high status because of the *barakaat* of the Ahlul Bayt. They didn't have anything from themselves. The same way that the Ahlul Bayt (a) have what they have because of Allah (swt) not because of themselves.

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