



## ARBA'ĪN

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**ARBA'ĪN**, fortieth day after '*Āšūrā*'. A day of mourning, preferably at the shrine of Imam Ḥosayn, *Arba'īn* forms part of a cycle of days commemorating the burial of the imam and his companions and the various stages of the return journey of the women captives to Medina. Many pious tales, which have come to form an important part of the '*Āšūrā*' tradition, have sprung up around this journey (see M. B. Maǰlesī, *Behār al-anwār* XLV, Tehran, 1384/1964, pp. 107, 112ff., and passim). A special pilgrimage of visitation, the *zīārat-e arba'īn*, is associated with the day, which is still widely observed.

According to hagiographical tradition, on the night of '*Āšūrā*' the inhabitants of Medina heard a voice announcing the death of Ḥosayn. One of those who heard this was Jāber b. 'Abdallāh Anṣārī, well-known companion of the Prophet and a friend of the imams. He immediately set out for Karbalā' and arrived at the tomb of the martyred imam forty days later. Meanwhile, on their way to Medina, the captives begged their escort to pass by Karbalā', and thus they reached the sacred spot at the same time as Jāber. The entire company performed the first *zīāra*, and held the first lamentation, '*azādārī*', at the sacred tomb (see 'Alī b. Mūsā b. Moḥammed b. Ṭā'ūs, *al-Lohūf 'alā qatlat al-ṭofūf*, Naǰaf 1385/1965, p. 82).

This tale, which is commonly taken as the basis of the *zīārat-e arba'īn*, would seem to be a pious invention, for both the observance of the day and the *zīāra* attached to it appear to be late. No mention is made of *Arba'īn* in the earliest and most authoritative *zīāra* collection, the *Kāmel al-zīārāt* of Ebn Qawlūya (d. 367/977; partly tr. in 'A. Qomī, *Kollīyāt mafātīḥ al-ǰenān*, Tehran, 1379/1959, pp.



322-571). The sanctity of the number forty and especially of the forty-day period in the religious lore of the region is most probably one of the reasons behind this tradition. Fortieth-day observances honoring the dead are still common in the Middle East.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also Ḥorr 'Āmelī, *Wasā'el al-šī'a*, ed.

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'A. Qomī, *Kollīyāt mafātīḥ al-ženān*, Tehran, 1389/1969, pp. 925-29.

M. B. Maḵlesī, *Beḥār al-anwār* CI, Tehran, 1388/1969, pp. 329-36.

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