'Ashura'.. A Message of Hope in Times of Oppression



Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the Ordainer of divine laws and the One who alternates the days among people; He who honors whom He wills through obedience to Him and humbles whom He wills through His justice. He never breaks His promise nor alters His established way. And peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – the Seal of the Prophets and the Imam (leader) of the Messengers – through whom Allah united the legacy of the prophets and linked his nation to the entire history of faith; and upon his kinship, his companions, and followers of his path until the Day of Judgment.

To proceed:

The day of "Ashura" (on the tenth of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar) is not merely a historical anniversary on which we recall a past event, nor is it simply an occasion of worship whose significance is confined to the virtue of fasting. Rather, it is a day on which the meanings of certainty (in Allah) are renewed; the divine laws of victory for truth and destruction of falsehood become manifest; and believers are reminded that the path of the prophets is one, that the struggle between faith and tyranny will endure as long as life itself, and that the divine laws which brought salvation in the past remain capable of bringing it today and tomorrow.

It was narrated that Ibn 'Abbas said: "When the Prophet (PBUH) came to Al¯ Madinah, and he found the Jews observing a fast (on the Day of Ashura). He said: 'What is this?' They said: 'This is the day when Allah saved Musa (and his people) and drowned Pharaoh (and his soldiers), so Musa fasted this day in gratitude.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'We have more right to Musa than you do.' So, he fasted (that day) and enjoined (others) to fast it also.'" (Narrated by al¯Bukhari and Muslim)

This statement (by the Prophet) was not merely an expression of participation in a historical commemoration; rather, it proclaimed a profound theological truth: that the message of Islam is the complete continuation of the heavenly revelations, and that the Ummah (nation) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the true inheritor of the legacy of the prophets, carrying the banner of monotheism raised by Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad – peace be upon them all.

Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Shura: ﴿He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus – to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].﴾ (Al Shura: 31). And He also says in Surat Al-Anbiya: ﴿Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.﴾ (Al-Anbiya: 92)

Accordingly, the connection of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with Prophet Moses (PBUH) was not one of admiration or reverence alone; it was a bond of mission, methodology, and shared purpose. He has "more right" to Moses (than the Jews) because he carried forward his message, completed his mission, renewed among humanity the meanings of monotheism, justice, and liberation, and stood against tyranny just as all the prophets had done before him.

Ashura: A School of Divine Laws

Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, chose to recount the story of Moses and Pharaoh in the Quran more frequently than any other narrative because it presents the clearest Quranic model for confronting oppression and tyranny. It demonstrates that the struggle between truth and falsehood is not a passing historical episode but a recurring divine law governing the lives of nations.

Tyranny is never embodied in a single individual alone. Rather, it is sustained by an integrated system of power, wealth, deception, and harnessing vested interests to serve falsehood. The Quran illustrates this through Pharaoh, Haman, Qarun, and all those who rallied around them in pursuit of worldly interests and personal ambition.

The tyrant stands surrounded by armies, wealth, and worldly authority, while the believer appears to possess nothing except unwavering certainty in Allah. Yet the battle concludes in a manner no one on earth could have anticipated, teaching humanity that true strength does not lie in the resources of the arrogant but in what Allah grants to His faithful servants.

Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Qasas: ﴿And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors. And establish them in the land and show Pharaoh and [his minister] Haman and their soldiers through them that which they had feared.﴾ (Al-Qasas: 5-6)

These verses do not speak exclusively about the Children of Israel. Rather, they establish a universal divine principle that applies in every age and place: Allah Almighty does not abandon the oppressed when they remain truthful and patient, nor does He allow tyrants to escape accountability, regardless of how long their reign may endure.

Thus, the sea that appeared before Moses and his people to be marking the end of the road became instead the gateway to salvation. It became the very means through which Pharaoh and his armies were destroyed. This scene remains forever engraved in the hearts of believers, reminding them that when Allah wills victory for His servants, He creates means beyond human imagination; that relief may emerge from the very heart of hardship; and that divine gifts are often born from the womb of severe trials.

'Ashura' teaches the believer that oppression is never an eternal destiny, that awaiting Allah's relief is itself an act of worship, and that confidence in His promise is not mere optimism but a certainty grounded in the history of divine revelation and the immutable laws by which Allah governs His creation. As Allah says in Surat Al-Rum: ﴿...and incumbent upon Us was support of the believers.﴾ (Al-Rum: 47)

From the Shore of the Sea to the Reality of the (Islamic) nation

A believer does not read the story of Moses (peace be upon him) merely as a chapter from history. Rather, he reads it as one of Allah's enduring laws governing the rise and fall of nations. Names may change, faces may differ, yet the struggle between truth and falsehood remains fundamentally the same.

How similar is the cry of the Children of Israel as mentioned in Surat Al-Shuara: ﴿Indeed, we are to be overtaken.﴾ (Al-Shuara: 61) to the words often uttered by people when every apparent means of relief has vanished and hardships have reached their peak.

And how similar is the unwavering response of Moses (peace be upon him): ﴿..."No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.﴾ (Al-Shuara: 62) to the certainty every believer needs in every time and place.

These are not simply words spoken in moments of distress. They represent a creed that nurtures steadfastness, instills hope, and grants the nation the strength to endure, regardless of the severity of its trials.

What is unfolding today in Gaza – its siege, starvation, killing, and displacement – and the patience, resilience, and steadfastness displayed by its people remind the (Islamic) nation that trials are often the prelude to empowerment.

The children born beneath the bombardment, the mothers who bid farewell to their sons and husbands while repeating, "Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] the best Disposer of affairs", and the men who remain firmly rooted in their homeland despite immense suffering are all writing a new chapter in the history of patience – a chapter that echoes the legacy of the prophets.

Victory may be delayed, and trials may intensify. Yet the believer knows that Allah's promise never fails, that the days alternate among people, and that truth is not measured by a single battle or a temporary setback, but by the final outcome that Allah has decreed for His righteous servants.

Just as Allah saved Moses and those who believed with him from the tyranny of Pharaoh and his armies, so too does He grant victory to the oppressed when they remain sincere and patient, and bring them from constriction to relief, from hardship to blessing, and from oppression to empowerment.

Behind Prison Walls: Allah's Promise to the Oppressed

The people of Gaza are not the only ones experiencing the reality of oppression. Behind prison walls are thousands of detainees and wrongfully imprisoned individuals who await relief with certainty (in Allah) that no matter how long the night may last, dawn must eventually break.

Across various Muslim lands, countless families continue to endure the pain of separation and the hardship of prolonged waiting. Yet no matter how long the trial endures, it never extinguishes the believer's hope in his Lord or diminishes his confidence in the ultimate good that Allah has promised.

In Egypt, thousands of families continue to live under the burden of years of imprisonment, persecution, and deprivation. Nevertheless, they remain steadfast in hope, convinced that injustice is destined to disappear, that history continually alternates between triumph and trial, and that Allah never allows the reward of the patient to be lost.

This reminds us that the path of the oppressed may indeed be long, but it is never meaningless. The tears of the wronged and the sighs of those burdened by affliction are all preserved with Allah, from Whom nothing is hidden. Allah Almighty says in Surat Ibrahim: ﴿And never think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He only delays them for a Day when eyes will stare [in horror].﴾ (Ibrahim: 42)

Between Pharaoh of Yesterday and the Tyrants of Today

Names change, faces differ, but the essence of tyranny remains the same: arrogance upon the earth, contempt for humanity, corruption throughout the land, and hostility toward the people of truth.

The Quran captures this reality in the words of Allah, as He says in Surat Al-Qasas: ﴿Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into factions, oppressing a sector among them, slaughtering their [newborn] sons and keeping their females alive. Indeed, he was of the corrupters.﴾ (Al-Qasas: 4)

The Quran does not recount the story of Pharaoh merely to narrate history. Rather, it teaches us that every tyrant who follows Pharaoh's path will ultimately meet Pharaoh's fate. Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Ankabut: ﴿So each We seized for his sin…﴾ (Al-Ankabut: 40)

The people of falsehood may imagine that their military power, weapons, wealth, or media influence can alter the course of history. Yet history itself bears witness that tyranny enjoys only a temporary round of success, whereas the ultimate victory belongs to truth; as Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Imran: ﴿...And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people so that Allah may make evident those who believe and [may] take to Himself from among you martyrs – and Allah does not like the wrongdoers.﴾ (Al-Imran: 140)

Ashura and the Making of Hope

In Islam, hope is not a fleeting emotion or mere wishful thinking. Rather, it is certainty in Allah's promise and complete trust in His unchanging laws. For this reason, the believer does not view events solely through the lens of the present moment, but through the guidance of divine revelation.

From the unwavering conviction of Moses (peace be upon him), saying: ﴿..."Nay, verily with me is my Lord. He will guide me."﴾ (Al-Shuara: 62); and from the assurance given by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Surat Al Tawbah: ﴿"Do not grieve; indeed, Allah is with us."﴾(Al-Tawbah: 40) the believer draws strength that renews determination and fortifies steadfastness.

When certainty is joined with action, and patience is accompanied by taking the necessary means, the promise of Allah is fulfilled, as He says in Surat Al-Hajj: ﴿Verily, Allah will help those who help His (Cause). Truly, Allah is All Strong.﴾ (Al-Hajj: 40)

Our Duty on the Day of Ashura

'Ashura' is not merely a day to remember events of the past. It is a day to renew our covenant with Allah, deepen our commitment to the mission of the prophets, and restore our confidence in His promises and His immutable laws.

The duty of the (Islamic) nation is to strengthen relationship with its Lord, to come to the aid of the oppressed, and stand firm with those who uphold the truth, raise its future generations upon dignity and honor, and remain certain that the path of reform may be long, but it is the very path walked by the prophets and the righteous before us.

If Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) observed this day in gratitude to Allah for salvation, then the nation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) combines in 'Ashura' gratitude for Allah's blessings with renewed certainty, remembrance of the unity of the prophetic message, and commitment to supporting the oppressed, establishing justice, and resisting oppression.

Thus, 'Ashura' remains an enduring testimony that the path of the prophets is one, that the ultimate outcome belongs to the [best] outcome is for the righteous, and that Allah's divine laws neither favor anyone unjustly nor ever fail.

We pray to Allah Almighty to make the Day of Ashura a day of renewed faith, certainty (in Allah), and hope; to relieve the distress of those in hardship; to grant freedom to the wrongfully imprisoned; to grant victory to the oppressed; and to guide this (Islamic) nation to what is right and pleasing to Him; as indeed, He alone has the power to bring that about.

And our final supplication will be, "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!".
Allah is the Greatest, and praise be to Allah,

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