

*Tatbīr*  
(Self-Flagellation)

SHAYKH NĀMI FARḤĀT AL-‘ĀMILĪ

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## Translators Introduction

Following the translation of the research of His Eminence, Shaykh Nāmi Farḥāt al-‘Āmili, titled ‘*Chest Beating & Shedding Tears – forbidden, permissible, or recommended*’ – there was a huge demand to cover the ever-controversial topic of self-flagellation (*Taṭbīr*).

One does not need to elaborate the details of the sensitivity of this topic; which is now a source of division among the lovers of Imām al-Ḥussain (as). It is a topic that is so sensitive that many scholars tend to ignore or deflect giving their opinion and conclusions on it. However, Shaykh Nāmi Farḥāt has courageously shared his research on this topic, and it was an honour to be able to translate his work.

An important point that I want to emphasise before the reader embarks on observing the Shaykh’s position in this matter, is that it is imperative to read this translation from start to finish, and not immediately jump to the conclusion. This research is not only to know his opinion, but rather – and more beneficial – is to observe the method, analysis, and critique that the Shaykh so eloquently presented in reaching his conclusion. It is with regret that I say, it is extremely rare to find such clearly expressed research on such topics – especially in the English language. It is one that I have personally learned a lot from and I hope that this translation is one that is also able to benefit others.

One may benefit from this without necessarily changing their opinion. Rather, the real benefit that I aspire the readers to reach is that it opens the minds to be more tolerant and understanding of differing opinions. One of the diseases infecting the *Shī‘as* of today is the lack of tolerance between each other – to the point that we have become mirror images of the very same *takfiris* that we have historically despised. We have become a people who are so quick to condemn anyone who does not share the same opinion as us, even if we have not understood the reasoning for such stances. Rather than closing all doors of development, growth, and broader understanding – let us be of those who unite under the banner of *al-Wilāyah* and show love, respect, and support to others, even if they do not say what we say. By doing so, we also open our hearts to the possibility that some other opinions may enlighten us to new understandings, and truly submit to the truth - wherever it may take us.

Along with this analysis of al-Shaykh Nāmi Farḥāt al-‘Āmili, we have taken the liberty of providing some commentary through the footnotes. Please note that aside from the primary sources, any further footnotes are considered the opinion and/or research of the translator, and totally independent from the author of this work, Shaykh Nāmi Farḥāt al-‘Āmili.

We thank Allāh, Mighty and Majestic, for the strength and blessings of completing this translation, and hope it is of benefit to those who wish to seek the truth.

## The ‘Ḥussaini symbolic rituals’ (Sha ‘ā’ir).

Allāh (swt) said: {That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols (*sha ‘ā’ir*) of Allāh - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.}<sup>1</sup>

The ‘Ḥussaini symbolic rituals’ is a term that is used for the actions and deeds that are undertaken by the followers of the school of Ahl al-Bayt (as) during the sacred month of Muḥarram. The one who pays attention knows that these different types of actions and deeds are in abundance and every year they increase – some which began in the times of old and some which have appeared within different communities in recent ages.

Our intention in this research is to first analyse the meaning of ‘symbolic rituals’ (*sha ‘ā’ir*) and then look into some rituals which are placed under this category – be it justified or not - and see if they can legitimately be considered one of the ‘symbolic rituals.’ We will then discuss the most famous of these rituals; crying (*bukā’*), chest beating (*laṭum*),<sup>2</sup> and more specifically - self-flagellation (*Taṭbīr*). These rituals will be scrutinised to see if they have any valid proofs and conclude on its jurisprudential status. It is imperative that we mention to the honoured reader that this jurisprudential research is from the realm of evidences, which differs from the realm of binding rulings! Therefore, it is important for the one who has the burden of following the most learned to refer to that scholar for his jurisprudential obligations. As for the jurisprudential research, it is only binding upon its author.

In the beginning, it is imperative to set boundaries in understanding the meaning of ‘symbolic rituals’ (*sha ‘ā’ir*) before going into details of their different types. We will discuss the meaning of ‘symbolic rituals’ (*sha ‘ā’ir*) linguistically, as well as its contextual usage. Thereafter, we will investigate the application of these understandings and examine it with respect to the sacred law of jurisprudence.

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<sup>1</sup> Surat al-Ḥajj, āyah 32. Translation: Ṣaḥīḥ International

<sup>2</sup> These two were discussed in detail in the research titled ‘*Chest Beating & Shedding Tears – forbidden, permissible, or recommended*’ by the same author, his eminence al-Shaykh Nāmi Farḥāt al-‘Āmili.

## Defining 'symbolic rituals' (*sha 'ā'ir*) linguistically

Linguistically, *al-Sha 'ā'ir* is the plural of *Sha 'irah* which means a sign or symbol (*al-'alāmah*).

Al-Fayrūzābādi said in his book *Al Qāmūs*: 'He made him associate through feeling the matter, meaning making him come to know it; and the term *ash 'arahā* means he made a symbol for it. The symbol of Hajj is the *Manāsek* and its signs.'

And the like of this is mentioned by the linguists such as al-Farāhīdi<sup>3</sup> and ibn Firās,<sup>4</sup> who agreed in its meaning that *al-Sha 'irah* is that which is a symbol that one allows people to associate through knowing and feeling the meaning of that which is attributed to Allāh, Glory be to His Name, or to His upright religion.

## Defining 'symbolic rituals' (*sha 'ā'ir*) in contextual usage

Some of the scholars of the general populous (i.e. Ahl al-Sunnah) adopted the meaning of 'symbolic rituals' to mean the religion (*al-dīn*). Al-Qurṭubi specified it to be rituals of worship (*al-'ibādāt*)<sup>5</sup>; While some have specified it to be the rites of *Hajj*.<sup>6</sup>

However, all these statements are flawed, because 'symbolic rituals' is a label for the symbols of the religion and not the religion itself. Likewise, there is no proof that it is specified to be the 'acts of worship' in contrast to all the other religious rulings. As for the restriction of it being the rites of *Hajj* exclusively, the claimant used the context of the Qur'anic *āyah* of *Hajj* as a proof; however, it is refuted because the rites of *Hajj* is labelled as 'symbolic rituals' primarily for the outward public and promotional dimension of it. Therefore, they are from the different types or categories of the 'symbolic rituals', and not the 'symbolic rituals' itself.

As for the Shī'i scholars, the general popular opinion and consensus is that 'symbolic rituals' is general; and whatever symbol that leads to Allāh and promotes the laws of the religion is regarded as a 'symbolic ritual'. It is not restricted to only rulings or to *Hajj*.<sup>7</sup> Al-Shahīd al-Thāni adopted the opinion that 'symbolic rituals' is restricted to mean the acts of worship (*al-'ibādāt*),<sup>8</sup> but this opinion is not convincing as we have already proven above.

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<sup>3</sup> Al-'Ayn, Volume 1, Page 251

<sup>4</sup> Mu'jam Miqāyīs al-Lughā, Volume 3, Page 193.

<sup>5</sup> Tafsīr al-Qurṭubi, Volume 12, Page 66.

<sup>6</sup> This is what has been attributed to ibn 'Abbās. Refer to *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, al-Jaṣāṣ, Volume 2, Page 1376.

<sup>7</sup> *Jawāhir al-Kalām*, Volume 6, Page 98.

<sup>8</sup> *Masālik al-Afhām*, Volume 2, Page 198.

## The 'Ḥussaini symbolic rituals'

As for the 'Ḥussaini symbolic rituals', it is considered one of the categories or applications of the 'symbolic rituals' of Allāh. It was named 'Ḥussaini' due to its link with the Master of Martyrs, Imām al-Ḥussain (as). He is from the divine symbols which the sacred guiding lights of Allāh is manifested in. Since it is established in the science of 'Ilm al-Uṣūl that there is no restriction upon terminologies, there is no restriction in attributing the 'symbolic rituals' to Imām al-Ḥussain (as), as he is a complete manifestation of the sacred guiding lights of Allāh.

## Summary of our discussion on the meaning of 'symbolic rituals'

'Symbolic rituals' is understood to be **what leads to a subjectively symbolic act or actions prescribed for promotion of that which benefits the spreading of an understanding in the meaning of the religion** or more generally **any affair that has a relationship with Allāh, Mighty and High**. As for the limits of the different types or applications of the 'symbolic rituals', this is individually prescribed and subjective; while the jurists role in this not to prescribe individually, but rather the prescription of the different types and applications is in the hands of the societal precepts and the intellectuals.

Based on this, we find that the 'symbolic rituals' are not absolute, and the divine scriptural proofs are not all-binding upon it. Whatever is found in the *āyāt* and narrations are simply different applications of it and are not limited to them.

Some may object by saying 'how can you worship Allāh through things that are not mentioned through the divine texts?' We reply that we worship Allāh, Mighty and High, through his laws and not through the 'symbolic rituals'. The 'symbolic rituals' are not the laws themselves – nor the religion, as we have already established. Rather, it is only a means or medium that is subjectively prescribed for the purpose of promoting the symbols of the religion of Allāh, Mighty and High.

# Taṭbīr (Self-Flagellation)

## Origins of Taṭbīr

There is a difference of opinions as to the origins of Taṭbīr. The likes of Shaykh al-Muṭahhari took the opinion that it was from the practices of the Christians that eventually found its way to us through the Orthodox of Caucasus<sup>9</sup>.<sup>10</sup> ‘Alī Sharī‘ati added that the timeframe was around the Ṣafavid era<sup>11</sup>.<sup>12</sup> As for Ḥaydar Ḥubb-Allāh, he adopted the opinion that the origins of Taṭbīr was during the Qajar dynasty.<sup>13</sup> The one responsible for introducing it was al-Fādhl al-Darabandi in a ritual for the revival of ‘Āshūrā’.<sup>14</sup> Aḥmed al-‘Āmiri al-Nāṣiri adopted the opinion that the origins of Taṭbīr was from the Turks during the Ottoman dynasty under al-Ghāzi Murād Khān the first. This is from the affairs that is linked with the Inkishāri army.<sup>15</sup> And there are other opinions which has no benefit to us in mentioning.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A region located at the border of Europe and Asia, situated between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and occupied by Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. A less common definition includes also portions of north-western Iran and north-eastern Turkey. Today, the peoples of the northern and southern Caucasus tend to be either Sunni Muslims, Eastern Orthodox Christians and Armenian Christians. Twelver Shi'ism has many adherents in the south-eastern part of the region, in Azerbaijan which extends into Iran. (Wikipedia)

<sup>10</sup> Al-Jithib wal-Dafa‘ fi Shakhṣiyat al-Imām ‘Alī, Page 165.

<sup>11</sup> Ruled Persia from 1501 to 1736.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Tashayyu‘ al-‘Alawi wa al-Tashayyu‘ al-Ṣafawi, Page 208.

<sup>13</sup> Ruled Persia from 1785 to 1925.

<sup>14</sup> Jadal wa Muwāqif fi al-‘Āshir al-Ḥussainiyyah, Page 69.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Taṭbīr – Its History and stories, Page 42.

<sup>16</sup> Islamically, most scholars depend upon the narrations or the biographies to reconstruct history and would opt to take this rather than other historical commentaries which originated outside Islam. An opinion exists where Taṭbīr is explicitly found within our narrations and biographies of honoured individuals in our religion. The first of those is the actions attributed to the sister of the Master of Martyrs, Zaynab (as). The extract from the narration is as follows: ‘Zainab (as) turned her face and saw the face of her brother, and as a result struck her head upon the wooden pillar of the litter. We saw with our own eyes that blood started flowing from under her veil.’ The narration is found in the encyclopedia of narrations, Biḥār al-Anwār (Volume 45, Page 114-115). Al-Majlisi states at the beginning of the narration: ‘I found in some of the reliable books narrated in disconnected fashion (mursal) from Muslim Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, that he said..’. To depend on this narration from a jurisprudential perspective is problematic for two reasons. The first is that we are not aware which book it is that al-Majlisi found this in. Yes, he mentioned that it is reliable, but the researchers have confirmed that what al-Majlisi classes as reliable is not necessarily acceptable by the standards accepted as valid today. Since we are not even aware of the title of the book, we cannot verify that the methods that al-Majlisi used to prove the reliability of the book is a valid method. The second problem is that it is narrated in a disconnected fashion (mursal), meaning there is no chain for this narration, automatically rendering it as weak. Many of the notorious pro-Taṭbīr scholars have still accepted this narration as reliable (Sayyid Ṣādiq Roḥāni, Moḥammed Jamīl Ḥammūd etc.), despite its apparent weakness. In saying all this, even if it is considered weak, it would not necessarily be a problem to depend on this from a historical point of view – in contrast to jurisprudentially – in that this may be the origins of Taṭbīr within Islamic circles. However, it would not be correct to suggest this incident to be the origins of Taṭbīr as a ‘symbolic ritual’. It is clear the actions described in this narration shows it was an uncontrollable act of emotion rather than an action done under the banner of a ‘symbolic ritual’. The author apparently seemed to intend the origins of this act as a beginning in the form of a ‘symbolic rituals’, which is perhaps why it was not mentioned. Strangely, another ‘narration’ that is brought forward is that of Imām Zayn ul-

As for our opinion, we outright reject that *Taṭbīr* could have originated from the Inkishāri army since the Ottoman empire was the arch-enemies of the Safavid empire; and it goes against the intellect to suggest that the Safavid empire would blindly adopt the practices of their enemies. For the one who looks deeply into the books of history, he will see that the strongest opinion is that *Taṭbīr* originated – in the way that it is practiced today – from the Safavid dynasty in Iran, a practice which crept into theirs through Caucasus.

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‘Ābidīn (as) when he hit his head on the wall and blood gushed forth from his head. This is found in the book *‘Dār al-Islām fīmā Yata‘alak Bilru‘yah wal Manām’* by al-Nūri al-Ṭabrasi (Volume 2, Page 200) – a book which is specific to dreams and visions. The story is without a chain, regarding a Christian man who saw visions in his dream. Upon hearing it, Imām Zayn ul-‘Ābidīn (as) hit his head on the wall and blood gushed forth from his head due to the grief he had when hearing the dream. Naturally, this is a weak narration without any ancient primary source, nor a chain, nor even the name of the primary narrator. The other narration which is often referred to in this discussion is that of the actions of Bani Asad. It is narrated that when they heard of the news of the martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥussain (as) they struck their heads with swords and blood gushed from their heads. The narration is found without a chain in the book titled *‘Lam Takun Ridda’* (Page 272). Most pro-*Taṭbīr* scholars have not stated this narration is reliable and prefer the narration mentioned above regarding Zaynab (as) as an evidence. Moḥammed Jamīl Ḥammūd in his Q&A styled research titled *‘Al-Sha‘ā‘ir al-Ḥussainiyyah’* (Page 40) stated it is not proven that this incident happened. More interestingly, Sayyid Ṣādiq Roḥāni has answered two questions in relation to this incident. In one answer he is asked about this incident of Bani Asad and the incident of Zaynab (as), in which he replies: ‘They are both found in our books and both reliable’ (Q&A code: 18345-5283 from his Arabic website). In another similar question he replies: ‘We have mentioned in previous replies that the narration of the pillar (that Zaynab (as) struck her head on) is reliable; as for the narration regarding Bani Asad, it does not exist in any of our reliable books.’ (Q&A code: 18346-7262 from his Arabic website). This contradiction, however, is sadly not unusual to find in the rulings of Sayyid Ṣādiq Roḥāni – where our experience has shown they are in abundance. Whether this is due to a change of view or a lack of attention is unclear. Perhaps, the reason why the author - his eminence al-Shaykh Nāmi Farḥāt al-‘Āmili - did not mention these opinions is due to them not being worthy of mention, as he suggested, due to the weakness of them. This is besides the fact that all the narrations indicate they were acts done outside the definitions and boundaries of ‘symbolic rituals’.



## Is *Taṭbīr* considered one of the ‘symbolic rituals’?

Some of the scholars, such as al-Sayyid al-Khū’i and al-Mīrza Jawād al-Tabrīzi, took the opinion that *Taṭbīr* is not from the types of ‘symbolic rituals’.<sup>17</sup> The reason for this is that they limit it to the textual proofs and consider ‘symbolic rituals’ to be restricted in its boundaries by that. As we have already made apparent, we do not limit the ‘symbolic rituals’ to the textual proofs, and we do not agree with the opinion they have taken.

Thus, those who view ‘symbolic rituals’ to be limited to textual proofs cannot judge that *Taṭbīr* is one of the ‘symbolic rituals’. As for our interpretation, i.e. that the ‘symbolic rituals’ are not limited to textual proofs, it would be acceptable for us to say that *Taṭbīr* is from one of the types of ‘symbolic rituals’ – provided the requirements stipulated are met<sup>18</sup> – from the perspective that it is a subjectively symbolic act prescribed for promotional purposes that the social precepts have established; and it has its specific role in certain eras for publicising the oppression of the Master of Martyrs (as).

It is not possible for any intellectual person to doubt that *Taṭbīr* has an important role in the revival and preservation of the message of the Master of Martyrs (as) in some eras and places – such as during the era of al-Shaykh al-Nā’ini; however, what is applicable in one time and place is not necessarily applicable in another time and place! Thus, it is the duty of the scholar of jurisprudence to have cognizance of the developments and affairs of his era. This is part and parcel of the process of deriving jurisprudential law; and it is not befitting for the scholar of jurisprudence to have an ancient (lit. *Salafi*) mentality such that he is restricted in what was derived by the ancestors of old, without studying the realities that he currently lives in.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ṣirāt al-Najāh*, Volume 1, Page 432.

<sup>18</sup> This is discussed in the next section.

## Stipulated conditions for ‘Symbolic rituals’

Despite negating the restriction of textual proofs for the different types of ‘symbolic rituals’, there are two main principles and conditions that are required to be fulfilled for us to accept them as ‘symbolic rituals’.

**First:** The action does not negate the other established laws of the religion, taking into consideration that the primary purpose of the ‘symbolic rituals’ is to spread the teachings of the upright religion. Therefore, if the so called ‘symbolic ritual’ defeats the primary purpose of ‘symbolic rituals’ then it is rejected and not truly one of the ‘symbolic rituals’. So, the foundation of the ‘symbolic ritual’ is dependent upon its link with Allāh (swt), just as it is apparent in the *āyah*: **{That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols (sha ‘ā’ir) of Allāh - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.}**<sup>19</sup>

When it comes to *Taṭbīr* - if it does not lead to any serious harm<sup>20</sup> - then it does not negate any of the rulings of the religion. Rather, it falls under the category of the jurisprudentially indifferent (*mubāḥāt*) that is in accordance with the principle of the original status of jurisprudentially indifference.

**Second:** The study of the environment to verify if its purpose is being fulfilled on a practical level. As we proved earlier, the ‘symbolic rituals’ has the primary purpose of the promotion of Islam; therefore, intellectuals have agreed on the importance of researching the exemplar path in promoting the religion of Allāh, Mighty and High. Consequently, it is imperative that one studies the environment that he lives in so that we see if a specific ‘symbolic ritual’ fulfils the positive outcome of promoting the religion of the Mighty and High, or if it works towards the opposite and leaves negative consequences.<sup>21</sup>

The study of the environment does not mean simply observing the application of the different types of ‘symbolic rituals’ in the past; because realities change or the different types of ‘symbolic rituals’ may become obsolete with the change of time. Note that this discussion is restricted to those actions which are jurisprudentially indifferent (*mubāḥ*) and not with the

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<sup>19</sup> Surat al-Ḥajj, āyah 32. Translation: Ṣaḥīḥ International

<sup>20</sup> From a jurisprudential perspective, the principle of ‘*lā dharar wa lā dhirār*’ (no harm to self or harm to others) which is derived from the narrations (eg. See Wasā’il al-Shī‘a, Volume 18, Page 32, Narrations #3-5 / 23073 - 23075) is what defines the limits of the forbidden type of ‘serious harm’. According to the popular opinion, most types of self-flagellation and *Taṭbīr* is not considered from the types of forbidden ‘serious harm’. Rather, harm such as suicide or severing limbs or other actions which would lead to such irreparable harm that one would not normally be able to cope with is what the narrations seem to restrict this principle to. See al-Khū‘ī’s discussion on this (*Miṣbāḥ al-Uṣūl*, Volume 2, Page 548 onwards).

<sup>21</sup> The theory that our actions should always reflect the beauty of Allāh (swt), the Prophet (sawa), and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) is one that is firmly established within our narrations. One of these reliable narrations are as follows. Imām al-Ṣādiq (as) said: ‘You must never engage in an act that would be a source of embarrassment for us ... Be a beauty for those to whom you are devoted and do not be an embarrassment to them.’ (Al-Kāfi, Volume 2, Page 219, Narration #11). This narration is graded as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) by Al-Majlisi (Mir’āt al-‘Uqūl, Volume 9, Page 179); al-Bahbūdi (Ṣaḥīḥ al- Kāfi, Volume 1, Page 98); al-Khū‘ī (Kitāb al-Ṭahāra, Volume 4, Page 316); Moḥammed Sa‘īd al-Ḥakīm (Miṣbāḥ al-Minhāj - al-Ṭahāra, Volume 2, Page 390); Hādi al-Najafi (Mawsū‘at Aḥādīth Ahl al-Bayt, Volume 3, Page 407).

obligatory acts of worship, such as pilgrimage (*hajj*). Therefore, whatever the social precepts and the intellectuals have established in the past as a legitimate 'symbolic ritual', may change or be abolished due to the change in time, place, or one of the conditions not being met.

As for our opinion, we see that the second condition – which is the essence of the 'symbolic rituals' – is not fulfilled during our current environment and age. Therefore, there is no room for saying that *Ṭaṭbīr* is correctly considered a legitimate 'symbolic ritual' today. In this age of globalisation, that sees the whole world connected and completely transparent to one another like a small town, we cannot allow for this second condition to be unfulfilled in one place, like the West, while fulfilled in another place, like the Muslim countries. This is because these days it is possible to closely follow any incident that takes place in any country around the world while you are sitting in your own home. Thus, the definition of the place is not restricted to a city or region – but rather inclusive of the whole world, so long as one place can follow and see the actions of any other place in the world.<sup>22</sup>

Today, *Ṭaṭbīr* does not fulfil its purpose of promoting the 'Ḥussaini' mentality in an appropriate manner. This is especially the case when considering that the enemies of this nation portray an image of the religion of Islam in a way that makes it look like a religion that is backwards and terrorist orientated; which does not help the advanced and sophisticated peoples of this religion. Therefore, it is imperative that we study the environment and constantly develop new 'symbolic rituals' that ensures that the 'Ḥussaini' message remains perpetually enduring and powerful in attracting others towards it.

The 'symbolic rituals' are not sacred in themselves, but rather it is the divine 'Ḥussaini' affairs that are sacred. Therefore, so long as the 'symbolic ritual' fulfils the conditions and is serving the religion, through the sacredness of its relationship to the 'Ḥussaini' affairs it becomes sacred. However, if it eventuates that it is not in servitude to the religion or if it results in the attenuation of it, it is not fitting to maintain its position as part of the 'symbolic rituals', nor maintain its status as sacred.

Keep in mind, the discussion here is not about *Ṭaṭbīr* being permissible (*ḥalāl*) or forbidden (*ḥarām*). Rather, the discussion is if this action is eligible for it to be considered as a 'symbolic ritual' or not. Therefore, do not rush in your conclusions and be patient in examining so that you may reach the quintessence of the discussion!

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<sup>22</sup> With the access of internet and the widespread use of compact cameras, the statement the author has made is accurate. However, one may object and say: 'but if we do it alone behind closed doors with certainty these actions cannot be publicised, then surely it is permissible!' We would reply that these actions would no longer fulfil the primary objective of 'symbolic ritual' in that it would not be done to promote the message of al-Ḥussaini (as), Allāh (swt), or His religion; since one cannot promote when there are no observers to the actions! The action would remain jurisprudentially indifferent and have no relationship with 'symbolic rituals'. Therefore, this would be outside the realm of the purpose of this discussion, and irrelevant to 'symbolic rituals'.

## Is Ṭaṭbīr considered part of *al-Jaza* '23?

It was reported in the narration of Mu'āwiyah bin Wahab, from Abī 'Abd Allāh (as): "All of *Jaza* ' and crying is disliked (*makrūh*), except for the *Jaza* ' and crying over al-Ḥussain (as).<sup>24</sup>

With this narration we find two objections. The first is with the chain of the narrator, and the second is with the content.<sup>25</sup>

**The chain:** There are objections regarding the reliability of two narrators in this narration's chain. The first is Moḥammed bin Ja'far bin Mūsa bin Qūlawayh where there is no explicit proof of his reliability; however, we find that his son - Ja'far bin Moḥammed bin Qūlawayh, the author of the book *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* - had an abundant number of narrations narrated from him. We adopt the opinion that the ones he directly narrated from in his book were all reliable,<sup>26</sup> therefore we can establish his reliability from this perspective.

The second narrator is Abū Moḥammed al-Anṣāri, whereupon it is said that he is unknown (*majhūl*). Indeed, some have attempted to strengthen him to be reliable via the testimony of Moḥammed bin 'Abd al-Jabbār where he stated that he was 'good' (*kāna khayran*);<sup>27</sup> however this statement proves nothing more than that al-Anṣāri was not a liar. The statement does not give us certainty in the second principle of establishing reliability i.e. his accuracy in speech. Furthermore, this view (of him not being reliable) is aided with what ibn al-Ghidhā'ari stated: "An abundance of fabrications would reach him."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it is not possible for us to establish his reliability.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Al-jaza' - Generally translated as deep grief, sadness and/or sorrow.

<sup>24</sup> Wasā'il al-Shī'a, Volume 3, Page 282, Narration #9 / 3657; Al-Āmālī al-Ṭūsi, Page 162, Narration #20 / 267.

<sup>25</sup> The objection would actually be three-fold if we also consider the primary source for this narration. This will be discussed later in the footnotes at the conclusion of the discussion of the chain, God willing.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Qūlawayh mentioned on page 37 of *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*: "Furthermore, I have only narrated that which was reported to me by the trustworthy ones from among our companions - may Allah's Mercy be upon them - and I did not include anything which has been reported by unknown or unreliable sources who are not well-known for their knowledge and narrations." There is debate on whether one can depend on this testimony, and furthermore if this includes all the narrators within the book or just the ones al-Qūlawayh directly narrated from. The popular opinion is that this testimony is valid and verifies the reliability of only those al-Qūlawayh directly narrated from.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Kāfi, Volume 3, Page 127.

<sup>28</sup> Rijāl ibn al-Ghidhā'ari, Page 75.

<sup>29</sup> This conclusion is in opposition to many of the scholars who suggest that one can depend upon the statements of those who are praised. If a conclusion is reached that Abū Moḥammed al-Anṣāri is indeed praised, then this is enough to elevate him to the level of praised (*mamdūh*) and in turn render a narration as having a good (*ḥassan*) chain, provided no one else in the chain is below the rank of praised. Among the modern-day scholars of rijāl we find many, including Sayyid al-Khū'i (Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth, Volume 23, Pages 40-42) and al-Tustari (Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Volume 11, Page 493), accept that Abū Moḥammed al-Anṣāri is praised and the proofs that go against this, including what al-Kishi narrated via Naṣr and the statement of ibn al-Ghidhā'ari, are not sufficient to disprove the testimony of Moḥammed bin 'Abd al-Jabbār. With regards to this narration itself, Sayyid al-Khū'i stated it having a good (*ḥassan*) chain (Kitāb al-Ṭahāra, Volume 9, Page 227). Curiously, elsewhere Sayyid al-Khū'i graded it as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) although we believe this was a mistake on his behalf (Ṣirāṭ al-

**The contents:** “All *Jaza*‘ and crying is disliked (makrūh), except for the *Jaza*‘ and crying over al-Ḥussain (as).”

There are certain objections raised about the idea that shedding tears is disliked except if it is over al-Ḥussain (as); and this objection revolves around it being in opposition to the biography of the past prophets (as); beginning with the tears of Ādām (as)<sup>30</sup> to the tears of Ya‘qūb (as)<sup>31</sup> to the greatest of prophets, Moḥammed (sawa),<sup>32</sup> to the tears of the Mistress of women, Fāṭima (sa).<sup>33</sup> For this reason, Sayyid al-Khū‘i attempted to backup this perspective: “And what is meant by ‘disliked’ is that it is from the perspective of the societal precepts (rather than from the religious jurisprudence), due to it being disliked being incompatible with the realities of the glorious ranks in the reality.”<sup>34</sup>

Sayyid al-Khū‘i’s statements are rejected by us, because the Imām (as) has the role of making the jurisprudential laws of the religion apparent, and not the laws that are dictated by the societal precepts. His interpretation goes against the apparent and would require some foundations that prove it. Also, his statement: “it is from the perspective of the societal precepts (rather than from the religious jurisprudence), due to it being disliked being incompatible with the realities of the glorious ranks in the reality” is not correct from the perspective that the societal precepts have never rejected shedding tears and has never contradicted its reverence, glory, and rank – due to it being an affair from mankind’s innate nature and natural disposition (*fiṭra*).

Despite all that has been said, we do not accept this narration due to reasons that we proved in our research titled “*Chest Beating & Shedding Tears – forbidden, permissible, or recommended*”; whereupon we established that *Jaza*‘ in general, be it for the infallible (as) or other than the infallible, is not a problem. This is due to the weakness of all the narrations that indicate it

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Najāh, Volume 3, Page 443). Al-Shaykh Hādi al-Najafi mentioned that there is no problems with the chain without strengthening it further (Mawsū‘at Aḥādīth Ahl al-Bayt, Volume 2, Page 79). In saying all this, what was not discussed or mentioned by the author is the third objection that one may raise against this narration; and that is the primary source for this narration, being the Āmālī attributed to al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī. Al-Shaykh Āṣif al-Moḥsini raises doubts about the actual author of this book and if the copy that is available today is truly authored by al-Ṭūsī (Buḥūth fī ‘ilm al-Rijāl, Pages 434-436). This is why, when he grades the chapter that this narration is found in Biḥār al-Anwār (Volume 44, Page 280, Narration #9) he excludes it from the reliable narrations, saying: “there are other reliable narrations, however the primary source the narration is found in is not reliable” (Mashra‘at Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 2, Page 154). It is important to note that an almost identical narration is found in Kāmil al-Ziyārāt (Page 201, Narration #286). However, it’s chain is weak due to it having Abī ‘Abd Allāh al-Jāmūrāni who is weak, and al-Ḥassan bin ‘Alī bin Abī Ḥamza who is known to be a liar and cursed.

<sup>30</sup> There is an authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) narration which states that when Ādām descended he cried over Paradise. (‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i‘, Volume 2, Page 492; ‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Ridha, Volume 1, Page 287).

<sup>31</sup> Surat Yūsif, āyah 84.

<sup>32</sup> It is well documented in the books of all Muslims that the Prophet (sawa) cried over what was to befall his son, al-Ḥussain (as).

<sup>33</sup> It is well documented in the books of all Muslims that Fāṭima (sa) cried over her fathers (sawa) demise.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Tanqīḥ fī Sharḥ ‘Urwat al-Wuthqāh, Volume 9, Page 342.

being disliked or prohibited. Consequently, we established the greater principle in that displaying *Jaza‘* is permissible. However, the discussion here is for a more detailed matter, which is: *is Ṭaṭbīr one of the types of al-Jaza‘ or not?*

To be able to answer this question, it is imperative to first understand what is meant by *al-Jaza‘*?

*Al-Jaza‘* is the polar-opposite of patience.<sup>35</sup> It is said “He was not patient, so he displayed grief.”<sup>36</sup> Or “He was not patient, so he displayed grief and distress.”<sup>37</sup>

*Al-Jaza‘* is a term used to refer to the condition that emanates from the emotions of people in a time of calamity, similar in the way a volcano erupts. It is not done intentionally, and it is a result of the emotions and hardships of the situation. The emotions are those which overtake a bereaved person that does not have the ability to be patient over the calamities, so he unintentionally erupts into crying, lamenting, scratching the face, tearing out their hair, or hitting themselves to the point of bleeding. Indeed, we have clearly proven and established in our research titled “*Chest Beating & Shedding Tears – forbidden, permissible, or recommended*” the permissibility of all of this, be it for the infallible or any other person, due to the weakness in the narrations that indicate its prohibition.

Regarding hitting the head to the point that blood comes out, we say that if the afflicted one were to perform this act, then it has no problems in it so long as it does not reach a point where it seriously harms the person.<sup>38</sup> No jurisprudential scholar, nor any intellectual person, would say that this act is jurisprudentially forbidden; neither from a primary ruling nor a secondary ruling. Therefore, if one were to perform this act of *Ṭaṭbīr*, then there is no doubt it is considered to be one of the types of *al-Jaza‘*.

Some may object to us, referring to the narration of Jābir, from Abī Ja‘far (as) who said: “I said to him, what is *al-Jaza‘*?” He replied: “The most extreme cases of *al-Jaza‘* is shrieking in distress, lamenting, and beating the face and chest, and uprooting the hair forelocks.”<sup>39</sup> However, this narration is contains the presence of Sahl bin Ziyād al-Ādami within the chain;<sup>40</sup> Although we have begun a research into this person to re-evaluate our position on

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<sup>35</sup> Lisān al-Lisān, Volume 1, Page 84.

<sup>36</sup> Aqrab al-Muwārid, Volume 1, Page 120.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Munjid fi al-Lughah, Page 89.

<sup>38</sup> Harming to the point of loss of life or limbs, as mentioned in earlier footnotes.

<sup>39</sup> Wasā’il al-Shī‘a, Volume 3, Page 271-272, Narration # 1/3625; Al-Kāfi, Volume 3, Page 222-223, Narration #1.

<sup>40</sup> Despite a difference in opinions from the contemporary scholars of rijāl regarding Sahl bin Ziyād, and the new possible developments the author may have reached, we say that this narration is weak and Sahl bin Ziyād is not reliable. As he mentioned, it also includes the weak Abī Jamīlah. In the authors other research titled ‘*Chest Beating & Shedding Tears – forbidden, permissible, or recommended*’, there is another chain found in Al-Kāfi with the same contents (Volume 3, Page 222-223, Narration #2). The chain is as follows: ‘Alī bin Ibrāhīm, from his father, from ‘Amru bin ‘Uthmān, from Abī Jamīlah, from Jābir, from Abī Ja‘far (as). Despite the likes of Shaykh Hādi al-Najafi stating it is a reliable chain (Mawsū‘at Aḥādīth Ahl al-Bayt, Volume 2, Page 369), the chain is weak due to the presence of Abī Jamīlah. This is confirmed by the likes of al-Majlisi (Mir’āt al-‘Uqūl, Volume 14, Page 183) and al-Khū‘i (Kitāb al-Ṭahāra, Volume 9, Page 230).

him, for now we halt our judgement until we develop our position further. Regardless, Abī Jamīlah is also present.

In saying all this, if one were to observe the *Ṭaṭbīr* processions that is commonly seen today, we find that those who perform it choose the place and time and prepare swords and cerements (*akfān*). These actions are all voluntary, therefore it is not possible to say that the *Ṭaṭbīr* commonly seen performed today is from one of the types of *al-Jaza'* - which, by definition, is the polar-opposite of patience.<sup>41</sup> As we mentioned earlier, what results in acts that a person may do involuntarily is permissible, but one cannot suggest that the voluntary acts done with clear conscience in today's *Ṭaṭbīr* processions are involuntary and spontaneous eruptions of emotion!

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<sup>41</sup> One may even go to the extent to suggest that patience is mandatory in the *Ṭaṭbīr* processions, as many must remain patient until the given moment where they are given permission to striking their heads.

## Ruling of *Ṭaṭbīr* in our current era

We have absolutely no doubt about the love all *Shī'a* have for our master, the Master of Martyrs (as). The one who is pro-*Ṭaṭbīr* has no doubt that he preserves the continuation of the sacred 'Ḥussaini' affairs; and the one who is anti-*Ṭaṭbīr* also has no doubt that it is obligatory upon him to put a stop to this phenomenon due to its distortion that the enemies of this nation depend upon, so that he preserves the continuation of the sacred 'Ḥussaini' affairs. Therefore, both parties have the same purpose despite disagreeing on this ruling! Thus, it is not correct that either party to make accusations of the other - in casting them away from the boundaries of belief (*yakfur*), or attribute misguidance to them.

What we see today with the bickering and enmity due to the differences regarding *Ṭaṭbīr* makes the heart of the Master of our time (ajtf) bleed, may our souls be sacrificed for the dust under his feet. What is shameful and disgraceful, is some of those who wear the turban enter this battlefield of altercation like the laymen do, and in turn ignite the flame of turmoil (*fitna*) between brothers and tear apart the ranks of the *Shī'a*; and this is one of the biggest crimes against the sacred 'Ḥussaini' affairs.

Regardless if we said it was permissible or forbidden, it is not correct to understand it to be a support for one party over the other, or that it is a position used to adulate the hoodlums that surround these two parties. Whatever will be presented in terms of opinions and conclusions are simply expressions of our personal understandings. This does not necessarily mean that we consider those opinions that oppose ours are incorrect. Rather, every person is bound to their own opinion. Furthermore, it is not correct that one object to us by presenting the opinions of other scholars, for those opinions are limited and binding to that scholar and his followers, and not binding upon us in this matter.

Dear beloved reader, whether you ultimately agree with us or disagree with us, there will be nothing between us except respect towards your opinion and your freedom of expression. However, whatever your opinion is, you should know that it will not change my stance that I see correct, not even an inch. Therefore, it is imperative that a scholar is courageous in handling the burden of jurisprudence without fear of anyone; for this affair is between myself and Allāh, Mighty and High, and not between myself and the people. So, let whoever is content be content and whoever is angry be angry - what is most important is that the true station of contentment is with the Divine, and not with the view of humans or any others. **{That is only Satan who frightens [you] of his supporters. So fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [indeed] believers.}**<sup>42</sup>

Our conclusion is *Ṭaṭbīr* is not from the 'symbolic rituals' due to it falling short of the second necessary criteria and condition mentioned earlier. Thus, it is not possible to refer to the Qur'ānic *āyāt* that speak about the 'symbolic rituals' of Allāh as evidence. Nor is it considered one of the forms of *al-Jaza'* because it is not accordance with the principle of it being the 'opposite of patience.' Therefore, it is not correct to refer to the narrations that the infallible Ahl al-Bayt (as) have reported regarding *al-Jaza'* as evidence.

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<sup>42</sup> Surat Āle 'Imrān, āyah 175. Translation: Ṣaḥīḥ International



There is no objection in using the principle of the original status of jurisprudential indifference (*aṣālat al-Ibāḥa*) as a foundation for proving its permissibility of *Ṭaṭbīr* from a primary ruling. In saying that, the discussion here is regarding the secondary ruling, whereupon most of the scholars of imitation (*marāja' al-taqlīd*) have issued a ruling in the prohibition of *Ṭaṭbīr* if it leads to any sort of harm or if it distorts the image of the sect (*madhhab*). However, most of them have given license to each individual to determine this.<sup>43</sup>

As for our perspective, we see that *Ṭaṭbīr*, in general and in most cases, does not reach a point of serious harm; however, it does reach a point where it distorts the image of the sect and furthermore the sacred 'Ḥussaini' affairs. Therefore, in the face of this understanding and view, there is no choice for us but to say that it is prohibited in our current era due to a secondary ruling.

**Nāmi Farḥāt al-Āmili,**

**Fourth morning from the month of Ṣaffar, year 1439 AH.**

**Sydney / Australia.**

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<sup>43</sup> The follower of the scholar of imitation is given the licence to determine if these secondary rulings apply. Meaning, one follower in a particular environment may see it meeting the conditions of the secondary rulings, while another follower in a different environment will see it falling short of those conditions. Further than that, due to the perceptions of each individual follower, some may be within the same environment and perceive the conditions being different. Thus, a particular follower may have judged the act to be forbidden while another follower in the same environment judges it to be permissible. These sorts of situations are quite common, since they are closely linked to one's time, place, and situation. Other examples that the follower is burdened with determining could be the appropriate clothing of their era and environment; or even if a particular item is considered to be from the tools of gambling which is dictated by social precepts.