PRECEPTS CONCERNING THE ARBAEEN PILGRIMAGE - 24 /Oct/ 2018

The Canonic Status of the Arbaeen Pilgrimage

Q.1| Considering the current geopolitical circumstances, can it be said that the Arbaeen Pilgrimage is an obligatory duty in our day and age?

A. The Arbaeen Pilgrimage is a highly commendable supererogatory act of devotion.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

Using a Valid Passport

Q.2| Is it necessary to have a valid passport and to secure the required visa and documents if we wish to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage?

A. It is necessary in all circumstances to comply with the pertinent laws and regulations.

Using Someone Else's Passport

Q.3| There is not much time left till the arrival of the Arbaeen season, and there is not enough time for me to acquire a valid passport. May I instead use my brother's passport, with his consent, in order to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, or is this forbidden by religious canon?

A. Compliance with the pertinent laws and regulations is necessary in all circumstances. Any violation of such laws and regulations is impermissible.

Participation in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage during the School Year

Q.4| Can college students take time off during the school year in order to attend the Arbaeen Pilgrimage?

A. Students must abide by the pertinent rules and regulations.

Questions concerning Donations and Pledges Made for the Occasion of Arbaeen

Reconciling a Pledge to Offer Food on Arbaeen with Participating in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage

Q.5| A woman has pledged to offer food as a religious vow every year on the occasion of Arbaeen. This year she intends to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, and so on the Day of Arbaeen, she will be in Iraq, not in her hometown, where she had originally made the pledge. How does the pilgrimage affect the canonic status of her pledge (nadhr) and how can she fulfill it?

A. If she has not uttered the specific canonically prescribed formula (sighah) of nadhr, she is not under a religious obligation to carry out the pledge. If, however, she has uttered the canonically prescribed formula in accordance with the conditions specified in Islamic canon, she must honor her pledge and act accordingly, and so it would be impermissible for her to do otherwise.

Moving the Date of a Pledge

Q.6| Can someone who has made a pledge whose date of fulfillment is the Day of Arbaeen perform the pledge on the day prior to Arbaeen?

A. If he has not uttered the specific canonically prescribed formula of nadhr, he is under no religious obligation on account of the pledge, and so he may move the date as he sees fit. If, however, he has uttered the specific canonically prescribed formula and his pledge includes a specific date, he must act in accordance with the conditions of his pledge.

Investing the Remainder of Pledged Donations

Q.7| I, along with a few of my friends, collected privately donated monetary pledges (nudhurat) for the purpose of funding the religious ceremonies associated with the Arbaeen season. A portion of the pledged funds remained unused during the recent Arbaeen season, and they will remain unused until the next Arbaeen season, for the funds were pledged specifically for use during the Arbaeen season. Now, we have two questions in this connection. (A) First, can we deposit this unused portion with a bank in a savings account and use the earned interest toward funding the religious ceremonies of the next Arbaeen season? (B) And second, the funds are currently deposited in a non-interest-bearing (qarzol hasaneh) bank account. Is it canonically permissible to deposit funds in non-interest-bearing bank accounts?

A. (A) As to the first question: Depositing the surplus of the pledged funds in a savings account is permissible provided that, one, it is carried out with the consent of the donors and, two, the earned interest results from a contract (aqd) that is sanctioned by Islamic canon. (B) As to the second question: It is permissible to deposit money in non-interest-bearing bank accounts.

Putting the Remainder of the Funds Pledged for the Arbaeen Season to Use for Other Religious Occasions

Q.8| Some of the donations made by people for the purpose of buying cups, tea, sugar, and other items needed to serve the believers during the ceremonies of the Arbaeen season have remained unused. Can we spend the unused remainder of the donations for ceremonies held throughout the year in commemoration of Imam Hussein, or do we need to keep it for use for the Arbaeen season of next year?

A. It depends on the consent and permission of the donors.

Using Donated Bottled Water for Ablution

Q.9| Can we make wudu using bottled water donated for Arbaeen pilgrims if it has not been specified whether or not they are donated specifically for the purpose of drinking?

A. In the scenario mentioned in the question, it is impermissible to use bottled water for any purpose other than drinking unless one is certain that it is allowed by the donors.

Expenses of the Volunteers Serving the Arbaeen Pilgrims

Q.10| Many of those who wish to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage instead volunteer to serve the pilgrims by working in the makeshift rest-stations (mawakib) that are set up in Najaf and Karbala and along the procession path during the Arbaeen season. Though they choose to serve the pilgrims, they are also themselves considered pilgrims. As such, a question that some of those that manage the rest-stations have is whether it is permissible to use some of the donations made by people for funding the ceremonies of the Arbaeen season in order to pay for the expenses needed for the transportation of the volunteers (including the fee for obtaining their visas and their travel costs)?

A. It depends on the intention of the donors. If their intention in offering their donations is general (that is, they do not have specific uses in mind), it is permissible to use a part of the donations for the purpose described in the question.

Other Questions pertaining to the Ceremonies of the Arbaeen Season

The Necessity of Being Present in Karbala on the Day of Arbaeen

Q.11| In order to be entitled to the rewards mentioned in the reports related in the Shia corpus for those who undertake the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, is it required to be in Karbala on the Day of Arbaeen, or is it enough to be there around that time, be it a day sooner or later?

A. It is important to note that undertaking the pilgrimage to Karbala to visit the shrine of Imam Hussein is a very commendable deed and involves great rewards regardless of the occasion and the time of year. However, securing the rewards specified for a pilgrimage that is associated with a certain occasion or a certain date is contingent on performing it on the specified occasion and date. Yet, there are no restrictions against performing the pilgrimage to Karbala a day or two sooner or later than Arbaeen in hopes of securing the rewards specified in the Shia corpus for the Arbaeen Pilgrimage.

Performing the Arbaeen Pilgrimage before the Day of Arbaeen to Escape the Overwhelming Crowdedness

Q.12| I am the supervisor of one of the caravans that undertake the Arbaeen Pilgrimage on foot. We arrive in Karbala before the Day of Arbaeen. Is it necessary to be present in Karbala on the Day of Arbaeen to count as having performed the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, or can we leave Karbala before the Day of Arbaeen in order to avoid the overwhelming crowds of that day?

A. There is no canonic proscription against leaving Karbala prior to the Day of Arbaeen, unless the caravan management or its members have made an agreement to be in Karbala on the Day of Arbaeen.

Concluding the Arbaeen Pilgrimage at a Distance from the Holy Shrine

Q.13| Due to the overwhelming crowds that converge on Karbala on the Day of Arbaeen, it is very difficult to attempt to enter the holy shrine of Imam Hussein or even the sacred distance between the shrines of Abul Fadl al-Abbas and of Imam Hussein. For some, it is practically impossible. And trying to push one's way through may hurt fellow pilgrims. As such, can we pay our respects to Imam Hussein from the closest spot to the shrine that we can reach without having to hustle and conclude our pilgrimage there, or do we have to enter the holy shrine.

A. In the scenario described in the question, it is permissible to conclude one's pilgrimage at a distance from the holy shrine.

Women's Pilgrimage during their Menstrual Period

Q.14| Can women visit the holy shrines of the Infallible Imams during their monthly menstrual period?

A. As a matter of mandatory caution, it is impermissible for women in their menstrual period to remain in the sacred sanctuary (haram) within the holy shrines of the Infallible Imams (which is the central chamber that houses the sacred tomb of the imam and is situated directly beneath the main dome (qubbah or gunbad) of the shrine), though they may pass through it. However, they are allowed to remain and worship in the adjacent rooms and halls, provided that the rooms and halls are not canonically sanctified mosques.

Wearing Black Clothes until the Day of Arbaeen

Q.15| Is there a problem, from the viewpoint of Islamic canon, with wearing black clothes in honor of Imam Hussein's martyrdom for the forty or fifty days that mark the period between the beginning of the month of Muharram and the Day of Arbaeen?

A. Wearing black on the mournful occasions marking the martyrdom of the holy members of the sacred family of Prophet Muhammad as a means to commemorate their grief and to honor "the signs of God" (sha'a'ir allah) earns the believer great rewards.

Going to Work on the Day of Arbaeen

Q.16| Is it permissible to go to work and to engage in business on the Day of Arbaeen?

A. Going to work or engaging in matters of business on the Day of Arbaeen is, as such, permissible.

Participation in Arbaeen Pilgrimage if It Worsens Illness or Pain

Q.17| (A) On account of the reports related from the Infallible Imams (may God's peace and blessings be upon them) that underscore the great spiritual rewards of participating in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, my elderly mother is very eager to undertake this pilgrimage. However, due to her recent illness and her consequent frailty and because of the possibility that her illness may reemerge, doctors have warned her not to undertake this journey. In this light, is it permissible for her to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage? (B) Also, my grandmother wishes to participate in this pilgrimage, but she suffers from chronic pain in her knees. If there is a reasonable possibility (ihtimal uqala'ee) that the trip may worsen her pain, is the pilgrimage permissible for her?

A. It is impermissible to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage if it entails serious harm to one's health.

Travelling without Permission from One's Father

Q.18| I am a college student enrolled in the final term of undergraduate school. I would really like to travel to Karbala for the occasion of Arbaeen. But I'm certain that if I mention the trip to my father, he will not give me permission because the roads are really crowded and for a number of other reasons. Is it permissible that I embark on the trip without informing my parents and let them know only when I am well on my way?

A. If travelling without your parents' knowledge will cause them to be distressed, it is impermissible. Moreover, if your father forbids you from travelling for Arbaeen out of love and concern, you must obey.

Permissibility of Arbaeen Pilgrimage when in Debt

Q.19| Can a person who is in debt to his relatives or friends participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage?

A. If the time agreed upon for the repayment of debt has not arrived or if the creditor allows an extension in the repayment period, it is permissible for the debtor to participate in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage. If, however, the repayment date has arrived and the creditor demands the repayment of his debt, one must pay off one's debt before embarking on the pilgrimage. If a canonically duty-bound person (mukallaf) embarks on a trip (be it the Arbaeen Pilgrimage or any other trip) with the intention of avoiding the repayment of an outstanding debt whose repayment date has arrived or with the intention of avoiding any canonic obligation, for that matter, his trip is deemed sinful and thus his four-segment canonic prayers must be prayed in full. If, however, he embarks on a trip without such an intention, even if his trip would inevitably involve avoiding a canonic obligation, his trip is deemed permissible and thus his four-segment canonic prayers are, in accordance with the general rule, reduced to two segments.