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Ziyarat Ashura as a Holistic Covenantal Loop: Responsible Mourning, Ethical Dissociation from Injustice, and Present Moral Accountability

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Abstract

This article examines Ziyarat Ashura (*Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’*) as a holistic covenantal loop and comprehensive ritual–ethical cycle through which Ashura mourning is transformed into responsible remembrance, covenantal fidelity, ethical dissociation from injustice, and present moral accountability. The study addresses a gap in which Ziyarat Ashura is often received externally as a lament-centred devotional text, while its internal movement from grief to *salām*, *wilāyah*, *barā’ah*, covenant, supplication, and moral self-assessment remains insufficiently theorized. The unit of analysis is the *ziyārah* text itself, with *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Safwān* treated as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension rather than an independent *ziyārah*; the wider Ashura ritual ecology is used only as the text’s reception context. Using qualitative, source-sensitive conceptual analysis and textual coding, the article identifies four interlocking movements: mourning-to-covenant, ethical dissociation from injustice, post-covenantal supplication, and moral self-assessment. These movements show how Karbala functions as a living criterion for truth, loyalty, dignity, and resistance to distortion. The article argues that *barā’ah* is best interpreted as moral boundary-making against injustice, humiliation, distortion, and complicity rather than as sectarian hostility. Theoretically, it contributes a source-grounded model of Ashura remembrance as present moral accountability. Practically, it offers a careful interpretive vocabulary for scholarly and pedagogical engagement with contested devotional texts. The boundary condition is explicit: sanctity, faith, sincerity, intercession, *thawāb*, divine acceptance, and the truth of *wilāyah* are not measured as empirical variables.

Keywords: Ziyarat Ashura; Ashura mourning; Shi‘i ritual studies; responsible remembrance; *barā’ah*; textual coding; moral accountability.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Ziyarat Ashura (*Ziyārat ‘Āshūrā’*) occupies a central place in Imami Shi‘i devotional practice, yet its scholarly significance is not exhausted by lament, elegy, or commemorative recitation. It links the calamity of Karbala to responsible remembrance, *wilāyah*, ethical dissociation from injustice, covenantal fidelity, supplication, and present moral accountability. The



external question is often why Shi'i communities continue to mourn Ashura after centuries. The more precise scholarly question is how a devotional text converts mourning into a living grammar of moral positioning.

This question matters because Ziyarat Ashura is not recited in an interpretive vacuum. It is received within a wider Ashura ritual ecology that includes mourning assemblies, *maqal* recitation, *rawḍa*, elegy, embodied ritual practice, sacred time, sacred place, and collective Shi'i memory. Yet this wider ecology remains the reception context of the text, not a substitute for the text's own internal movement. The present article therefore focuses on the *ziyārah* itself while recognizing that its meaning is sustained through ritual repetition, communal memory, and devotional reception.

The "why now" of this study is scholarly rather than merely historical. Existing literature has examined Ashura mourning, redemptive suffering, Shi'i identity, ritual performance, collective memory, and *ziyārah*. However, the internal movement of Ziyarat Ashura itself from grief to responsible remembrance, from *salām* to *wilāyah*, from *wilāyah* to *barā'ah*, from *barā'ah* to covenant, and from covenant to supplication and present responsibility remains insufficiently theorized. The article responds to this gap by reading Ziyarat Ashura as a holistic covenantal loop and comprehensive ritual–ethical cycle.

The primary theoretical lens combines ritual memory, responsible mourning, ethical boundary-making, and non-reductionist sacred-text analysis. A rival but insufficient reading would treat Ziyarat Ashura mainly as lament, affective grief, sectarian boundary-language, or ritual repetition. This article argues instead that the text performs a structured moral translation: it does not stop at sorrow but moves the reciter toward covenant, ethical dissociation from injustice, and moral self-assessment.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The problem is not whether Ziyarat Ashura produces grief. It does. The problem is how the *ziyārah* moves the reciter beyond grief: from the perception of calamity to responsible remembrance, from *salām* and love to *wilāyah*, from *wilāyah* to *barā'ah*, from *barā'ah* to covenant, and from covenant to supplication, steadfastness, and present responsibility. If this internal movement is not theorized, Ziyarat Ashura may be misunderstood either as a text of grief alone or as a language of hostility. Both readings are incomplete and risk obscuring its ritual–ethical architecture.

The most sensitive element is *barā'ah*. If it is translated as sectarian hostility, the analysis becomes ethically risky and textually reductive. If, however, *barā'ah* is interpreted as moral boundary-making against injustice, humiliation, distortion, and complicity, it becomes central to the article's contribution. The *ziyārah* does not merely ask the reciter to love Imam Husayn; it asks the reciter to refuse moral neutrality before injustice.

Du'ā' Alqama/Şafwān is also crucial. In this article, it is not treated as an independent *ziyārah*. It is understood as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension that completes the movement of Ziyarat Ashura by linking moral positioning to plea, refuge-seeking, request for divine support, and reliance on God.

1.3 Research Gap

The best existing literature explains important dimensions of Ashura: mourning, redemptive suffering, collective memory, ritual embodiment, Shi'i identity, authority, and devotional performance. What remains underdeveloped is a focused, text-internal account of how Ziyarat Ashura itself operates as a ritual–ethical cycle. The gap is therefore not simply that "few



studies exist”; rather, the high-value gap is that existing scholarship has not sufficiently integrated textual sequence, ritual function, ethical boundary-making, post-covenantal supplication, and non-reductionist claim-boundaries into one coherent model.

This study addresses that gap by proposing a source-sensitive and non-reductionist reading of Ziyarat Ashura. It posits the following conceptual movement: the calamity of Karbala activates grief; grief becomes responsible remembrance; remembrance deepens into *wilāyah*; *wilāyah* clarifies moral recognition of injustice; that recognition requires ethical *barā’ah*; *barā’ah* becomes covenantal fidelity; covenant is extended through post-covenantal supplication; and supplication returns the reciter to present moral accountability.

1.4 Research Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this article is to explain how Ziyarat Ashura transforms Ashura mourning into covenant, moral positioning, ethical dissociation from injustice, post-covenantal supplication, and present responsibility. The article does so through qualitative, source-sensitive conceptual analysis and textual coding, treating Ziyarat Ashura as the primary corpus and *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Şafwān* as its post-covenantal supplicatory extension.

The primary research question is: How does Ziyarat Ashura, as a holistic covenantal loop and comprehensive ritual–ethical cycle, transform Ashura mourning into covenant, moral positioning, and present responsibility?

Six subsidiary questions guide the inquiry:

1. How does Ziyarat Ashura transform calamity, tears, and grief into responsible remembrance?
2. How are *salām*, love, *wilāyah*, and *barā’ah* related within the text?
3. How can *barā’ah* be framed as moral boundary-making against injustice rather than sectarian hostility?
4. What role does *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Şafwān* play in completing the movement of the *ziyārah*?
5. How does Ziyarat Ashura invite the reciter into moral self-assessment and present responsibility?
6. How can the text be studied socially, ritually, and ethically without reducing sanctity, faith, sincerity, intercession, *thawāb*, or the truth of *wilāyah* to empirical variables?

1.5 Significance and Contributions

The study is significant because it reframes Ashura mourning not as attachment to grief, but as an affective threshold into responsible remembrance, loyalty, ethical boundary-making, and moral choice. It therefore clarifies how Karbala remains a living criterion for truth, dignity, loyalty, and resistance to distortion.

This paper contributes by (1) offering a source-grounded model of Ziyarat Ashura as a holistic covenantal loop rather than a merely lament-centred devotional text; (2) theorizing *barā’ah* as ethical dissociation from injustice, distortion, humiliation, and complicity rather than sectarian hostility; and (3) defining the role of *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Şafwān* as post-covenantal supplication that extends moral positioning into plea, refuge, request for divine support, and reliance on God.

The article also contributes methodologically by distinguishing what may be analyzed from what must not be measured. Ritual, ethical, social, mnemonic, and textual functions may be studied; divine acceptance, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, sanctity, and the truth of *wilāyah*



are not converted into metrics. This distinction is essential for preventing the reduction of sacred devotion to psychological effect, social data, or managerial performance.

1.6 Scope and Boundary Conditions

The article is deliberately bounded. Its unit of analysis is the *ziyārah* text itself, with *Du‘ā‘ Alqama/Şafwān* treated as a supporting supplicatory extension. The wider Ashura ritual ecology is discussed only as the reception context of the text. The study does not attempt to resolve every *isnād*, *rijāl*, or manuscript-variant debate, nor does it offer a field-based sociology of mourning or an empirical study of reciters.

The argument is expected to hold where Ziyarat Ashura is studied as a received Imami devotional text and as a ritual–ethical structure. It should not be generalized as a measurement model for faith, sanctity, divine reward, or actual behavioral outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Review Logic and Source Selection

This literature review is an integrative and theory-building review rather than a systematic or meta-analytic review. Its purpose is not to quantify findings across empirical studies, but to synthesize source-critical, devotional, ritual, ethical and theoretical literatures in order to justify a text-internal model of Ziyarat Ashura. The review is bounded by the article’s unit of analysis: Ziyarat Ashura as the primary *ziyārah* corpus, *Du‘ā‘ Alqama/Şafwān* as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension, and the wider Ashura ritual ecology as reception context rather than as the central object of analysis.

The selection logic follows three criteria. First, the review includes primary and devotional sources that establish the textual and reception field of Ziyarat Ashura, especially *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* and *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid* [1,2], contemporary source-critical discussions [3–6], devotional commentaries and ritual explanations [7–10], *rijāl*, *ḥadīth* and theological works [11–18], and modern discussions of *tawallī*, *tabarrī* and Ziyarat Ashura [19–22]. Second, it includes academic studies on Ashura mourning, Shi‘i ritual, *ziyārah*, authority and identity formation [23–29]. Third, it includes theoretical works on collective memory, cultural memory, ritual performance, sincerity, moral protest and moral emotion [30–38]. Non-peer-reviewed or devotional sources are used only where they clarify reception, textual status or intra-traditional interpretation; they are not treated as substitutes for critical academic analysis.

2.2 Theoretical Background and Rival Readings

The primary theoretical lens of this article combines ritual memory, performative theology, moral emotion and ethical boundary-making. Ritual memory explains how a past event remains active through repetition, social frameworks and embodied practice [30–32]. Performative ritual theory explains why recitation is not merely expressive but world-making, identity-forming and normatively ordering [33,34]. Moral emotion theory helps explain why grief, lament and shock should not be reduced to passive affect; emotions may also function as evaluative judgments that orient the subject toward truth, injustice and responsibility [36–38].

This lens must be distinguished from four rival readings. The first is a lament-only reading, which treats Ziyarat Ashura primarily as a text of grief. This explains the affective intensity of Ashura mourning but fails to account for the movement from grief to *wilāyah*, *barā‘ah*, covenant and present responsibility. The second is a sectarian-hostility reading, which



interprets *barā'ah* and curse language mainly as communal antagonism. This reading recognizes the boundary-forming force of the text but risks reducing ethical dissociation from injustice to identity hostility. The third is a purely sociological reading, which explains Ashura as collective identity or ritual performance but may understate the text's internal theological and covenantal logic. The fourth is a managerial or KPI-reductive reading, which would translate sacred content into measurable performance variables. This article rejects that move: ritual, ethical, textual and mnemonic functions may be analyzed, but sanctity, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, divine acceptance and the truth of *wilāyah* are not measured.

2.3 Conceptual Domain Map: Key Constructs and Boundaries

The central constructs are responsible mourning, living remembrance, *wilāyah*, *barā'ah*, covenantal fidelity, post-covenantal supplication, and moral accountability. Responsible mourning refers to grief that becomes remembrance, recognition, and ethical orientation. Living remembrance refers to the continuing activation of Karbala through text, recitation, ritual ecology, and communal memory. *Wilāyah* is treated as covenantal loyalty and alignment with Imam Husayn and the camp of truth. *Barā'ah* is defined as ethical dissociation from injustice, distortion, humiliation, and complicity rather than sectarian hostility. Covenantal fidelity marks the reciter's movement from recognition to binding moral stance; post-covenantal supplication refers to the role of *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān*; and moral accountability refers to the reciter's renewed self-location before Karbala as a living criterion of truth, loyalty, dignity, and resistance to distortion.

2.4 Critical Synthesis by Mechanisms

The first mechanism concerns mourning and responsible remembrance. Scholarship on Ashura has shown that grief in Twelver Shi'i devotion is not merely emotional but devotional, soteriological, identity-forming and morally charged [23]. Ritual-historical work further shows that Ashura memory becomes collective practice rather than private recollection alone [24]. Yet the debate remains over whether mourning should be read primarily as affect, identity formation, social discipline or moral transformation. The present article resolves this tension by treating mourning as the first movement in a broader ritual-ethical cycle. This mechanism directly supports SRQ1 by explaining how calamity, tears, and grief become responsible remembrance rather than remaining at the level of affective lament.

The second mechanism concerns *ziyārah* and performative theology. Work on Twelver Shi'i liturgy allows *ziyārah* and *du'ā'* to be read as performative theology rather than inert textual repetition [26]. This is important because Ziyarat Ashura does not simply represent loyalty; it performs loyalty, dissociation, covenant and supplication through recitation. The contested issue is whether the text should be read mainly as devotional formula, theological statement, ritual performance or communal identity marker. The article adopts a performative-textual reading: the *ziyārah* is a devotional text whose internal sequence performs moral positioning. Implication for the model/RQs: SRQ2 and SRQ4 require a reading of *salām*, *wilāyah*, *barā'ah* and *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* as structured movements rather than isolated phrases.

The third mechanism concerns *barā'ah* and moral boundary-making. Anthropological work on lamentation and cursing shows that ritual curse and dissociation language is analytically sensitive and easily misread [27]. Mavani and Takim provide broader doctrinal and communal contexts for religious authority, *wilāyah*, charisma and Shi'i identity [28,29]. The key debate is whether *barā'ah* should be treated as sectarian opposition, doctrinal identity, ritualized anger or ethical dissociation. This article adopts the fourth reading. *Barā'ah* is theorized as moral boundary-making against injustice, distortion, humiliation and complicity.



This mechanism supports SRQ3 by separating anti-injustice dissociation from communal hostility, thereby strengthening the article's interpretive validity.

The fourth mechanism concerns memory, embodiment and ritual ecology. Collective and cultural memory studies explain how past events remain socially active through frameworks of remembrance and transmission [30,31]. Connerton's work on bodily memory clarifies why repetition, voice, mourning practices and embodied participation matter [32]. Bell and Rappaport show that ritual orders worlds, forms subjects and generates performative commitments [33,34]. The tension is that ritual ecology can easily become so broad that the text disappears. This article therefore treats the Ashura ritual ecology as reception context, not as the object replacing Ziyarat Ashura. This mechanism clarifies that the model preserves Ziyarat Ashura as the textual corpus while acknowledging that its reception is sustained through mourning assemblies, maq̄al, rawḍa, elegy, sacred time, sacred place, and collective memory.

The fifth mechanism concerns moral emotion and ethical self-assessment. Jasper's work on moral protest and Nussbaum's account of emotions as intelligent evaluations support the claim that affective experience can carry ethical cognition [36,37]. Haidt is used only at the limited level of moral cognition and boundary-making, not as a full explanatory reduction of the sacred text [38]. The debate is whether moral emotion explains ritual transformation or merely translates it into psychology. This article uses moral emotion cautiously: grief and moral shock are not the whole meaning of the *ziyārah*, but they help explain how the text activates ethical recognition and self-assessment. This mechanism supports SRQ5 by showing that Ziyarat Ashura does not merely invite the reciter to remember Karbala, but also to ask where they stand now in relation to truth, injustice, dignity, and distortion.

2.5 Research Gaps and Bridge to Research Questions

The literature establishes that Ashura mourning is devotional, collective, embodied, and morally charged, and that *ziyārah* can function as performative theology. What remains insufficiently developed is a text-internal account of how Ziyarat Ashura moves from calamity to responsible remembrance, *wilāyah*, ethical *barā'ah*, covenant, *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Ṣafwān*, and present responsibility. The present article addresses this gap through the primary research question and six subsidiary questions stated above, while preserving the non-reductionist boundary required for sacred devotional texts.

3. Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative, source-sensitive, and conceptual research design. It is not an empirical, causal, survey-based, or fieldwork study. The purpose is to explain how Ziyarat Ashura functions as a holistic covenantal loop and ritual-ethical cycle, moving internally from mourning to responsible remembrance, *wilāyah*, ethical *barā'ah*, covenant, post-covenantal supplication, and present moral accountability. The unit of analysis is the *ziyārah* text itself. *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Ṣafwān* is treated as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension, while the wider Ashura ritual ecology is considered only as reception context.

The study uses documentary and textual data. The primary source is the transmitted text of Ziyarat Ashura as preserved in the relevant Imami devotional tradition, especially through Kāmil al-Ziyārāt and Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid. Supporting sources include source-critical discussions, devotional commentaries, *rijāl*, ḥadīth and theological works, and academic literature on Ashura, *ziyārah*, ritual memory, performative ritual, and moral emotion. The



sampling strategy is purposive textual sampling: selected units are phrases and passages that perform a function in the movement from calamity to remembrance, wilāyah, barā'ah, covenant, supplication, steadfastness, and present responsibility.

The coding unit is the phrase–function unit. Each relevant phrase is coded not only by vocabulary, but by its role in the ritual–ethical movement of the text. The main constructs are responsible mourning, living remembrance, wilāyah, barā'ah, covenantal fidelity, post-covenantal supplication, and moral accountability. These constructs are not treated as empirical variables; they are operationalized as traceable textual–ritual functions.

The analysis proceeds in five stages: corpus delimitation, phrase–function extraction, functional coding, cycle mapping, and claim-boundary testing. SRQ1 is addressed through passages of calamity, grief, and remembrance. SRQ2 is addressed through the relation among salām, love, wilāyah, and barā'ah. SRQ3 is addressed by interpreting barā'ah as ethical boundary-making against injustice rather than sectarian hostility. SRQ4 is addressed through the structural role of Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān. SRQ5 is addressed through the self-assessment and present-responsibility functions of the ziyārah. SRQ6 is addressed through the non-reductionist boundary that separates textual, ritual, and ethical analysis from measurement of sacred truth.

The design is also informed by a limited evidence-audit logic derived from earlier structured sacred-text analysis. Civilizational Algorithm Theory (CAT) was developed as a design–science method for structuring bounded sacred textual units through corpus delimitation, semantic extraction, ontological coding, systems translation, and systems integration [39]. A related Jawshan Kabir study showed how sacred textual units may be examined through traceable conceptual architecture without reducing them to managerial slogans [40]. In the present article, this methodological lineage supports corpus delimitation, textual coding discipline, claim traceability, and non-reductionist boundary control; it is not used to convert Ziyarat Ashura into governance KPIs or empirical measures of sacred meaning.

Trustworthiness is supported by source transparency, construct definition before coding, phrase–function traceability, comparison with relevant literature, and explicit boundary control. No interviews, surveys, participant observation, private records, or personal data are used. The study does not measure faith, sincerity, thawāb, intercession, divine acceptance, sanctity, or the truth of wilāyah. The author declares no conflict of interest.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Data Overview and Evidence Base

The findings reported in this section are conceptual and textual rather than statistical. The evidence base consists of Ziyarat Ashura as the primary *ziyārah* corpus, *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* as the post-covenantal supplicatory extension, the principal devotional source anchors, source-critical discussions, and the academic literature reviewed above on Ashura mourning, Shi'i ritual, *ziyārah*, ritual memory and moral emotion. The unit of analysis is not an empirical sample of reciters or ritual participants, but a bounded textual corpus and its reception context.

Since the study is based on a bounded textual corpus rather than human-subject or observational data, the relevant quality issue is not missingness or imputation, but the traceability of each claim to a textual unit, source layer, interpretive construct, and non-reductionist boundary. The relevant “evidence quality” issue is instead textual and



interpretive: whether each claim can be traced to a textual function, source layer, theoretical construct and non-reductionist claim boundary.

The findings are organized as pre-specified conceptual findings derived from the primary research question and six subsidiary questions. They should not be read as causal effects, behavioral outcomes or empirical measurements. Their status is interpretive-explanatory: they identify how the text functions within the article's ritual-ethical model.

4.2 Measurement Checks and Quality Diagnostics

Statistical measurement checks such as reliability coefficients, factor loadings, model-fit indices, multicollinearity diagnostics, significance tests or confidence intervals are not applicable to this study. The article does not measure latent variables, survey responses or behavioral outcomes. Instead, quality control is established through four qualitative diagnostics.

First, corpus differentiation is maintained: Ziyarat Ashura is the primary text; *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* is a supporting post-covenantal supplication; the wider Ashura ritual ecology is the reception context. Second, phrase-function coding is used: textual units are interpreted by their role in the ritual-ethical movement rather than by isolated vocabulary alone. Third, conceptual triangulation is applied by comparing the coding results with source-critical literature, devotional reception, ritual studies and moral-emotion theory. Fourth, a non-reductionist boundary is applied to every major claim: sanctity, faith, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, divine acceptance and the truth of *wilāyah* are not treated as empirical variables.

4.3 Main Findings Mapped to the Research Questions

Finding 1: The Ashura ritual ecology is the reception context, not the substitute for the text.

The first finding is that Ziyarat Ashura is embedded in a wider Ashura ritual ecology but is not replaced by that ecology. The text is received through mourning assemblies, *maqal* recitation, *rawḍa*, elegy, embodied mourning, sacred time, sacred place and collective Shi'i memory. These layers explain how Karbala is remembered through voice, body, tears, narrative, place and repetition.

The result is not that the ecology itself becomes the article's central corpus. Rather, the ecology clarifies the conditions under which the text is received, repeated and socially sustained. This finding answers the scope component of the PRQ and supports SRQ6: the text may be studied socially, ritually and ethically, but without replacing textual analysis with a general sociology of Ashura mourning.

Finding 2: Ziyarat Ashura functions as a received Imami text with source-critical boundaries.

The second finding concerns source status. Ziyarat Ashura functions in this article as a received Imami *ziyārah* associated with the source tradition of Imam al-Bāqir and transmitted through major devotional works. *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* and *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid* serve as the principal textual anchors [1,2]. Contemporary *isnād* discussions and debates on variant or contested phrases provide the cautionary source-critical layer [3–6]. Later commentaries, ritual explanations, *rijāl*, ḥadīth and theological sources, and modern discussions of *tawallī*, *tabarrī* and Ziyarat Ashura clarify the breadth of reception and debate [7–22].

The finding is that the article neither ignores source-critical issues nor collapses into a purely *rijāl*-based adjudication. Source discussion functions as a claim-boundary mechanism. This answers the methodological and boundary dimension of the PRQ: the model is source-sensitive, but its purpose is not to settle every manuscript or *isnād* dispute.



Finding 3: The text operates through a phrase–function sequence.

The third finding is that Ziyarat Ashura contains a traceable sequence of phrase–function movements. The opening *salām* establishes identity linkage, reverence and relational loyalty. The references to the enormity of the calamity generate moral shock and responsible remembrance. The naming of injustice, displacement, preparation for violence and complicity functions as moral-historical recognition. *Barā'ah* and *la'n* passages function as ethical dissociation from injustice, distortion, humiliation and complicity, not as a call to communal hostility.

The declaration of alignment with those at peace with the Imam and opposition to those who war against him turns love and *wilāyah* into explicit moral positioning. The request for justice with the guided Imam must be read within the horizon of justice, hope and divine ordering, not as raw vengeance. The supplicatory passages concerning life, death, intercession and steadfastness extend covenant into existential orientation.

This finding answers SRQ1, SRQ2 and SRQ3. It shows how calamity and grief become responsible remembrance, how *salām*, love, *wilāyah* and *barā'ah* are related, and how *barā'ah* may be framed as moral boundary-making against injustice rather than sectarian hostility.

Finding 4: The main result is a holistic covenantal loop.

The fourth finding is the article's central result: Ziyarat Ashura operates as a holistic covenantal loop. Its movement can be stated as follows: the calamity of Karbala activates grief and responsible remembrance; remembrance deepens into *wilāyah*; *wilāyah* clarifies moral recognition of injustice; moral recognition requires ethical *barā'ah*; *barā'ah* becomes covenantal fidelity; covenant is extended through post-covenantal supplication; and supplication returns the reciter to present moral accountability.

This loop is not merely linear. It returns the reciter repeatedly to Karbala as a living criterion of truth, loyalty, dignity and resistance to distortion. The reciter does not only recall what happened; the reciter is invited to ask where they stand now in relation to truth, injustice, complicity, silence, loyalty and dignity.

This finding directly answers the PRQ. It explains how Ashura mourning becomes covenant, moral positioning and present responsibility.

Finding 5: Four interlocking sub-cycles structure the larger loop.

The fifth finding is that the larger covenantal loop contains four interlocking sub-cycles.

The first is the mourning-to-covenant cycle. In this movement, calamity and grief do not end in affective sorrow; they activate responsible remembrance and covenantal loyalty. This sub-cycle answers SRQ1.

The second is the ethical dissociation cycle. Love and *wilāyah* lead to recognition of injustice, and recognition of injustice requires *barā'ah* as moral boundary-making. This sub-cycle answers SRQ2 and SRQ3.

The third is the post-covenantal supplication cycle. *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* extends the covenantal stance into plea, refuge-seeking, request for divine support and reliance on God. It is therefore not treated as an independent *ziyārah*, but as a supplicatory completion of the *ziyārah*'s moral movement. This sub-cycle answers SRQ4.

The fourth is the moral self-assessment cycle. Through repeated recitation, the text returns the reciter to the question of present stance: where does the reciter stand now in relation to truth, injustice, loyalty, humiliation, distortion and responsibility? This sub-cycle answers SRQ5.



Finding 6: The non-reductionist boundary is itself a result of the analysis.

The sixth finding is that the article's non-reductionist boundary is not merely a methodological caution; it is required by the structure of the object being studied. Ziyarat Ashura can be analyzed as text, ritual, memory, ethical orientation and devotional performance. However, the article does not measure sanctity, faith, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, divine acceptance or the truth of *wilāyah*.

This finding answers SRQ6. The article's contribution depends on preserving the difference between analyzing ritual–ethical function and reducing sacred reality to empirical variables. The model therefore remains reviewer-defensible because it explains the internal movement of the text without turning the text into psychology, sociology, political slogan or KPI logic.

4.4 Additional Analyses: Rival Readings and Boundary Tests

Four rival readings were considered as boundary tests. The lament-only reading explains the affective intensity of the text but cannot explain the full movement from grief to *wilāyah*, *barā'ah*, covenant, supplication and moral accountability. The sectarian-hostility reading recognizes boundary language but misreads *barā'ah* if it converts ethical dissociation from injustice into communal hostility. The purely sociological reading explains collective memory and ritual ecology but risks losing the internal theological and covenantal sequence of the *ziyārah*. The KPI-reductive reading introduces auditability but fails if it converts sanctity, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession or divine acceptance into measurable indicators.

These rival readings confirm the need for the article's adopted model: a source-sensitive, non-reductionist, textual–ritual account of Ziyarat Ashura as a covenantal moral loop.

4.5 Results-to-Objectives Traceability

The PRQ is answered by Finding 4, which identifies the holistic covenantal loop. SRQ1 is answered by Finding 3 and the mourning-to-covenant sub-cycle in Finding 5. SRQ2 is answered by the phrase–function sequence linking *salām*, love, *wilāyah* and *barā'ah*. SRQ3 is answered by the interpretation of *barā'ah* as ethical dissociation from injustice. SRQ4 is answered by the treatment of *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* as post-covenantal supplication. SRQ5 is answered by the moral self-assessment cycle. SRQ6 is answered by the non-reductionist boundary, which prevents sacred realities from being converted into empirical variables.

No stated objective remains unanswered within the limits of a conceptual, source-sensitive study. What remains outside the scope is empirical validation through interviews, surveys, participant observation, reception studies or comparative work with other *ziyārāt*.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Principal Findings

The article's principal finding is that Ziyarat Ashura does not operate only as a lament-centred devotional text. It functions as a holistic covenantal loop and comprehensive ritual–ethical cycle through which Ashura mourning is transformed into responsible remembrance, *wilāyah*, ethical *barā'ah*, covenantal fidelity, post-covenantal supplication, moral self-assessment, and present accountability. This finding directly answers the primary research question by showing how mourning becomes a structured moral position rather than remaining only an affective response.

A second finding is that the wider Ashura ritual ecology provides the reception context of Ziyarat Ashura but does not replace the text itself. Mourning assemblies, *maqālat* recitation,



rawḍa, elegy, embodied ritual practice, sacred time, sacred place, and collective Shi'i memory help explain how the text is received and sustained, but the article's unit of analysis remains the *ziyārah* corpus.

A third finding is that *barā'ah* is best understood as ethical dissociation from injustice, humiliation, distortion, and complicity rather than as sectarian hostility. A fourth finding is that *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Ṣafwān* should be read as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension, not as an independent *ziyārah*. A fifth finding is that the text produces four interlocking sub-cycles: mourning-to-covenant, ethical dissociation, post-covenantal supplication, and moral self-assessment.

5.2 Interpretation and Mechanisms

Evidence-supported interpretation: Ziyarat Ashura transforms grief into moral responsibility by linking the emotional force of Karbala to recognition, loyalty, dissociation, covenant, supplication, and self-assessment. Grief functions as the threshold of the cycle, not its destination. The reciter is moved from the memory of calamity to the question of present stance: where does one stand now in relation to truth, injustice, loyalty, silence, dignity, and distortion?

Evidence-supported mechanism 1 is the mourning-to-covenant mechanism. The text begins from calamity and grief, but grief is not allowed to remain private or passive. It is transformed into responsible remembrance and covenantal fidelity. This mechanism supports the article's claim that Ashura mourning is not mere attachment to sorrow, but a disciplined form of moral remembrance.

Evidence-supported mechanism 2 is the ethical dissociation mechanism. *Wilāyah* does not remain only affection or loyalty; it clarifies the moral recognition of injustice. From that recognition emerges *barā'ah*, understood here as moral boundary-making against injustice, distortion, humiliation, and complicity. This mechanism is central to preventing the misreading of *barā'ah* as communal hostility.

Evidence-supported mechanism 3 is the post-covenantal supplication mechanism. *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Ṣafwān* extends the ethical position established by the *ziyārah* into plea, refuge-seeking, request for divine support, and reliance on God. This means that the cycle does not end in moral declaration alone; it turns the reciter toward dependence on God.

Evidence-supported mechanism 4 is the moral self-assessment mechanism. Through repetition, the text does not merely recall Karbala; it returns the reciter to ethical self-location. Karbala becomes a living criterion by which the reciter's present relation to truth, loyalty, injustice, dignity, and complicity is re-examined.

Interpretive but requiring further testing: the article suggests that repeated recitation may shape ethical sensibility over time. However, because the study does not use interviews, surveys, observation, or behavioral data, it cannot claim measurable psychological or social effects. That question belongs to future reception studies.

5.3 Comparison with Prior Literature

The findings align with literature that treats Ashura mourning as devotional, morally charged, and more than emotional expression. Ayoub's work on redemptive suffering helps explain why grief in Shi'i devotion is not simply affective but soteriological and ethically meaningful [23]. The present article agrees with that insight but shifts the analytical focus from the broader theology of suffering to the internal movement of Ziyarat Ashura itself.



The findings also align with historical and ritual studies that show how Ashura memory becomes collective practice. Nakash's work helps explain the social formation of Ashura observance [24], while Deeb's work supports the idea that piety and mourning may become socially consequential ethical commitment [25]. This article builds on these approaches but does not reduce Ziyarat Ashura to collective identity or social practice alone. Its contribution is more text-internal: it asks how the *ziyārah* itself organizes the movement from grief to moral accountability.

Khetia's work on Twelver Shi'i liturgy is particularly important for reading *ziyārah* and *du'ā'* as performative theology rather than inert textual repetition [26]. The present article extends this line by treating *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension that completes the moral movement of Ziyarat Ashura.

The article also engages the difficulty of ritual curse and dissociation language. Parsapajouh's work indicates that lamentation and cursing must be interpreted with analytical care [27]. The present article responds by distinguishing ethical dissociation from injustice from sectarian hostility. Mavani and Takim help situate *wilāyah*, religious authority, charisma, and Shi'i identity formation [28,29], while this article narrows the focus to the ritual-ethical grammar by which *wilāyah* and *barā'ah* are linked within Ziyarat Ashura.

Finally, memory and ritual theories help explain why the text is not merely remembered but reactivated. Halbwachs, Assmann, Connerton, Bell, Rappaport, Seligman and colleagues, Jasper, Nussbaum, and Haidt provide vocabulary for collective memory, embodied memory, ritual order, sincerity, moral protest, and moral emotion [30–38]. This article uses those theories cautiously. It does not claim that social science exhausts the meaning of the *ziyārah*. Rather, it uses these theories to clarify the text's ritual, mnemonic, and ethical functions while preserving its sacred horizon.

5.4 Alternative Explanations and Rival Mechanisms

The first alternative explanation is the lament-only reading. This reading correctly recognizes the centrality of grief, tears, and calamity, but it cannot explain why the text moves from grief to *salām*, *wilāyah*, *barā'ah*, covenant, supplication, and present responsibility. It captures the affective threshold but not the full cycle.

The second alternative explanation is the sectarian-hostility reading. This reading recognizes that Ziyarat Ashura contains strong dissociation and curse language, but it becomes reductive when it equates *barā'ah* with communal hostility. The article's reading is more defensible because it frames *barā'ah* as ethical dissociation from injustice, humiliation, distortion, and complicity.

The third alternative explanation is the purely sociological reading. This reading explains ritual ecology, collective memory, and group identity, but it may obscure the internal textual sequence of the *ziyārah*. The present article therefore treats ritual ecology as reception context, not as a substitute for the text.

The fourth alternative explanation is the managerial or KPI-reductive reading. This reading values auditability and structured analysis, but it fails if it converts sanctity, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, divine acceptance, or the truth of *wilāyah* into measurable variables. The article therefore retains traceability and evidence discipline without converting sacred realities into managerial indicators.

5.5 Theoretical Implications



The first theoretical contribution is to Shi'i ritual studies. The article shows that Ziyarat Ashura may be read as a ritual–ethical cycle rather than as lament alone. This contribution is tied to Finding 4 and addresses the literature gap concerning the under-theorized internal movement of the *ziyārah*.

The second contribution is to studies of Ashura memory. The article reframes remembrance as responsible remembrance: memory is not only the preservation of the past, but the activation of present moral accountability. This contribution is tied to Findings 1 and 4 and extends memory studies by showing how sacred text, ritual repetition, and ethical self-location interact.

The third contribution is to Islamic ethical discourse on *barā'ah*. The article provides a reviewer-defensible vocabulary for interpreting *barā'ah* as ethical dissociation from injustice rather than sectarian hostility. This contribution is tied to Findings 3 and 6 and responds to the risk of misreading dissociation language.

The fourth contribution is to the study of *ziyārah* and *du'ā'*. By placing *Du'ā' Alqama/Şafwān* as post-covenantal supplication, the article clarifies the relationship between visitation, covenantal stance, plea, refuge, and reliance on God. This contribution is tied to Finding 5 and addresses the structural role of the supplication.

The fifth contribution is methodological. The article offers a non-reductionist evidence-audit logic for sacred-text analysis. It shows how textual, ritual, ethical, and mnemonic functions can be traced without measuring sanctity, faith, sincerity, divine acceptance, or metaphysical truth.

5.6 Practical and Policy Implications

For religious educators, the implication is actor → action → evidence discipline → quality indicator → risk control. Educators should teach Ziyarat Ashura not only as a text of mourning, but as a disciplined movement from grief to responsible remembrance, *wilāyah*, ethical *barā'ah*, supplication, and present responsibility. The enabling input is a source-grounded teaching guide that distinguishes text, supplication, and ritual ecology. A suitable quality indicator is not “measured faith” but clarity of explanation: whether students can distinguish ethical dissociation from sectarian hostility. The main risk is polemical simplification.

For scholars of Islamic studies and ritual studies, the implication is to preserve source sensitivity while avoiding both apologetic overclaim and secular reduction. The enabling input is a claim-boundary matrix linking each claim to text, source layer, theory, and limitation. A suitable quality indicator is traceability of claims, not empirical measurement of sacred states. The main risk is conceptual essay drift without adequate evidence discipline.

For institutions that teach or translate devotional texts, the implication is to adopt careful language around *barā'ah*. Translation and commentary should avoid rendering *barā'ah* as hostility toward communities. It should be explained as moral boundary-making against injustice, distortion, humiliation, and complicity. The enabling input is terminological governance: consistent use of ethical dissociation, moral boundary-making, covenantal fidelity, and post-covenantal supplication. The main risk is mistranslation or politicized appropriation.

For future research teams, the implication is to build an evidence appendix before making larger civilizational claims. Each claim should be mapped to textual source, interpretive construct, theoretical support, reception evidence, and claim boundary. This is especially



important if the article is later linked to the broader AALMA-360+ portfolio. The main constraint is the need for precise Arabic source control before submission.

5.7 Boundary Conditions, Limitations, and Threats to Validity

The first boundary condition is textual. The model applies to Ziyarat Ashura as a received Imami devotional text and to *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Ṣafwān* as its post-covenantal supplicatory extension. It should not be generalized automatically to all *ziyārāt*, all Shi‘i rituals, or all forms of Islamic mourning.

The second boundary condition is methodological. The article is conceptual, source-sensitive, and interpretive. It does not claim causal effects, psychological outcomes, behavioral changes, or measurable ritual impact. It does not test whether reciters become more morally accountable after recitation.

The third boundary condition is source-critical. The article acknowledges source and variant issues, but it does not issue a final *isnād*, *rijāl*, or manuscript ruling on every disputed phrase. Its purpose is to define a source-aware interpretive model, not to settle all hadith-critical debates.

The fourth boundary condition is theological. The article does not measure sanctity, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, divine acceptance, faith, or the truth of *wilāyah*. This is not a weakness but a necessary safeguard. The article’s validity depends on preserving the difference between analyzing ritual–ethical function and reducing sacred reality to empirical variables.

The main threats to validity are over-extension, category confusion, and polemical misreading. Over-extension would occur if the model were applied beyond the evidence base. Category confusion would occur if textual function were treated as metaphysical proof or empirical effect. Polemical misreading would occur if *barā‘ah* were reframed as hostility rather than ethical dissociation from injustice.

5.8 Future Research Agenda

Future research should first strengthen the source-critical foundation by comparing relevant passages in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid*, later devotional commentaries, and contemporary source-critical discussions.

Second, future work should compare Ziyarat Ashura with Ziyarat Warith, Ziyarat al-Nāḥiyah, and Ziyarat al-Arba‘īn to determine whether similar covenantal, inheritance, witnessing, and return cycles appear across the wider Ashura–Arba‘īn textual portfolio.

Third, reception studies should examine how reciters, teachers, and religious educators understand *barā‘ah*, moral responsibility, supplication, and self-assessment after recitation.

Fourth, comparative studies may examine ritual curse and dissociation language in other religious traditions, while preserving the specificity of Shi‘i devotional grammar.

Fifth, expert review by scholars of ḥadīth, kalām, Shi‘i theology, ritual studies, and Islamic ethics could strengthen the coding model.

Sixth, future work may develop a non-reductionist evidence matrix for other *ziyārāt*, ensuring that each textual claim is linked to source, construct, theory, reception evidence, and boundary condition.

Seventh, if the article is later connected to the AALMA-360+ capstone project, that connection should remain cautious. The present article establishes the covenant–moral positioning cycle; broader civilizational claims require additional evidence from the other foundation articles.



5.9 Ethics, Governance, and Responsible Use

The ethical principle guiding this discussion is non-reduction with accountability. The article studies ritual, ethical, textual, and mnemonic functions, but it does not claim authority over divine acceptance, faith, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, or the truth of *wilāyah*. This boundary protects both scholarly credibility and devotional integrity.

Responsible use requires careful language. *Barā'ah* should not be translated or taught as hostility toward communities. It should be framed as ethical dissociation from injustice, distortion, humiliation, and complicity. Scholars and educators should also avoid sensationalizing curse language or extracting it from its covenantal and supplicatory structure.

No human participants, private data, or confidential records are involved in this study. The author declares no conflict of interest. The primary governance requirement is scholarly traceability: claims should remain linked to textual evidence, source layers, theoretical constructs, and explicit boundaries.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This article examined how Ziyarat Ashura transforms Ashura mourning into covenant, moral positioning, ethical dissociation from injustice, post-covenantal supplication, and present moral accountability. The central finding is that the *ziyārah* does not stop at sorrow. Sorrow is the threshold of the text, not its destination. The destination is responsible remembrance and renewed moral stance before the continuing question of Karbala: where does the reciter stand now in relation to truth, injustice, loyalty, silence, dignity, distortion, and complicity?

The article's findings answer the research questions in six movements. First, Ziyarat Ashura turns calamity, tears, and grief into responsible remembrance by preventing mourning from remaining merely affective. Second, *salām*, love, *wilāyah*, and *barā'ah* are not isolated devotional expressions; together they form a sequence of relational loyalty and moral positioning. Third, *barā'ah* is best understood as moral boundary-making against injustice, humiliation, distortion, and complicity rather than as sectarian hostility. Fourth, *Du'ā' 'Alqama/Şafwān* completes the movement of the *ziyārah* as a post-covenantal supplicatory extension, not as an independent *ziyārah*. Fifth, the repeated recitation of Ziyarat Ashura invites moral self-assessment by returning the reciter to the question of present responsibility. Sixth, the sacred text can be analyzed socially, ritually, textually, and ethically only if the analysis preserves a strict non-reductionist boundary: sanctity, faith, sincerity, *thawāb*, intercession, divine acceptance, and the truth of *wilāyah* are not empirical variables.

The main contrary finding is interpretive rather than statistical. Readings that reduce Ziyarat Ashura to lament alone, sectarian hostility, social identity alone, or KPI-style measurement do not account for the full internal movement of the text.

6.2 Scholarly Contributions

This paper makes four scholarly contributions. First, it refines the study of Ashura mourning by modelling Ziyarat Ashura as a holistic covenantal loop rather than as a merely lament-centred devotional text. This changes the literature by shifting attention from mourning as affect to mourning as a structured ritual–ethical movement.

Second, the article contributes to Islamic ethics and Shi'i ritual studies by theorizing *barā'ah* as ethical dissociation from injustice, distortion, humiliation, and complicity. This reframing



protects the text from a reductive sectarian-hostility reading while preserving its moral boundary-making force.

Third, the article clarifies the structural role of *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Şafwān*. It shows that the supplication extends the covenantal stance of the *ziyārah* into plea, refuge-seeking, request for divine support, and reliance on God. In this way, the article contributes to the study of the relation between *ziyārah* and *du‘ā’*.

Fourth, the article offers a non-reductionist evidence-audit logic for sacred-text analysis. It shows how textual, ritual, ethical, and mnemonic functions can be traced without converting sanctity, sincerity, divine acceptance, *thawāb*, intercession, or the truth of *wilāyah* into measurable variables.

6.3 Limitations

This article has four main limitations. First, it is conceptual and source-sensitive rather than empirical. It does not test whether reciters experience measurable psychological, social, or behavioral change after reciting Ziyarat Ashura. Therefore, no causal claim about reciter behavior is made.

Second, the article does not provide a final *isnād*, *rijāl*, or manuscript-critical ruling on every disputed phrase. Source-critical caution is included, but the aim is to construct a source-aware interpretive model rather than to settle every hadith-critical debate.

Third, the article is bounded to Ziyarat Ashura as a received Imami devotional text and to *Du‘ā’ ‘Alqama/Şafwān* as its post-covenantal supplicatory extension. The model should not be generalized automatically to all *ziyārāt*, all Shi‘i rituals, or all forms of Islamic mourning.

Fourth, the study does not include interviews, surveys, participant observation, or reception data. This means that the article can explain the text’s internal ritual–ethical movement, but it cannot claim how different communities or individual reciters actually understand or embody that movement.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

Future research should move in three directions. First, source-critical work should compare the relevant passages in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid*, later devotional commentaries, and contemporary source-critical discussions. Second, comparative textual research should examine Ziyarat Ashura alongside Ziyarat Warith, Ziyarat al-Nāḥiyah, and Ziyarat al-Arba‘īn to clarify how covenant, inheritance, witnessing, and return operate as distinct mechanisms. Third, reception research should examine how reciters, teachers, translators, and public lecturers understand *barā‘ah*, moral responsibility, and post-covenantal supplication.

6.5 Closing Synthesis

Ziyarat Ashura matters because it keeps Karbala present not only as a remembered tragedy, but as a living criterion of truth, loyalty, dignity, and responsibility. This article has shown that the *ziyārah* converts mourning into a covenantal moral grammar: grief becomes remembrance, remembrance becomes *wilāyah*, *wilāyah* clarifies injustice, injustice requires ethical *barā‘ah*, *barā‘ah* becomes covenant, covenant becomes supplication, and supplication returns the reciter to present accountability. This paper changes the literature on Ashura mourning from lament-centred interpretation toward a source-grounded ritual–ethical model, and enables educators and scholars to teach Ziyarat Ashura with greater ethical precision, textual traceability, and non-reductionist care.



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