

Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) **and the tragedy of Karbala**

A chronological account of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) based on reliable sources.

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1 Introduction

Imam Hussain's services to Islam are countless and precious. He lived his entire life preserving the fundamentals of Islam in words and actions. Wherever he went, people were astonished by his radiant character and moral conviction. In short, he came to represent the ideals of his Grandfather, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

But it is the episode of Karbala that is most associated with Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) today. Here, his brave, courageous and selfless actions left a mark on humanity till the Day of Judgement. Perhaps history will never again produce a character who epitomises sacrifice, bravery and courage as well as Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him).

What follows is a brief, chronological account of the events of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him), based on reliable Islamic sources. The classical sources I have depended upon are;

- *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.)
- *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.)
- *Tarikh al-Tabari*. Abu Ja'far Muhammad Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923 C.E.)
- *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.)

It is interesting to note that some Muslim historians simply could not bring pen to paper to express the actual gruesome murder of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him). The great Islamic scholar and Qur'an commentator, Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti is one such example. He briefly writes in his book, *Tarikh al-Khulafa* (The History of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs),

‘In the [actual] murder of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) is a long story that the heart simply cannot express. *For Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him we return.*’¹

¹ p. 159, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

2 The Birth of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) and his early life

Imam Hussain ibn Ali (may Allah be pleased with both of them) was born on Friday fifth of Sha'ban, in 3 A.H. (30th December, 626 C.E.)² He was the grandson of the Beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and it was him who named him.³ His father was Ali and his mother was Fatima (may Allah be pleased with them). Ali was the nephew of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and became the fourth Rightly-Guided Caliph of Islam (*Amir al-Mu'mineen*), after Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him). Fatima was the daughter of the Beloved Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). In her own right, she held an esteemed rank in Islam; faithful believers know her as the *Lady of Heaven*.⁴ Imam Hussain had an older brother called Hasan (may Allah be pleased with him). He too was Caliph for a period of six months after the death of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him).

Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) was born in Madina Sharif and grew up there. From an early and tender age, he was loved by all those around him, particularly by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). In one narration reported by the Companion Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him), we are told how the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would play with him with great fondness and admiration;

‘Once when Hussain was of tender years, the Prophet, holding his forearms out, said, ‘O Hussain! Climb up! Climb up!’ He started to climb till his feet were on the chest of the Prophet, and both were face to face. The Prophet kissed him with great fondness and said, ‘O Allah! I love him. You too love him!’⁵

This love and admiration for Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) was also to be found in the rest of the Prophet’s Companions, particularly in Abu Bakr, Umar ibn Khattab and Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with them).⁶

² p.149, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

³ p. 150, Ibid.

⁴ This title given to her is based on a Hadith in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) called her ‘the Leader of the female inhabitants of Paradise’. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith no. 3353. Book of Superiorities, Chapter; the signs of prophecy in Islam.

⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hadith 3464. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; the Superiority of Imam Hasan and Hussain.

⁶ p. 150, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

3 His Character and Superiority

The company of the pious and blessed in his youth meant that Imam Hussain grew up to become a character of great faith, patience, God-consciousness, politeness and bravery. He became a true reflection of the Prophet's faith and action.

- In a Hadith recorded by Imam Tirmidhi, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) held Imam Hasan and Hussain and said, 'Whoever loves me and these two, along with their mother and father, they will be with me on the Day of Judgement.'⁷
- Ya'la ibn Marra reports from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that he said, 'I am from Hussain and Hussain is from me. Allah loves the one who loves Hussain...'⁸
- Usama ibn Zaid (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once took Hussain and Hasan and proclaimed, 'O Allah! Verily I love these two, so you love them!'⁹
- Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that 'Hasan resembled the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) most from the chest upwards. Hussain resembled the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) most from the chest downwards.'¹⁰
- Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would lift Hussain up onto his shoulders. A man saw this and remarked [to Hussain], 'A great [person] you have mounted upon O child!' The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied, 'And great is the one who is mounted [on me].'¹¹
- Zaid ibn Arqam (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussain (may Allah be pleased with them all), 'I oppose those who oppose you, and I am peaceful to those who are peaceful to you.'¹²
- Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, 'Hasan and Hussain are the leaders of the youth in Paradise...'¹³

⁷ *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Hadith 3666. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; The Superiority of Ali ibn Abu Talib.

⁸ *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Hadith 3708. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; the Superiority of Imam Hasan and Hussain.

⁹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Hadith no. 3464. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; the Superiority of Imam Hasan and Hussain.

¹⁰ *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*. Hadith no. 812. Book; the narrations of the ten given glad tidings of Paradise. Chapter; the narrations of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him).

¹¹ *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Hadith no. 3717. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; the Superiority of Imam Hasan and Hussain.

¹² *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Hadith no. 3705. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; What has been mentioned regarding the superiority of Fatima bint Muhammad.

¹³ *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Hadith no. 3701. Book of Superiorities. Chapter; the Superiority of Imam Hasan and Hussain

4 Imam Hussain leaves Madina

After the death of Mu'awiya on the 15th Rajab 60 A.H./680 C.E., his son Yazid became the Leader of the Muslims.¹⁴ For many Muslims, the succession posed a serious problem. Unlike his father, Yazid was not known as a morally-upright, pious Muslim. Rather, he was an offensive, rude and non-practising Muslim. During his reign, the remarkable legacy left by the leaders before him began to become undone. He cared little for the welfare of the Islamic State and still less for the moral code of Islam. He introduced ill practices that had no Islamic precedence or justification.

Yazid sent urgent orders to Walid ibn Uqba, the Governor of Madina at the time, to force the oath of allegiance from Hussain. Yazid wrote to him,

‘Seize Hussain, Abd Allah ibn Umar and Abd Allah ibn Zubair to give the oath of allegiance. Act so fiercely that they have no chance to do anything before giving the oath of allegiance. Peace be with you.’¹⁵

Clearly, Yazid's respect and attitude differed completely to that of his father, Mu'awiya (may Allah be pleased with him). The latter had the utmost respect for Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him). Imam Dhahabi, the Islamic Historian, reports,

‘When Mu'awiya was on his deathbed, he sent a message to Yazid and advised him, ‘Keep your sights on Hussain ibn Fatima, for he is the most beloved of the people in the eyes of the people. So be kind to his relatives, and be lenient to him...’¹⁶

Yazid realised he could never be rightfully seen as the Leader of the Muslims without the backing of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him), but Imam Hussain –along with Ibn al-Zubair- showed no signs of accepting him as leader.¹⁷ This refusal did not stem from any reason other than the fact that he did not see him as a true representative of Islam, as with his predecessors to the post. Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti described his character in his book *Tarikh al-Khulafa*;

‘Yazid indulged in sinful behaviour. He married women along with their mothers, daughters and sisters. He drank alcohol and did not perform Salah.’¹⁸

¹⁴ pp.158-159. *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002: p.1. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. p. 146, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

¹⁵ p. 146-7, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Vol. VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999. See also pp.1-2. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

¹⁶ p. 7 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol. Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998. During his own lifetime, Mu'awiya had the utmost respect for Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him). See p. 150-151 *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

¹⁷ pp.158-159. *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002

¹⁸ p. 161, Ibid.

Another witness described the faithless character of Yazid;

‘We have come from a man who has no religion, who drinks wine, who plays lutes, who passes his time with songstresses, who plays with dogs and spends his evenings talking to robbers and young men.’¹⁹

After the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, Abd Allah ibn Zubair compared the character of Imam Hussain and Yazid;

‘Indeed, by God, they killed a man who stood in prayer [i.e. Imam Hussain] at night for long hours, who fasted frequently during the day, who had more right to govern than they did, and one who was more entitled to it in terms of religion and outstanding merit. Indeed, by God, he would never exchange the Qur’an for singing [i.e. he was referring to Yazid], nor would he exchange fasting for drinking forbidden drinks, nor would he exchange gathering in religious groups to remember Allah for rushing off in pursuit of game. They will meet destruction.’²⁰

Another man was given 100,000 Dirhams by Yazid. This amount did not stop him from admitting that Yazid drank alcohol and used to frequently miss prayer as a result of being drunk.²¹

Clearly, Yazid was not fit for the post. But he was adamant and took countless steps to try and win the support of Imam Hussain and thus try to be accepted as the Leader of the Faithful. In fact, serious threats were made against Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) if he did not accept the oath of allegiance.

Imam Hussain realised the situation could lead to bloodshed and chaos in the home city of the Beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Hence, in order to preserve the sanctity and dignity of this blessed land, he left Madina for Makka. This occurred on Friday 4th Sha’ban, 60 A.H./680 C.E. As he set off for Makka, Imam Hussain recited the Qu’ranic verses, ‘My Lord, save me from the unjust people’ (Qu’ran 28:21). As he entered Makka Sharif, he recited the verse, ‘And when he set out to Midian, he said, ‘Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the right path.’ (Qu’ran 28:22).²²

As he reached Makka, he was met with a warm and cordial welcome.

¹⁹ p.198. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. See also, *Muqalaat*, Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. Volume II. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 2001 (p. 305).

²⁰ p.190. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

²¹ p. 306. *Muqalaat*. Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. Volume II. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 2001.

²² pp. 9-10. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

5 Departure to Kufa

During this same period, the Muslims of Iraq - particularly Kufa- learnt that Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) had refused to accept Yazid as Leader. The people of Iraq were considered to be supporters of the Prophet's family. They met in secret meetings and decided to invite Imam Hussain to Kufa. In fact, the people of Kufa had requested Imam Hussain to come to them in the time of Mu'awiya, but he refused to go.²³ Imam Hussain was inundated with letters and messengers, requesting him to come to Kufa.²⁴ They said,

‘We have kept ourselves exclusively for you. We do not attend the Friday prayer with the governor, so come to us.’²⁵

In another letter, the people of Kufa promised to assist Imam Hussain in every way possible. They wrote,

‘...There is no Imam over us. Therefore come, so God may unite us in the truth through you. Nu'man ibn al-Bashir is in the governor's palace; we do not gather with him for the Friday prayer. Nor do we accompany him out of the mosque for the Eid prayers. If we hear that you will agree to come to us, we will drive him away until we pursue him to Syria, if God wills. The peace and mercy of God be with you.’²⁶

Around the early period of Ramadhan 60 A.H./680 C.E. alone, over fifty-three letters alone were sent to Imam Hussain asking him to come to Kufa.²⁷

Imam Hussain gave the letters serious consideration. He consulted with his associates and family. He decided to send his cousin Muslim ibn Aqil to Kufa to assess the situation. His task would be to analyse the circumstances there and investigate the level of support for Imam Hussain. Upon this assessment, Imam Hussain would then base his decision. Imam Hussain commanded Muslim ibn Aqil,

‘Go to Kufa and investigate what they have written to me. If it is true, we will go to them.’²⁸

²³ p. 159. *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002. p. 5 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998.

²⁴ p. 159, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002. p. 151 *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

²⁵ p.17. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

²⁶ p.24-25. Ibid.

²⁷ p.25. Ibid.

²⁸ p.17. Ibid.

He also sent a letter with him, in which he addressed the people of Kufa,

‘...I am sending you my brother Muslim ibn Aqil, who is my cousin and the trustworthy representative from my family. I have instructed him to write to me about your circumstances, situation and views. If he writes to me that the opinion of your leaders, and of the men of wisdom and merit among you is united in the same way as the messengers who have come to me have described, and as I have read in your letters, I will come to you speedily, God willing, for, by my life, what is the Imam except one who acts according to the Book, one who upholds justice, one who professes the truth and one who dictates himself to the essence of God? Peace be upon you.’²⁹

Thus, Muslim ibn Aqil, with his two young sons, reached Kufa. When news of Imam Muslim’s arrival circulated among the Kufans, they streamed to him in large numbers. He received a warm welcome and the locals reassured him of their allegiance and support for Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him). Immediately, twelve thousand of them gave the oath of allegiance to him.³⁰

In a matter of days, up to forty thousand Muslims took an oath of allegiance through the hands of Muslim ibn Aqil, in support of Imam Hussain.³¹ So, Muslim ibn Aqil wrote a letter to Imam Hussain and informed him of the situation. He requested him to come to Kufa as soon as possible.

Many of the close associates and friends of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) did try to persuade him not to go to Kufa. They were worried about the Kufans’ reputation for being unfaithful. But it seems that Imam Hussain knew something that others didn’t. Abd Allah ibn Ja’far wrote a letter to Imam Hussain, warning him about the nature of the Kufans. He urged him not to go there. In reply, Imam Hussain wrote,

‘Verily I had a dream, in which I saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He ordered me to do something, which I will implement. And I will not tell anyone of it until I complete this ordered task.’³²

²⁹ p.26. Ibid.

³⁰ p.17. Ibid.

³¹ In another report, 18,000 were said to have given the hands of allegiance to Imam Hussain via Muslim ibn Aqil. See p. 152, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma’arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

³² p. 5 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998. p.73. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. p. 163, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma’arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

Yazid learnt of the situation in Kufa, and was disappointed with the governor there, Nu'man ibn al-Bashir, and his failure to address the possible revolt. Upon the advice of his associates, he appointed Ubaid Allah ibn Ziyad, a fierce and ruthless person, to govern Kufa.³³ In his appointment letter, he instructed Ibn Ziyad,

‘...My followers among the people of Kufa have written to me to inform me that Muslim ibn Aqil is in Kufa gathering units in order to spread rebellion among the Muslims. Therefore, when you read this letter of mine, go to Kufa and search for Muslim ibn Aqil, as if you were looking for a bead, until you find him. Then bind him in chains, kill him, or expel him. Peace be with you.’³⁴

The tragedy and heartache began as soon as the letter was despatched. Based on the favourable findings, Imam Hussain left for Kufa on the 8th of Zul-Hajj, 60 A.H. At exactly the same time, the situation in Kufa took a drastic turn for the worse. Under the incitement, bribery and brute force of Ubaid Allah ibn Ziyad- the Governor of Kufa appointed by Yazid- the Kufans deserted Muslim ibn Aqil and switched their allegiance to Yazid.³⁵

Slowly, the Kufans deserted Muslim and showed their support for Ibn Ziyad. Muslim ibn Aqil took his supporters – who were four thousand in numbers- to demonstrate against Ibn Ziyad. His supporters began to slip away, so that by late afternoon, he only had five hundred. As darkness spread, even the five hundred had gone.³⁶

In another report, it is narrated that by evening prayer, Muslim ibn Aqil only had thirty men with him. After prayer, he headed for the gates of Kinda, by which time he only had ten men with him. When he left the gate, he had no one with him.³⁷

Muslim ibn Aqil took shelter in a house, but eventually the unfaithful Kufans told Ibn Ziyad of his whereabouts. The house was quickly surrounded. He was captured and taken to Ibn Ziyad. He ordered that he should be taken up to the top of the palace and executed. Then his body was thrown down to the people.³⁸

After the horrific death of Muslim ibn Aqil, the cruel Ibn Ziyad had his head sent to Yazid. Yazid wrote the following letter back to Ibn Ziyad;

‘You have not gone beyond how I wanted you to be. You have acted with decision...you have satisfied me, been sufficient for the task.’³⁹

³³ p. 152, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999. p.1 & p.18 . *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

³⁴ p.31. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

³⁵ p.98. Ibid.

³⁶ p.20-21.Ibid.

³⁷ p.51. Ibid. See also, p. 154-155, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

³⁸ p.21. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

³⁹ p. 157, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999. p.64. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. p. 157, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

Imam Hussain was in Makka at the time, unaware of the atrocities inflicted upon his cousin, Muslim ibn Aqil. He left Makka for Kufa on the 8th Zul-Hajj (in other narrations, it is said he left on the tenth of Zul-Hajj.⁴⁰), the day Muslim was killed in Kufa.⁴¹ When Imam Hussain eventually did learn of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Aqil, he was at a place called Zubalah.⁴²

Ibn Ziyad knew that Imam Hussain, along with a caravan of eighty two persons, had set off for Kufa. Thus, he despatched an army to block the path leading to the city. Their orders were to refuse Imam Hussain from entering Kufa, or allowing him to return to Makka or Madina.

6 At Karbala

When Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) crossed into Iraq, Ibn Ziyad's troops blocked the path and surrounded the caravan. Al-Hurr ibn Yazid⁴³ had been sent by Ibn Ziyad with one thousand troops to meet Imam Hussain. After studying the unfortunate situation, Imam Hussain said to the enemy troops,

‘I have come because you wrote letters inviting me to come and unite you for the cause of truth and justice. But now if you have changed your mind and you dislike my presence here, I am ready to go back.’

However, the treacherous Kufans, who invited the grandson of the Prophet showing their loyalty in their messages and letters, had now become so cruel and tyrant, that they were not prepared to let him go back, either to Makka or Madina.

Imam Hussain continued his march in a direction that led neither to Kufa or Madina, and reached the fateful plain of Karbala. Here, he camped on the 2nd Muharram, 61 A.H. His followers were forty-five horsemen and a hundred foot soldiers.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See p. 10 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998, and p. 159, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

⁴¹ p.64. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. Other reports suggest that Imam Hussain left one day before Muslim ibn Aqil was killed. See, p. 159, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.

⁴² p.89. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁴³ At the time, he was acting on commands from his seniors and was told to prevent Imam Hussain from advancing. Al-Hurr never intended to physically confront Imam Hussain. Indeed on the fateful day of Imam Hussain's martyrdom, he defected to Imam Hussain's followers and stood in front of Imam Hussain to protect him. See pp. 128-129. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁴⁴ p.75. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

From the second to the seventh of Muharram, Ibn Ziyad ordered an increase of troops to surround Imam Hussain. By the seventh, twenty two thousand troops had reached Karbala, demanding the oath of allegiance from him to Yazid. Also, on this date, the tyrannical army cut off the water supplies to Imam Hussain. Ibn Ziyad sent a letter to his associate Umar ibn Sa'd, commanding him to 'prevent al-Hussain and his followers from getting water', and so Umar ibn Sa'd despatched five hundred troops to guard the river banks of the Euphrates.⁴⁵

One of Ibn Ziyad's men, Abd Allah ibn Hussain al-Azdi called out to Imam Hussain, 'Hussain, don't you see that the water is as hard to get as the middle of heaven! By God! You will not taste a drop of it until you die of thirst.' In response to such insulting words to the grandson of the Prophet, Imam Hussain said, 'O Allah! Make him die of thirst and never forgive him.'

The words of Imam Hussain came true. Humaid ibn Muslim reports,

'By God! Later I visited him when he was ill. By God, other than Whom there is no God! I saw him drinking water without being able to quench his thirst, and then he vomited. Again he drank water without being able to quench his thirst. This went on until his breath, that is his life, came to an end.'⁴⁶

From the seventh to the tenth of Muharram, the respected members of the beloved Prophet's family were put under each and every kind of trial and affliction. They were without food and water, in the unbearable open fields of Karbala. They were scorched by hot blasts of winds. Everyone was sad, gloomy and in the state of dejection. Despite the unfavourable situation, Imam Hussain remained resolute and firm in his belief. He refused to accept defeat at the hands of the tyrannical and cruel ones.

Despite the obvious hardship facing Imam Hussain, the cruel Ibn Ziyad pressed Umar ibn Sa'd to continue and step-up the oppression against him. In one letter, Ibn Ziyad wrote;

'...I did not send you to Hussain to hold off from fighting him, to give him time, to promise him peace and preservation, or to be an intercessor on his behalf with me. Therefore, see that, if Hussain and his followers submit to my authority and surrender, you can send them to me in peace. If they refuse, then march against them to kill and disfigure them, for they deserve that. If Hussain is killed, make the horses trample on his chest and back, for he is a disobedient rebel, an evil man who splits the community. Not that I think he would feel any harm once he is dead, but I vowed to do this if I killed him. If you carry out our order concerning him, we will give you the reward due to he who heeds and obeys. If you refuse, then withdraw from our command and our army. Leave the army to Shimr ibn Dhi al-Jawshan. We have given him our authority. Peace be with you.'⁴⁷

⁴⁵ p.107. Ibid.

⁴⁶ p.107. Ibid.

⁴⁷ p.110.Ibid

The followers of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) showed unparalleled dedication and conviction. They refused to desert him, despite the unfavourable situation. One of his followers, Muslim ibn Awsajah al-Asadi, famously remarked;

‘Could we leave you alone? How should we excuse ourselves before Allah concerning doing our duty to you? By God! Not before I thrust my spear until I break it in their chests...I will not leave you. If I have no weapon to fight them with, I will throw stones at them to defend you until I die with you.’⁴⁸

Other faithful followers –like Sa’id ibn Abd Allah Hanafi and Zuhair ibn al-Qayn- voiced the exact sentiments and promised to defend Imam Hussain with their own lives.⁴⁹

7 The Fateful Battlefield

After three days of grief, hardship and difficulty, the fateful day of the tenth of Muharram arrived. Everybody was looking at each other with regret and sorrow. For all of them it was the day of calamity and great misfortune, because they were being forced to face the conflict and war. Ibn Sa’d, the commander of Yazid’s army, insisted Hussain to come in the battlefield and decide the matter by sword.

After a final discussion, the confrontation between truth and falsity commenced when Ibn Sa’d led the assault by shooting the first arrow.

Even at such a tense moment, Imam Hussain did not forget his Lord. Rather, he devoutly prayed to Allah. In one Du’a he recited;

‘O Allah! It is You in Whom I trust amid all grief. You are my hope amid all distress. You are my trust and provision in everything that happens to me...’⁵⁰

Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) also reminded the cruel and heartless army of the crime that they were about to commit. With great eloquence, Imam Hussain told them;

‘...Trace back my lineage and consider who I am. Then, look back at yourselves and remonstrate with yourselves. Consider whether it is right for you to kill me and desecrate my inviolability. Am I not the son of the daughter of your Prophet, the son of the executor of his will and his cousin, the first of the believers in God and the man who [first] believed in what His Messenger brought from his Lord? Was not Hamzah, the lord of the Martyrs, my uncle? Was not Ja’far, who flies with two wings in heaven, my uncle? Have you not heard the words that circulate among you that the Prophet of Allah said concerning myself and my brother: ‘These are the two leaders of the youths of the inhabitants of heaven’?’⁵¹

The enemies could not answer.

⁴⁸ p.116. Ibid.

⁴⁹ p. 116-117. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁵⁰ p. 122. Ibid.

⁵¹ p. 179 *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Vol. VIII. Maktaba al-Ma’arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999. pp. 123-124. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

As the tensions heightened, an enemy called Abd Allah ibn Hawzah confronted Imam Hussain and said, 'Hussain, Hussain.' He asked, 'What do you want?' Ibn Hawzah asked, 'Do you expect Hell-Fire?' Imam Hussain replied, 'No, I am advancing to a Merciful Lord and an intercessor who is listened to.' Imam Hussain then prayed to Allah, 'O My Lord! Drive him into the fire.' As soon as Imam Hussain said these words, Ibn Hawzah's horse upset him in its stride and made him fall. His leg was stuck in the saddle, and his head fell to the ground. The horse bolted and dragged him along, making his head strike every stone and tree trunk until he died.⁵²

Though they were only thirty-two horsemen, Imam Hussain's followers put a brave and courageous fight.

By midday, most of Imam Hussain's faithful devotees had been martyred. Soon after, none remained except the close relatives of Imam Hussain. One by one, they too were brutally assassinated. Imam Hussain's own son, Ali Akbar, was savaged to pieces by the cruel army. Qasim, the son of Imam Hasan, showed great courage and bravery, but was soon martyred too. Even the infant Ali Asghar was not spared.

Despite the waging battle, Imam Hussain did not forget his duties to Allah and asked for time to read Salah.⁵³ He led the prayers of fear⁵⁴ and the fighting continued after the prayer. One by one, his followers stood in front of Imam Hussain and fought courageously. The two young sons of Jabir asked permission to fight. They two fought relentlessly until they were martyred.⁵⁵ Abis ibn Abi Shabib al-Shakiri came forward to fight, along with Hanzalah ibn As'ad al-Shibami. Abis charged at the enemies and reports say two hundred men were driven away by his might.⁵⁶ Eventually, he too died in the path of Allah. Abu al-Sha'tha Yazid ibn Ziyad shot one hundred arrows in front of Imam Hussain at the enemies. Reports say only five of these arrows missed their target.⁵⁷

8 The Martyrdom of Imam Hussain

Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) was left with no associate. Dead bodies of his family, friends and relatives lay outside his tent. The prince of the Prophet's family was now prepared for his historical and unforgettable martyrdom. Already suffering from heavy shock, physical weakness and loneliness, eventually Imam Hussain came in the tent. He embraced his son Zain al-Abidin, gave some instructions to his wife, awarded the last consolation to his sister Zainab, and kissed his seven year old daughter Sakina. Before departing, he looked at everybody for the last time with painful and wet eyes.

⁵² p.181, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999. p.131. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁵³ p.142. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁵⁴ This is a special type of prayer (Salat al-Khauf) read when one is in danger from a visible enemy.

⁵⁵ p.147. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁵⁶ p.148. Ibid.

⁵⁷ p.149. Ibid.

At first, no enemy dared to approach Imam Hussain as he left his tent for the battlefield. Everyone was hoping someone else would attack him. After a long wait, the enemy Shimr shouted out, ‘Shame on you! Why are you waiting for the man? Kill him, may your mothers be deprived of you!’⁵⁸ Thereafter, he was surrounded by the blows of swords, arrows and a crowd of spears. Witnesses say he still fought with a strong heart and spirit. A blow was struck against his left hand by Zurah ibn Sharik. The enemies withdrew as he stumbled to the ground. When he fell, Sinan ibn Anas ibn Amar al-Nakahi⁵⁹ attacked him and stabbed him with a spear.⁶⁰ Imam Hussain –the sovereign of martyrs – was inflicted thirty-three stab wounds and thirty-four blows.⁶¹ He breathed his last breath and departed this mortal world, just as the time for Friday prayers commenced. *Indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we return.* In all, sixteen people from his family were also martyred⁶² and seventy-two men from his followers.⁶³

Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) was 56 years, 5 months and 5 days old at the time of his death, on Friday the 10th day of Muharram 61 A.H/680 C.E.⁶⁴

A day after Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) was martyred, his head was despatched with Khawali ibn Yazid and Humayd ibn Muslim to Ibn Ziyad, and then Yazid.⁶⁵ When Yazid was presented with the head of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him), he began to poke his mouth with a cane.⁶⁶ Abu Barzah al-Aslami, a Companion, was nearby and cried out to him;

‘Take your cane away! By God! How often have I seen the Messenger of Allah kiss that mouth!’⁶⁷

⁵⁸ p.160. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah.* Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁵⁹ Other reports suggest that Shimr inflicted the fatal wound on Imam Hussain. See p. 14 *Tarikh al-Islam.* Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998.

⁶⁰ p.160. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah.* Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁶¹ p. 188, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya.* Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma’arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999. p.161. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah.* Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁶² p. 159, *Tarikh al-Khulafa,* Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002. p. 5 *Tarikh al-Islam.* Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998.

⁶³ p.163. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah.* Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁶⁴ p.82. Ibid.

⁶⁵ p.163. Ibid.

⁶⁶ p. 16, *Tarikh al-Islam.* Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998.

⁶⁷ p.76. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah.* Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. Reports say that Ibn Ziyad too showed the same gross and heinous behaviour of poking his teeth with a cane. See, p.165. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah.* Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990. Numerous reports stem from Abd Malik ibn Umair al-Lakhmi al-Kufi, who said, ‘I have seen in this palace –and he pointed to the main palace in Kufa- the head of Imam Hussain in front of Ubaid Allah ibn Ziyad on a plate. Then I saw the head of Ubaid Allah ibn Ziyad’s head in front of Mukhtar ibn Abid on a plate. Then I saw the head of Mukhtar ibn Abid’s head in front of Mas’ab on a plate. Then I saw the head of Mas’ab in front of Abd Malik ibn Marwan on a plate...’ (see p. 12 *Tarikh al-Islam.* Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998).

9 The Names of the Ahl Bayt killed with Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him)

Abbas ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Ja'far ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Abd Allah ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Uthman ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Abu Bakr ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Ali ibn Hussain ibn Ali.

Abd Allah ibn Hussain ibn Ali.

Abu Bakr ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Qasim ibn Hasan ibn Ali.

Awn ibn Abd Allah ibn Ja'far ibn Abu Talib.

Ja'far ibn Aqil ibn Abu Talib.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Aqil.

Abd Allah ibn Aqil ibn Abu Talib.

Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abu Talib.

Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abu Talib.

Muhammad ibn Abu Said ibn Aqil (May Allah be pleased with them all and shower His blessings upon them).

Ali ibn Hussain and Amr ibn Hussain were not killed. They were very young.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ p. 21 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998. p. 189. *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Hafiz ibn Kathir (d. 774 A.H.) Volume VIII. Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Beirut, Lebanon. 1999.pp. 179-181. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu'awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

10 The Aftermath

It was not just the Muslims who grieved on the day Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) was martyred. From reliable historical accounts, it is clear that the whole world – human and non-human- could not come to terms with the loss of the grandson of the Beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Consider the following events;

- On the day of his martyrdom –the tenth of Muharram- there was a solar eclipse. ⁶⁹
- The horizon of the sky remained red for six consecutive months of his death. ⁷⁰ According to another report, after Imam Hussain was killed, it seemed as if the walls for two or three months were smeared with blood from the time of sunrise until the sun rose. ⁷¹
- On the day he was martyred, fresh blood was found under every stone uncovered around Bayt al-Maqdas in Jerusalem. ⁷²
- Al-Tirmidhi reports from Salma; she said, I entered upon Um Salma and she was crying. I asked, ‘why are you crying?’ She replied, I just saw the Prophet in my dream, and his head and beard was covered in mud. I asked him ‘what is wrong?’ He replied, ‘I witnessed the killing of Hussain just now.’ ⁷³

11 The Message of Imam Hussain

This tragic incident of Karbala has many lessons and messages for mankind. For a true lover of Imam Hussain and his mission, it is necessary to bring all these lessons into action. This is the most proper and real tribute to Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him).

1. The most striking message of Imam Hussain from the bloody plains of Karbala was that a Muslim should always be obedient to the will of Allah. Regular and punctual performance of prayers, despite any trouble and misfortune, must be the first obligation of life. Imam Hussain’s earnest prayers and supplications at Karbala show that worship of Allah should be more important than to save one’s life.
2. One of the foremost lessons of Karbala is the fact that a Muslim should always rely on quality instead of quantity.

⁶⁹ p.160, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.

⁷⁰ p. 160, *Ibid*.

⁷¹ p.81. *The History of al-Tabari; The Caliphate of Yazid. b. Mu’awiyah*. Volume XIX. Translated by I.K.A. Howard. State University of New York Press, USA, 1990.

⁷² p. 160, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002. p. 16 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998.

⁷³ Cited in *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002, p. 160. See also, p. 17 *Tarikh al-Islam*. Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman al-Dhahabi (d. 748 A.H.) Vol.: Years 61-80 A.H. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998.

Logically it seems ridiculous for eighty two persons to face a majority of twenty two thousand people. But a Muslim never takes a decision on the basis of material majority or minority. He always decides the affairs on the ground of spiritual and moral values which constitute real power.

Followers of Yazid were challenging Imam Hussain with a pressure of man-power. Imam Hussain accepted the challenge and proved that victory is always of quality. The battle of Karbala was a confrontation between two different schools of thought. Imam Hussain and his followers were unique in their spiritual and moral values. Yazid and his followers were proud of weapons and provisions. Imam Hussain had the majority of perfection and virtues. Yazid had the majority of manpower. At Karbala, the struggle of these two powers occurred and the result showed that quality won at the expense of quantity.

Imam Hussain, even after being slaughtered, is alive in the pages of history and in the hearts and minds of devout Muslims. Yazid, even after cutting the head of Imam Hussain, lost the war and he is no longer remembered with fondness. Nawfal ibn Abu al-Furat said,

‘I was with Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz when a man mentioned Yazid and said, ‘the Leader of the Believers [*Amir al-Mu’minin*] Yazid ibn Mu’awiya....’ Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was enraged and said, ‘you call him the Leader of the Believers?’ Umar then ordered for him to be lashed twenty times.⁷⁴

Imam Bukhari, in his book *Tarikh Kabir* listed the biographical details of 213 people named Yazid. But he did not make any mention of Yazid ibn Mu’awiya. This itself implicitly suggests that he was not worthy of mention and that his name had become synonymous with deceit, indecency and dishonour.

3. Imam Hussain also taught us to fight against all type of sectarianism based on eloquence, racism, colour and nationality. For a Muslim, the measurement of good and evil on such grounds is absolutely wrong.

Imam Hussain and Yazid, both belonged to the same country and the language spoken by both was Arabic. But as a rightful Muslim Imam Hussain did not show favour to Yazid in spite of regional and lingual unity. It shows that in the way of Allah, language, race and nationality do not count. Rather, piety and God-consciousness does.

⁷⁴ p.161, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.) Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002. See also, *Muqalaat*, Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 2001 (p. 302).

12 Appendix A

12.1 Was Yazid 'forgiven'?

Hundreds of years after the tragedy of Karbala, no Muslim has forgotten the sacrifices of Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him) and his followers. By refusing to give in to the demands of the tyrant Yazid, Imam Hussain taught us the invaluable lesson that Islam does not tolerate injustice, oppression and evil. Insha'Allah until the Day of Judgment, the name of Hussain will live on to denote bravery, courage, unparalleled devotion and piety.

However, to the astonishment and surprise of countless devotees, there is a small minority of Muslims who argue that Yazid should not be categorized as a bad leader. In fact, they go as far as suggesting that he is forgiven. To defend their position they offer in evidence a Hadith narrated in Sahih Bukhari;

Imam Bukhari narrates from Ishaq ibn Yazid al-Dimashqi , who narrates from Yahya ibn Hamza, who narrates from Thaur ibn Yazid , from Khalid ibn Ma'dan that Umair ibn al-Aswad al-Anasi told him that he went to Ubaada ibn as-Samit while he was staying in his house at the sea-shore of Hums with (his wife) Umme Haram. Umair said; Umme Haram informed us that she heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying;

“Paradise is granted to the first batch of my followers who will undertake a naval expedition. Umme Haram added, I said ‘O Allah’s messenger! Will I be amongst them?’ He replied; ‘You are amongst them. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then said ‘The first army amongst the followers who will invade Caesar’s City will have their sins forgiven’. I asked ‘Will I be one of them, O Allah’s Messenger?’ He replied in the negative.”⁷⁵

Yazid’s supporters purport that Yazid was the first to invade Caesar’s City, and therefore he is deemed as ‘forgiven’.

This Hadith does not offer a vindication for Yazid. In no sense does the saying of the Prophet act as an appraisal for him, or a form of forgiveness.

There is clear historical evidence to prove conclusively that Yazid was not the first person or part of the first army to attack Caesar’s City (Constantinople). The reason is as follows;

* According to Ibn Khaldun, one of the most famous and credible Muslim historians, the first group of Muslims to attack went in the year 42 A.H. He writes; “The Muslims first entered the Roman territories in 42 A.H. and they fought with them and killed a number of them”.⁷⁶

According to Ibn Kathir, in his book *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, Mu’awiya was the first to attack Constantinople, in the year 32 A.H. According to Sheikh Muhammad Khudri, “In the year 48 A.H. Mu’awiya prepared a large army to conquer Constantinople”.⁷⁷

These three authentic sources differ with regards as to when the first attack took place (42, 32, or 48 A.H.) But two of the sources believe that it was Mu’awiya who prepared the first mission there.

⁷⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Jihad; Chapter 93 ‘What is said about the fighting of the Byzantines’

⁷⁶ Cited in *Muqalaat* (pp. 329-330). Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan. 2001.

⁷⁷ Source; *Lessons from the Muslim Nations*.

* As for Yazid, his army, by unanimous agreement of the scholars first went to Constantinople in 52 A.H. According to Ibn Kathir, by this time, Mu'awiya had already been there sixteen times. He writes; "Mu'awiya prepared armies to Constantinople sixteen times. He used to send an army there twice a year, once in the summer and once in the winter." How do we know Yazid's first visit was in 52 A.H.? The historians all agree that Yazid was head of the army in the year Abu Ayub al-Ansari passed away. The historians agree that he passed away in 52 A.H. Ibn Hajar writes;

"Yazid's mission to Constantinople took place in the year 52 A.H. In this mission, Abu Ayub al-Ansari passed away. Before he died, he asked to be buried next to the main door of Constantinople."

Ibn Kathir writes: "...Yazid went in 52 A.H., the same year Abu Ayub passed away."

This analysis, from authentic sources, shows that Yazid was by no means the first person to attack Constantinople. It was Mu'awiya, and thus he was most likely to be 'forgiven', in the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were 'the *first* army to...who will invade Caesar's City...'. Yazid was one of the last to go there. Thus, historical texts conclusively prove that Yazid cannot be deemed as 'forgiven', in the context of this Hadith.

12.2 Conclusion

Our biggest concern is that anyone who shows *any* amount of sympathy towards Yazid is forgetting the magnitude of the crime committed against the Sovereign of Martyrs Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him). After all, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "I am from Hussain, and Hussain is from me". In another Hadith, he said "Whoever loves [Hasan and Hussain] they love me, and whoever shows hatred towards them, is showing hatred towards me". By even indirectly showing support or sympathy for Yazid, one can risk being counted as those unfortunate beings that have upset and angered the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

13 Appendix B

13.1 Is it permissible to curse Yazid?

In Arabic, the word *La'na* means to be afar from Allah's mercy. As early as the times of the four great Imams, the scholars have disputed whether it is permissible to curse Yazid or not. Because of the magnitude of the crime committed against Imam Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him), some scholars believe it is permissible to curse him. On the other hand, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did prohibit Muslims from cursing fellow Muslims.⁷⁸

Rather than offering a definitive answer to this issue, I will simply quote a few reliable sources on the subject.

Imam Ghazali (d. 505 A.H.) writes in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*;

‘If it is asked, is it permissible to say ‘May Allah curse the murderer of Imam Hussain’ or ‘May Allah the one who ordered the murder of Imam Hussain’, we say that the correct opinion is to say, ‘If the murderer of Imam Hussain died before repenting [*Tawba*], then may Allah curse him’. This is because it is possible he [the murderer] died after repenting to Allah. Wa’shi murdered the uncle of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Hamza when he was an infidel. Later, he became a Muslim and repented from disbelief and from the murder. And it is not permissible to curse him....we have stated this [opinion] so that people do not think little of cursing people...’⁷⁹

In his book *Wafiyat al-A'yaan*, Ibn Khalkan quotes the opinion of Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad on the issue;

‘Yazid was not from the Companions because he was born in the era of Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him). As for the opinions of the *Salaf* on the issue, Imam Ahmad has two opinions; [it is permissible to curse him] implicitly and explicitly. Imam Malik has two opinions; [it is permissible to curse him] implicitly and explicitly. Imam Abu Hanifa has two opinions; [it is permissible to curse him] implicitly and explicitly. Imam Shafi has one opinion; that it is permissible to curse him explicitly. And why should this not be the case, since Yazid would play chess, hunt with foxes, continuously drink alcohol and praise alcohol in his poems and odes?’⁸⁰

⁷⁸ See, for example, pp. 165-170, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*. Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 505 A.H.) Volume III. Dar al-Fajr li al-Turath, Cairo, Egypt, 1999.

⁷⁹ p. 169, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*. Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 505 A.H.) Volume III. Dar al-Fajr li al-Turath, Cairo, Egypt, 1999.

⁸⁰ Cited in *Muqalaat*, Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. Volume II. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 2001 (pp. 332-333).

Allama Sa'd al-Din writes in *Sharh al-Aqa'id al-Nasfiyya*;

‘...And some scholars have declared the permissibility of cursing Yazid. This is because [they believe] he left the circle of Islam by killing Imam Hussain. All the scholars are unanimous that it is permissible to curse the one who killed Hussain, ordered his murder and showed content on his murder. And it is true that Yazid was content with the murder of Imam Hussain, showed great happiness on this and that he gravely insulted the *Ahl Bayt*. These matters have been proven – in terms of meaning – as conclusive and definitive [*Mutawatir*], though the individual reports are *Ahad*. We do not doubt the events or the fact that Yazid became a disbeliever. May Allah curse him and his helpers and associates.’⁸¹

Allama Qastalani, in *Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, cites the above quote and thus implicitly suggests it is permissible to curse Yazid.⁸²

⁸¹ *Sharh al-Aqa'id al-Nasfiyya*. Allama Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani. Maktaba Khair Kathir, Karachi, Lahore. n.d. on publication. (pp. 162-163)

⁸² See pp. 335-6, *Muqalaat*, Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. Volume II. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 2001 (pp. 332-333).

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