

COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH MAQTAL

رَأْسُ الْحُسَيْنِ

HEAD OF
HUSSEIN

A.S

AUTHOR

HAYDAR ALI SHAYKH
BIN MUHAMMAD



BAB UL QAIM
PUBLICATIONS

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مؤلف

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اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى عِوَالِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى عِوَالِ مُحَمَّدٍ

○ إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رُكْعُونَ ○

But rather, your Guardian is Allah, and His Rasool, and those who are believers, those who establish the Salat and are giving the Zakat while they are performing Ruku (Surah Al Maida 5:55)

“(It is narrated) from Imam Ali ibn Al-Hussein ^(a.s) and Imam Al-Baqir ^(a.s) having said (about) [Q 5:55]:

‘It was revealed regarding Ameerul Momineen Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^(a.s).”

(Tafseer Abu Hamza Al Thumali)

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى فَاطِمَةَ وَبَيْتِهَا وَبَعْلِهَا وَبَنِيهَا
وَالسُّلُوكِ فِيهَا بِمَعَارِجِهَا طَائِعُكَ

ﷺ وَ قَالَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ : فَاطِمَةُ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي مَنْ آذَاهَا فَقَدْ آذَانِي وَ مَنْ آذَانِي فَقَدْ آذَى اللَّهُ ﷻ

The Prophet ^(saws) said: "Fatima ^(s.a) is a part of Me; whoever harms her, has harmed Me, and thus whoever harms Me; has harmed Allah ^(SWT)".

(Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 30, p. 353)

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ
عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آبَائِهِ فِي هَذِهِ السَّاعَةِ وَفِي كُلِّ سَاعَةٍ وَلِيًّا وَحَافِظًا وَقَائِدًا
وَنَاصِرًا وَدَلِيلًا وَعَيْنًا حَتَّى تُسَكِّنَهُ لِرَضَاكَ طَوْعًا وَتُسَعِّهُ فِيهَا طَوِيلًا

This image displays a full page of intricate Arabic calligraphy in the Maghrebi style. The script is characterized by its bold, thick strokes and highly stylized, often circular or oval, letterforms. The text is organized into dense vertical columns, with a central column featuring the largest and most prominent characters. The entire page is filled with calligraphic elements, including large letters, smaller connecting strokes, and decorative flourishes that create a complex, almost abstract pattern. A small, circular seal or stamp is visible on the right side, adding to the historical or official nature of the document. The overall effect is one of great artistic skill and technical precision.

AUTHOR’S FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah {AZJ}, Who has made the truth manifest through sacrifice, and distinguished the path of guidance from the path of misguidance through trials that shook the heavens and the earth. In His divine wisdom, Allah {AZJ} ordained that the light of His religion would not be preserved through words alone, but through blood, steadfastness, and the ultimate testimony of sacrifice. He {AZJ} sent His noble Messenger {saws} as the Seal of the Prophets, through whom the final message was perfected and completed. Yet it was through his purified progeny, the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}, that the true essence of this message was safeguarded from distortion, and its spirit preserved for all generations to come.

The tragedy of Karbala stands as the clearest manifestation of this divine decree. It is not merely an event confined to history, nor a narrative bound by time; rather, it is an ever-living reality that continues to resonate within the hearts of the believers. Upon the burning plains of Karbala, Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the beloved grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}, stood surrounded, having been denied return, and confronted by forces of oppression that sought to silence the truth. His movement was not for worldly gain, but a continuation of the mission with which he had departed from Medinah: to uphold the religion of his grandfather {saws}, to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and to expose falsehood in its most oppressive and unmasked form. In that final stand, alongside his noble family and loyal companions, the virtuous Imam {a.s} became the eternal scale by which truth and falsehood are distinguished.

In this unparalleled trial, the Ahlul Bayt {a.s} embodied the highest stations of patience, sincerity, and complete submission to the will of Allah {AZJ}. Their words reflect divine wisdom, and their actions manifest the highest degree of closeness to Allah {AZJ}.

Through Karbala, faith was revived; and through the day of Ashura, the eternal measure by which justice is recognised was established for all of humanity.

The work before you is a humble attempt to present a flowing narrative of this supreme tragedy, drawn from the earliest and most reliable sources that have preserved the account of Karbala. It does not claim independence from the monumental efforts of the great scholars and historians who safeguarded these narrations.

Rather, it is a devotional endeavour to gather, organise, and present these accounts in a continuous and immersive form, allowing the reader to journey through the events from the departure of Imam al Hussein {a.s} from Medinah to the aftermath of the tragedy.

This narrative is built upon the foundations laid by the earliest transmitters of the Karbala tradition, those closest to the events, whose reports were preserved within the great compilations of Islamic history and maqal literature.

Care has been taken to remain faithful to these sources, preserving their substance, sequence, and spirit, while presenting them in a coherent and accessible manner. Where variations exist, they have been carefully examined and, where appropriate, integrated without compromising the overall account.

The primary motivation behind this work is a humble offering of service to our present Imam al Zaman, Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan al Mahdi {ajf}. It is presented with the hope that it may serve, however modestly, to preserve the living memory of the tragedy of his noble grandfather {a.s}, and to strengthen the bond of the believers with this eternal sacrifice.

This effort is also dedicated to my beloved parents and family, whose sacrifices, prayers, and unwavering support have been a constant source of strength throughout my journey. Whatever good is found within this work is from the love of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s} that they instilled within me. I pray that Allah {AZJ} accepts this as a means of continuous charity for them, elevates their ranks, and envelops them in His mercy. Likewise, this work stands as a tribute to my teachers and scholars, past and present, who preserved and transmitted the legacy of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s} through their knowledge, dedication, and sacrifice.

The task of compiling and presenting a Maqal of Imam al Hussein {a.s} carries an immense weight that cannot be fully expressed. Every word connected to Karbala bears responsibility. Every effort has been made to uphold accuracy, clarity, and reverence, ensuring that the sanctity of this narrative is preserved. Nevertheless, I acknowledge my limitations, and any shortcomings or errors within this work are solely my own. Thus, I seek the forgiveness of the almighty Allah {AZJ} and ask Him to grant sincerity and acceptance to this endeavour.

May this work serve as a means of reflection, allowing the reader to understand the events that led to Karbala and to feel the weight and sorrow of Ashura. May it strengthen the bond between the believers and the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}.

Finally, from a young age, I aspired to be among the ‘Dhakireen’ of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, those who sincerely keep alive the remembrance of his tragedy without seeking worldly or monetary gain. This aspiration has guided my efforts, even in the smallest acts of service.

I pray that through this work, I may be counted among those honoured believers who convey the message of Karbala to the hearts of the faithful, and who strive to keep its truth alive across generations. May Allah {AZJ} accept this humble offering and allow it to serve as a means of nearness to Him and a source of intercession through the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}.

I request all Momineen to recite Al-Fatiha for the souls of our departed Marhoomeen. May Allah {AZJ} grant them mercy, forgive their shortcomings, and elevate their ranks. Special prayers are requested for the soul of Muhammad Hanif Shaykh ibn Ghulam Abbas. May Allah {AZJ} illuminate his grave and grant him eternal peace in the hereafter.

{- إِمَامُ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ : سِتَّةٌ يَلْحَقَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ بَعْدَ وَفَاتِهِ وَلَدٌ يَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُ وَ مُصْحَفٌ يَخْلِفُهُ وَ غَرْسٌ يَغْرِسُهُ وَ صَدَقَةٌ مَاءٍ يُجْرِيهِ وَ قَلِيبٌ يَحْفَرُهُ وَ سَنَةٌ يُؤْخَذُ بِهَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ {-}

Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq {a.s} said: "Six things follow a believer after his death: a child who seeks forgiveness for him, a Qur'an he leaves behind, a tree he plants, a charity of water he provides, a well he digs, and a good tradition acted upon after him."

Man La Yahduruhu Al-Faqih, Volume. 1 (Hadith.555)

PRELUDE

Across the centuries, a vast body of literature has been devoted to the remembrance of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and the tragedy of Karbala. From the earliest transmitted accounts to later compositions shaped within gatherings of mourning and devotion, scholars and authors have laboured to preserve the memory of Ashura. This abundance of writing reflects not only the preservation of the event, but the enduring presence of that sacrifice within the hearts of the believers, as a source of reflection, grief, and moral awakening.

From the perspective of the school of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, the tragedy of Karbala is not merely a historical occurrence, but a divinely ordained manifestation of truth against falsehood, through which the religion of Allah ^{AZJ} was preserved in its purest form.

The stand of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was the continuation of the prophetic mission, embodying the highest expression of obedience, sacrifice, and guidance. Thus, its remembrance is not confined to history, but remains a living obligation upon the believers.

It must therefore be stated from the outset that the present work does not claim the rank of a purely critical historical study, nor does it present itself as an exhaustive analytical reconstruction of events. Rather, it is a devotional maqtal, composed with the intention of drawing the reader into a faithful and coherent remembrance of Karbala, rooted in the narrations that have reached us through the earliest generations.

The sources upon which the account of Karbala rests are not uniform in their purpose or nature. The earliest reports, transmitted by recognised historians and preserved within the first centuries of Islam, form the foundational layer of the narrative.

These accounts, many of which were later incorporated into larger historical and biographical works, represent the closest surviving record of the events of 61 AH, and thus provide the strongest framework for following the unfolding of the tragedy.

Alongside these, later writings emerged within contexts of devotion, mourning, and communal remembrance. These works carried the legacy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} across generations, nurturing a continuous connection to Karbala within the hearts of the believers. Their role in sustaining the remembrance of Ashura is profound and undeniable.

However, as many of these compositions were written with the primary aim of evoking grief and reflection, not all of their contents can be traced to the earliest authorities. For this reason, while they are honoured and valued for their devotional significance, they are approached with care when forming the structural basis of the narrative.

Accordingly, this work draws primarily upon the earliest and most widely recognised reports, arranging them into a coherent account. This is not to claim finality in reconstruction, nor to exclude the value of other narrations, but to allow the reader to encounter the events of Karbala as a unified flow rather than a fragmented collection of reports.

The intention is not to engage in detailed analysis of chains of transmission, but to present a narration grounded in early material and conveyed with dignity, and reverence.

In assembling this narrative, the substance of the transmitted reports has been preserved, while their presentation has been ordered into a chronological flow. Where the original narrations move abruptly between events, minimal transitions have been introduced solely to maintain continuity. These additions do not introduce new or invented speech, but serve only to connect what is already established within the broader corpus of reports.

In this way, the narrative remains anchored to its sources while being rendered accessible.

It is not claimed that this arrangement represents the only possible ordering of events, nor that other reconstructions are without merit. Rather, this work stands as an offering of remembrance, seeking to present the tragedy of Karbala in a manner that is faithful to its transmitted origins and conducive to reflection, mourning, and understanding.

For clarity, the principal sources from which the narrative of Karbala is drawn may be understood across three broad strands: early dedicated maqtals and records of the martyrs, major historical and genealogical compilations, and later scholarly and devotional works through which the account continued to be preserved.

Among the earliest writings is ‘Tasmiyah man Qutila ma’a al Hussein’ by Fudayl Ibn Zubayr al Asadi, a concise record of those martyred alongside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Although the Maqtal of Abu Mikhnaf ^{157AH} is no longer extant as an independent work, its material survives within later histories and remains among the most important early foundations of the narrative. Another work is ‘Muqatil al Talibiyyin’ by Abu al Faraj al Isfahani ^{356AH}, which puts the tragedy within the wider history of the martyrs from the family of Abu Talib.

The events were also preserved within the major historical works of the early centuries, including ‘Kitab al Tabaqat al Kubra’ of Ibn Sad ^{230AH}, ‘Ansab al Ashraf’ of al Baladhuri ^{279AH}, and ‘al Akhbar al Tiwal’ of al Dinawari ^{282AH}. Likewise, the histories of Tarikh al Ya’qubi ^{292AH} and Al Tabari ^{310AH}, particularly ‘Tarikh al Umam wa al Muluk’, became central reference points for later generations. This material continued to be transmitted through works such as ‘Kitab al Futuh’ of Ibn Atham al Kufi ^{314AH} and ‘al Kamil fi al Tarikh’ of Ibn Athir ^{630AH}.

Alongside these, a range of scholarly works contributed to the preservation and transmission of the Karbala narrative. Among them are ‘Kitab al Irshad’ of Shaykh al Mufid ^{413AH}, ‘Ilam al Wara’ of al Tabrisi ^{548AH}, and ‘Kashf al Ghummah’ of al Irbili ^{693AH}. Devotional works such as ‘Kamil al Ziyarat’ of Ibn Qulawayh ^{368AH} and ‘Misbah al Mutahajjid’ of Al Tusi ^{460AH} transmit traditions connected to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The maqtal tradition itself continued through works such as ‘Manaqib Al Abi Talib’ of Ibn Shahr Ashub ^{588AH}, ‘Muthir al Ahzan’ of Ibn al Nama ^{645AH}, and ‘al Malhuf’ of Sayyid Ibn Tawus ^{664AH}, among others.

Taken together, these works, spanning early reports, historical compilations, and devotional writings, form the inherited corpus through which the memory of Karbala has been preserved. This present work stands humbly within that tradition, not as a definitive historical authority, but as a devotional effort to gather from the earliest available sources and present their substance in a connected and flowing narrative, so that the tragedy of Ashura may be read, remembered, and felt as a unified whole.

Principal Historical and Devotional Sources for the Karbala Narrative

A concise overview of selected early and later sources used in preserving the events of Karbala. Sectarian labels are broad scholarly descriptions and, in some cases, remain debated.

Author and Work	Death Date / Affiliation	Importance for the Karbala Narrative
Fudayl ibn Zubayr al Asadi Tasmiyah man Qutila ma'a al Hussein	fl. 110-140 AH Shia / Zaydi Shia	An early Kufan transmitter whose work preserves one of the earliest lists of those martyred with Imam al Hussein {a.s}. He is associated with the circles of Zayd ibn Ali and Imam al Sadiq {a.s}.
Lut ibn Yahya ibn Sa'id al Azdi, Abu Mikhnaf Maqatal al Hussein	157 AH Shia / Kufan Shia-leaning	Among the most important early foundations for the Karbala narrative. Although his independent Maqatal is not extant, much of its material survives through later historians, especially al Tabari.
Abu al Faraj al Isfahani Muqatil al Talibiyyin	356 AH Shia-leaning / Zaydi Shia	A major work on the martyrs from the family of Abu Talib. Although not Twelver Imami, it preserves important Alid martyrdom material and places Karbala within the wider history of the Ahlulbayt's suffering.
Muhammad ibn Sa'd ibn Mani' al Hashimi Kitab al Tabaqat al Kubra	230 AH Sunni	An early biographical source. Ibn Sa'd was a Sunni scholar and biographer whose work preserves reports on major Islamic personalities, including material relevant to Imam al Hussein {a.s}.
Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir al Baladhuri Ansab al Ashraf	279 AH Sunni	A major Abbasid-era historian. His genealogical and historical work preserves important reports on the early Islamic period, including accounts connected to Karbala.
Abu Hanifa Ahmad ibn Dawud al Dinawari al Akhbar al Tiwal	282 AH Sunni / pro-Alid	An early historian and polymath. Although generally treated within the Sunni scholarly tradition, his history preserves material of strong value for the Karbala narrative.
Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub al Ya'qubi Tarikh al Ya'qubi	284 AH Shia-leaning / disputed	A classical universal history. Al Ya'qubi is often described as having strong pro-Alid tendencies, though his precise sectarian identification is debated.
Muhammad ibn Jarir al Tabari Tarikh al Umam wa al Muluk	310 AH Sunni	One of the most important universal histories in Arabic. Al Tabari was a Sunni historian, exegete, hadith scholar, and jurist; his Karbala account preserves extensive earlier material, including reports transmitted from Abu Mikhnaf.

Author and Work	Death Date / Affiliation	Importance for the Karbala Narrative
Abu Muhammad Ahmad ibn A'tham al Kufi Kitab al Futuh	commonly 314 AH Shia / pro-Alid	An early historical work preserving important material on Karbala and the early Islamic conquests. Ibn A'tham is commonly described as Shia or strongly pro-Alid in historical orientation.
Ibn al Athir al Jazari al Kamil fi al Tarikh	630 AH Sunni	A major later universal chronicle by a Sunni historian and biographer. Its earlier sections often draw heavily on earlier authorities such as al Tabari.
Shaykh al Mufid Kitab al Irshad	413 AH Shia Twelver Imami	A foundational Imami biographical and theological work on the lives of the Twelve Imams. It is one of the most important early Twelver sources for the lives, virtues, and martyrdoms of the Imams.
Ibn Qulawayh al Qummi Kamil al Ziyarat	368 AH Shia Twelver Imami	An early Imami hadith work on ziyarat and the merits of visiting the shrines. It has major importance for the devotional and mourning traditions connected to Imam al Hussein {a.s}.
Shaykh al Tusi Misbah al Murahajjid	460 AH Shia Twelver Imami	A major Imami devotional and legal work. Shaykh al Tusi was one of the greatest Twelver Shia jurists and hadith scholars, and this work is important for supplications, ziyarat, and devotional practice.
Shaykh al Tabarsi Ilam al Wara	548 AH Shia Twelver Imami	An Imami biographical and theological work preserving material on the lives, virtues, and deaths of the Ahlulbayt.
Ibn Shahr Ashub Manaqib Al Abi Talib	588 AH Shia Twelver Imami	An important Imami work on the virtues of the Ahlulbayt. Ibn Shahr Ashub was a Twelver Shia scholar of hadith, fiqh, history, rijal, and Qur'anic commentary.
Ibn Nama al Hilli Muthir al Ahzan	645 AH or 680 AH Shia Twelver Imami	A later Shia Maqatal source associated with the scholarly circles of Hillah. The work gives a concise account of Karbala, neither overly lengthy nor too brief.
Sayyid Ibn Tawus al Malhuf / al Luhuf	664 AH Shia Twelver Imami	One of the most famous later Maqatal works. It is known for its concise, devotional, and elegiac presentation of the tragedy of Karbala.
Ali ibn Isa al Irbili Kashf al Ghummah	692 AH Shia	An Imami biographical work on the Prophet and the Imams. It preserves biographies, virtues, and miracle reports concerning the Fourteen Infallibles.

بَرَأْتُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُمْ وَمِنْ أَشْيَاعِهِمْ وَاتِّبَاعِهِمْ وَأَوْلِيَائِهِمْ

I turn to Allah and I turn towards you and turn away from them and their adherents, followers and friends.

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ إِنِّي سَلِمْتُ لِمَنْ سَالَمَكُمْ وَحَرَبْتُ لِمَنْ حَارَبَكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

O' Aba Abdillah! I am at peace with those who make peace with you and I am at war with those who make war with you until the Day of Judgment.

وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ آلَ زِيَادٍ وَآلَ مَرْوَانَ وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ قَاطِبَةً وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ ابْنَ مَرْجَانَةَ وَلَعَنَّ

اللَّهُ عُمَرَ بْنَ سَعْدٍ وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ شِمْرًا وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً أَسْرَجَتْ وَأَلْجَمَتْ وَتَنَقَّبَتْ لِقِتَالِكَ

May the curse of Allah be upon the family of Ziyad and the family of Marwan and may the curse of Allah be upon Bani Umayyah. May the curse of Allah be upon Ibn Marjana and may the curse of Allah be upon Umar ibn Sa'd and may the curse of Allah be upon Shimr.

And may the curse of Allah be upon the nation that carried out, saw and were silent at your killing.

بِأَبِي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي لَقَدْ عَظُمَ مُصَابِي بِكَ فَاسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَكْرَمَ مَقَامَكَ وَأَكْرَمَنِي بِكَ أَنْ

يَرْزُقَنِي طَلَبَ تَارِكَ مَعَ إِمَامٍ مَنْصُورٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ

May my father and mother be sacrificed for you. Surely my sorrow for you is great and I pray to Allah who has honoured your status and has also honoured me through you that He grant me the opportunity to seek your revenge with the victorious Imam from the family of Muhammad.

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي عِنْدَكَ وَجِيهاً بِالْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

O' Allah! Make me worthy of respect with You through Hussein, peace be upon him, both in the transient world and also the next life.

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ إِنِّي أَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى رَسُولِهِ وَإِلَى أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِلَى فَاطِمَةَ وَإِلَى

الْحَسَنِ وَإِلَيْكَ بِمُؤَالَاتِكَ وَبِالْبَرَاءَةِ مِمَّنْ قَاتَلَكَ وَنَصَبَ لَكَ الْحَرْبَ وَبِالْبَرَاءَةِ مِمَّنْ أَسَسَ

أَسَاسَ الظُّلْمِ وَالْجَوْرِ عَلَيْكُمْ، وَأَبْرَأُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى رَسُولِهِ مِمَّنْ أَسَسَ أَسَاسَ ذَلِكَ وَبَنَى

عَلَيْهِ بُنْيَانَهُ وَجَرَى فِي ظُلْمِهِ وَجُورِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَلَى أَشْيَاعِكُمْ

O' Aba Abdillah! Surely, I seek closeness to Allah and to His Messenger and to the Commander of the Faithful and to Fatimah and to Hasan and to you through love of you and through distancing myself from those who laid the foundations and those who built upon and carried out oppression and cruelty upon you all and upon your followers.

زيارة عاشوراء

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بْنَ أَمِيرِ

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَابْنَ سَيِّدِ الْوَصِيِّينَ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بْنَ فَاطِمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ،

Peace be upon you O' Aba Abdillah; Peace be upon you O' son of the Messenger of Allah; Peace be upon you O' son of the Commander of the Faithful and the son of the leader of the inheritors (of the Prophet); Peace be upon you O' son of Fatimah, the leader of the women of the entire Universe.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللَّهِ وَابْنَ ثَارِهِ وَالْوَثَرَ الْمَوْتُورَ،

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى الْأَرْوَاحِ الَّتِي حَلَّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ

Peace be upon you O' the one who was killed and whose blood has not yet been avenged - and whose avenging is in the hands of Allah and peace be upon you, the son of one who was killed and whose blood has not yet been avenged (Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib) and peace be upon you O' the one who was alone, an individual (killed).
Peace be upon you and also upon those souls who accompanied you to your annihilation.

عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي جَمِيعاً سَلَامُ اللَّهِ أَبَدًا مَا بَقِيَتْ وَبَقِيَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ

Upon you and upon all of those (who were killed) is the Salam of Allah from me for eternity, as long as the night and the day remain.

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَظُمَتِ الرَّزِيَّةُ وَجَلَّتْ وَعَظُمَتِ الْمُصِيبَةُ بِكَ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ

الْإِسْلَامِ، وَجَلَّتْ وَعَظُمَتِ مُصِيبَتُكَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ عَلَى جَمِيعِ أَهْلِ السَّمَاوَاتِ

O' Aba Abdillah! Surely the tribulations are great and unbearable and your tragedy is great for us, and for all the people of Islam and unbearable and great is your tragedy in the heavens and for all of the dwellers of the heavens.

فَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً أَسَّسَتْ أَسَاسَ الظُّلْمِ وَالْجَوْرِ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً دَفَعَتْكُمْ

عَنْ مَقَامِكُمْ وَأَزَالَتْكُمْ عَنْ مَرَاتِبِكُمْ الَّتِي رَتَبَكُمْ اللَّهُ فِيهَا وَلَعَنَّ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً قَتَلَتْكُمْ وَلَعَنَّ

اللَّهُ الْمُمَهِّدِينَ لَهُمْ بِالتَّمَكِينِ مِنْ قِتَالِكُمْ،

May the curse (La'n) be upon those people who laid down the foundations for the oppression and wrongs done upon you, the family of the Prophet (Ahlul Bayt). May Allah curse those people who denied you your position (O' Ahlul Bayt) and removed you from your rank which Allah himself had granted you.

May the curse of Allah be upon those people who killed you and may the curse of Allah be upon those people who made it easy for them by preparing the grounds of your killing.

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي فِي مَقَامِي هَذَا مِمَّنْ تَنَالَهُ مِنْكَ صَلَوَاتُ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ

O' Allah! Make me at this moment, one who receives from You prayers, mercy and forgiveness.

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ مَحْيَايَ مَحْيَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَمَمَاتِي مَمَاتَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

O' Allah! Make me live the life of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and permit me to die the death of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ هَذَا يَوْمٌ تَبَرَّكَتَ بِهِ بَنُو أُمَيَّةَ وَأَبْنُ أَكَلَةَ الْأَكْبَادِ اللَّعِينُ ابْنُ اللَّعِينِ عَلَى لِسَانِكَ

وَلِسَانِ نَبِيِّكَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِي كُلِّ مَوْطِنٍ وَمَوْقِفٍ وَقَفَ فِيهِ نَبِيِّكَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ

عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ

O' Allah! This is the day (the Day of Ashura) which the Bani Umayyah rejoiced upon (and is the day when the son of the liver eater (the son of Hind ibn Abu Sufyan - Mu'awiyah and his son Yazid) celebrated, the cursed son(s) (Yazid) of the cursed (Mu'awiyah), as said by You and Your Prophet at every place and occasion.

اللَّهُمَّ الْعَنْ أَبَا سُفْيَانَ وَمُعَاوِيَةَ وَيَزِيدَ بْنَ مُعَاوِيَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْكَ اللَّعْنَةُ أَبَدَ الْأَبَدِينَ،

وَهَذَا يَوْمٌ فَرَحَتْ بِهِ آلُ زِيَادٍ وَآلُ مَرْوَانَ بِقَتْلِهِمُ الْحُسَيْنَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ،

اللَّهُمَّ فَضَاعِفْ عَلَيْهِمُ اللَّعْنَ مِنْكَ وَالْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ

O' Allah! Curse Abu Sufyan and Mu'awiyah and Yazid ibn Muawiyah - upon them may Your curse be forever and eternity. And this is the day when the family of Ziyad were happy and so were the family of Marwan at their killing of Hussein, may the Prayers of Allah be upon him.

O' Allah! Increase upon them Your curse and (Your) painful punishment.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي هَذَا الْيَوْمِ وَفِي مَوْقِفِي هَذَا وَأَيَّامِ حَيَاتِي بِالْبَرَاءَةِ مِنْهُمْ

وَاللَّعْنَةِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَبِالْمُؤَالَاةِ لِنَبِيِّكَ وَآلِ نَبِيِّكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ

O' Allah! Surely I seek nearness to you on this day (the Day of Ashura) and in this place (which I am in) and in all days of my life by disassociating myself from these people and sending curses upon them and through my love and friendship to Your Prophet and the family of Your Prophet, peace be upon him and upon all of them.

بَرَأْتُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُمْ وَأَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْكُمْ بِمُؤَالَاتِكُمْ وَمُؤَالَاةِ وَلِيِّكُمْ

وَالْبَرَاءَةِ مِنْ أَعْدَائِكُمْ وَالنَّاصِبِينَ لَكُمْ الْحَرْبَ وَبِالْبَرَاءَةِ مِنْ أَشْيَاعِهِمْ وَأَتْبَاعِهِمْ

I disassociate myself from them through Allah and through all of you and I seek nearness to Allah and then to you through love for you and your friends and disassociation with your enemies and from those who want to fight against you and disassociation from their adherents and followers.

إِنِّي سَلِمٌ لِمَنْ سَالَمَكُمْ وَحَرْبٌ لِمَنْ حَارَبَكُمْ وَوَلِيٌّ لِمَنْ وَالَاكُمْ وَعَدُوٌّ لِمَنْ عَادَاكُمْ

Surely, I am at peace with those who are at peace with you and I am at war with those who are at war with you and I am a friend to those who are friends to you and I am an enemy to those who are enemies to you.

فَأَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَكْرَمَنِي بِمَعْرِفَتِكُمْ وَمَعْرِفَةِ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ وَرَزَقَنِي الْبَرَاءَةَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِكُمْ أَنْ

يَجْعَلَني مَعَكُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَنْ يَثْبِتَ لِي عِنْدَكُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

So, then I ask Allah who has honoured me with a cognizance of all of you and a cognizance of your friends that He also grant me the opportunity to disassociate myself from your enemies and that He place me with you - both in the transient world and also in the next life –

And that Allah make me firm in your presence with a truthful stance both in the transient world and also the next life.

وَأَسْأَلُهُ أَنْ يَبْلِغَنِي الْمَقَامَ الْمَحْمُودَ لَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ يَرْزُقَنِي طَلَبَ تَارِي مَعَ إِمَامٍ هُدًى

ظَاهِرٍ نَاطِقٍ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْكُمْ

And I ask Him (Allah) that He enables me to reach to the honoured station with you in the presence of Allah and that He grant me the ability to seek the revenge of you with the rightly guided Imam from you, who shall surely come and speak the truth.

وَأَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ بِحَقِّكُمْ وَبِالْشَّانِ الَّذِي لَكُمْ عِنْدَهُ أَنْ يُعْطِيَنِي بِمُصَابِي بِكُمْ أَفْضَلَ مَا يُعْطِي

مُصَاباً بِمُصِيبَتِهِ، مُصِيبَةً مَا عَظَمَهَا وَأَعَظَمَ رَزِيَّتَهَا فِي الْإِسْلَامِ وَفِي جَمِيعِ السَّمَاوَاتِ

وَالْأَرْضِ!

And I ask Allah for your sake and for the status and rank which you have with Him that He grant me that thing due to me showing grief and sorrow at your sorrows even more than of that which he gives in a person's own grief and sorrows, and what great sorrow and tragedies you faced!

How great was your tragedy for Islam and for all of the inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth!

اللَّهُمَّ الْعَنْ أَوَّلَ ظَالِمٍ ظَلَمَ حَقَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآخِرَ تَابِعٍ لَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ،
اللَّهُمَّ الْعَنْ الْعِصَابَةَ الَّتِي جَاهَدَتِ الْحُسَيْنَ وَشَايَعَتْ وَبَايَعَتْ وَتَابَعَتْ عَلَى قَتْلِهِ اللَّهُمَّ
الْعَنْهُمْ جَمِيعاً

O' Allah! Curse the first tyrant who oppressed the right of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and the next person who followed him on this path. O' Allah! Curse the group who fought against Hussein and those who followed them and supported them and assisted them in killing him. O' Allah, curse all of them!

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أبا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى الْأَرْوَاحِ الَّتِي حَلَّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ، عَلَيْكَ مِنِّي سَلَامُ اللَّهِ
أَبداً مَا بَقِيَتْ وَبَقِيَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَلَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ آخِرَ الْعَهْدِ مِنِّي لِزِيَارَتِكُمْ. السَّلَامُ عَلَى
الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى أَوْلَادِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى أَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ

Peace be upon you O' Aba Abdillah and upon the souls which were annihilated with you. Upon you, from me, is the peace of Allah for eternity, as long as the night and the day remain and please do not make this (Ziyarat) as my last contact with you. Greetings be upon Hussein, and upon Ali the son of Hussein and upon the children of Hussein and upon the companions of Hussein.

اللَّهُمَّ خُصَّ أَنْتَ أَوَّلَ ظَالِمٍ بِاللَّعْنِ مِنِّي وَأَبداً بِهِ أَوَّلًا ثُمَّ الثَّانِي وَالثَّالِثَ وَالرَّابِعَ،
اللَّهُمَّ الْعَنْ يَزِيدَ خَامِساً وَالْعَنْ عُبَيْدَ اللَّهِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ وَأَبْنَ مَرْجَانَةَ وَعُمَرَ بْنَ سَعْدٍ وَشِمراً
وَأَلَّ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ وَأَلَّ زِيَادٍ وَأَلَّ مَرْوَانَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

O' Allah! Particularly curse the first tyrant (Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafa), a curse from me, and begin the first curse with him and then send the curse on the second tyrant (Umar ibn al-Khattab) and the third tyrant (Uthman ibn Affan) and then the fourth tyrant (Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan).

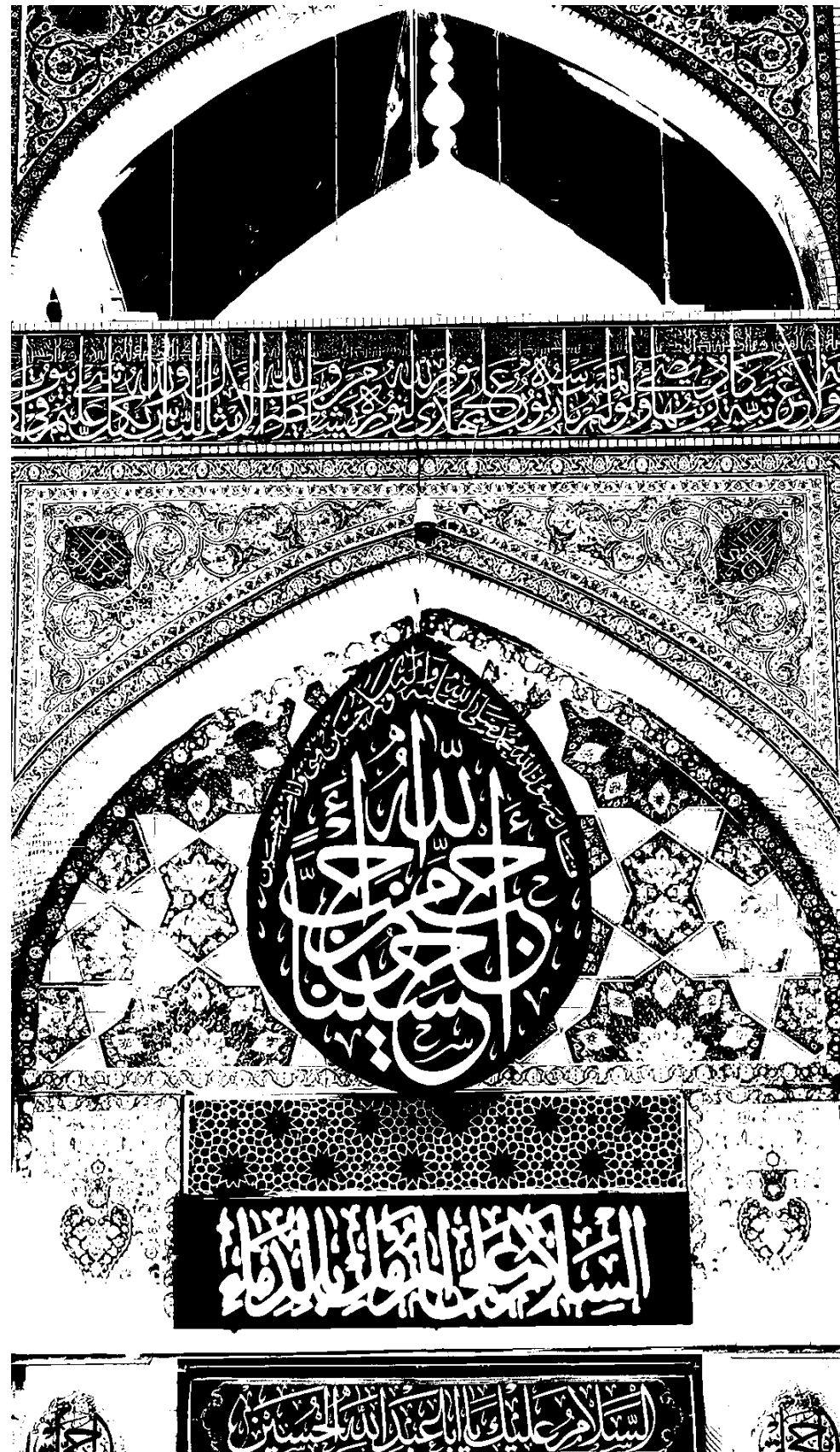
O' Allah curse Yazid, the fifth tyrant and curse Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and Ibn Marjanah and Umar ibn Sa'd and Shimr and the family of Sufyan and the family of Ziyad and family of Marwan until the day of Judgement.

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدَ الشَّاكِرِينَ لَكَ عَلَى مُصَابِهِمْ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى عَظِيمِ رَزِيَّتِي،
اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي شَفَاعَةَ الْحُسَيْنِ يَوْمَ الْوُرُودِ وَتَبَّتْ لِي قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَكَ مَعَ الْحُسَيْنِ
وَأَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ الَّذِينَ بَذَلُوا مَهْجَهُمْ دُونَ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

O' Allah! To you belongs the praise, the praise of those who are thankful to You for their tribulations. All Praise belongs to Allah for my intense grief.

O' Allah, grant me the blessing of intercession of Hussein on the Day of Appearance (before You) and strengthen me with a truthful stand in Your presence along with Hussein and the companions of Hussein, those people who sacrificed everything for Hussein, peace be upon him.





CONTENT PAGE

BACKGROUND - THE FITNAH OF BANU UMAYYAH.....	2
THE WILL OF MUAWIYAH	2
THE PLANS FOR SUCCESSION	6
THE CRIMES OF MUAWIYAH	8
THE DEATH OF MUAWIYAH.....	11
THE FAMILY TREES	13
THE LAND OF MEDINAH.....	16
THE FOUNDATIONS OF OPPRESSION	16
THE LETTER OF YAZID TO AL WALID	19
THE CONSULTATION OF AL WALID AND MARWAN	22
THE SUMMONS AT THE DEAD OF NIGHT	24
THE SUMMONS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s).....	26
THE POSITION OF ABDULLAH IBN AL ZUBAYR	29
THE POSITION OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAR	31
THE NIGHT OF FAREWELL	32
THE PREPARATIONS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)	32
THE FAREWELL OF LADY UMM SALAMAH	37
THE WILL OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)	39
THE DEPARTURE FROM MEDINAH.....	42
THE IMAM (a.s) ON HIS WAY TO MECCA.....	44
THE CARAVAN MEETS ABDULLAH IBN MUTT'	46
THE ARRIVAL OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s) INTO MECCA	47
THE CITY OF KUFA.....	49
THE LETTERS FROM KUFA	52
THE RESPONSE OF IMAM (a.s) TO KUFA	56
THE JOURNEY OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....	58
THE ARRIVAL OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL INTO KUFA.....	60
THE KHUTBAH OF AL NU'MAN IBN BASHIR.....	63
THE LETTERS OF ALARM	65
THE CITY OF BASRA.....	68
THE FIVE CHIEFS OF BASRA.....	68
THE SERMON OF UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD	72
THE CALL OF DESTINY; YAZID IBN MASUD AL NAHSHALI	74
THE DEPARTURE OF UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD	76
THE FITNAH OF UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD.....	78
THE DEPOSING OF AL NU'MAN	78
THE SERMON OF IBN ZIYAD IN KUFA.....	80

THE CHANGING WINDS OF KUFA83

THE TRANSFER OF MUSLIM TO THE HOUSE OF HANI83

BACKGROUND - THE ALLEGED COUNCIL FOR KILLING IBN ZIYAD85

THE SHAMI SPY, MA'QIL88

THE SUMMONS OF HANI IBN URWAH.....90

THE RUSE OF IBN ZIYAD.....94

THE ARREST OF HANI IBN URWAH.....98

THE UPRISING OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....101

THE PALACE UNDER SIEGE.....104

THE FALSE BANNERS OF AMNESTY106

THE ESTRANGEMENT OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....110

THE PURSUIT OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL114

THE OPPRESSOR EMERGES.....114

THE DELAY OF AL MUKHTAR.....117

THE BETRAYAL OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....120

THE BATTLE OF FIREBRANDS AND STONES.....122

THE CAPTURE OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....125

THE DESPERATION OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....128

THE GATES OF THE PALACE.....130

THE COURT OF IBN ZIYAD132

THE MARTYRDOM OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....136

THE MARTYRDOM OF HANI IBN URWAH.....138

BACKGROUND - THE KUFAN MISSION OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL.....141

THE VICE GRIP TIGHTENS IN KUFA.....144

THE DESECRATION OF BODIES.....146

THE IMPRISONMENT OF AL MUKHTAR AL THAQAFI149

THE STORM FROM DAMASCUS151

THE SANCTUARY OF MECCA.....153

THE AMBITIONS OF IBN AL ZUBAYR.....155

THE COUNSEL OF UMAR IBN ABDUL RAHMAN157

THE COUNSEL OF ABU BAKR IBN ABDUL RAHMAN159

THE COLLECTIVE OF COUNSELS161

THE COUNSEL OF ABDULLAH IBN ABBAS.....163

THE SECOND COUNSEL OF IBN ABBAS.....165

THE CALL OF DESTINY; ABDULLAH IBN UMAR.....167

THE WIFE OF IBN AL ZUBAYR.....171

THE THREAT ON THE DAY OF TARWIYAH.....174

THE DEPARTURE FROM MECCA.....177

THE PLEA OF MUHAMMAD AL HANAFIYYAH.....177

THE LETTER OF ABDULLAH IBN JAFAR.....179

THE PURSUIT OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}182

BACKGROUND - THE JOURNEY FROM MECCA184

THE STATIONS OF THE ROAD186

AL TAN'IM.....188

AL SIFAH189

DHAT IRQ.....191

AL QADISIYYAH194

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN YAQTAR.....196

THE MARTYRDOM OF QAYS IBN MUSHIR AL SAYDAWI198

AL KHUZAYMIYYAH200

ZARUD201

THE CALL OF DESTINY; ZUHAYR IBN QAYN203

AL THA'LABIYYAH206

ZUBALAH209

BATN AL AQABAH.....211

SHARAF213

THE MOMENT OF INTERCEPTION215

DHU HUSAM.....215

THE CALL OF DESTINY; AL HURR IBN YAZID.....218

AL BAYDAH222

UDHAYB AL HIJANAT224

BACKGROUND - THE ENVOYS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}228

THE CALL OF DESTINY; AL TIRMIMAH IBN ADI230

QASR BANI MUQATIL.....232

THE CALL OF DESTINY; ABDULLAH IBN AL HURR233

NAYNAWA.....235

THE CARAVAN HALTS.....238

THE LAND OF KARBALA.....242

THE CALL OF DESTINY; UMAR IBN SA'D242

THE ARRIVAL OF UMAR IBN SA'D IN KARBALA.....245

THE LETTER OF UMAR IBN SA'D TO IBN ZIYAD248

THE MEETINGS OF IMAM {a.s} WITH UMAR IBN SA'D.....250

THE ALLEGED LETTER OF UMAR IBN SA'D.....254

THE SUMMONS OF SHIMR IBN DHI'L JAWSHAN256

THE AMASSING OF ARMIES.....258

THE RECRUITMENT WITHIN KUFA.....258

THE ARRIVAL OF SHIMR IN KARBALA261

THE CALL OF DESTINY; THE TRIBE OF BANU ASAD263

THE BLOCKADE OF WATER.....	265
THE SIEGE OF EUPHRATES	267
THE HASTE TO BLOODSHED	269
THE LETTER OF SAFETY.....	271
THE DRUMS OF WAR	273
THE NIGHT BEFORE ASHURA.....	278
THE CALL OF DESTINY; AL DAHHAK IBN ABDULLAH	278
THE SERMON ON THE NIGHT OF ASHURA	280
THE STANCE OF THE COMPANIONS	283
THE STATIONS IN PARADISE	286
THE IMAM ^(a.s.) ON THE NIGHT OF ASHURA.....	288
THE NIGHT OF REMEMBRANCE	293
THE FAJR OF ASHURA	296
THE MORAL SEPARATION IN KARBALA.....	298
THE STILLNESS BEFORE WAR.....	301
THE SERMON OF ZUHAYR IBN AL QAYN	307
THE SERMON OF BURAYR IBN KHUDAYR.....	309
THE COMMAND TO WAR	311
THE COMMENCEMENT OF WAR	314
THE REGRET OF AL HURR, THE GUILTY.....	314
THE SERMON OF AL HURR, THE FREE.....	319
THE BATTLE OF KARBALA BEGINS	321
THE FIRST ASSAULT ON ASHURA	323
THE FIELD OF MANY DUELS	325
THE DUELS OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAYR AL KALBI	325
THE MARTYRDOM OF UMAYR IBN ABDULLAH AL MAZHAJI	327
THE MARTYRDOM OF THE FOUR RIDERS	328
THE MARTYRDOM OF ANIS IBN MA'QIL AL ASBAHI.....	329
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDUL RAHMAN AL YAZNI.....	329
THE MARTYRDOM OF YAHYA IBN SALIM AL MAZANI.....	330
THE MARTYRDOM OF QURRAH IBN ABI QURRAH.....	330
THE MARTYRDOM OF ANAS IBN KAHIL AL ASADI.....	331
THE MARTYRDOM OF YAZID IBN ZIYAD IBN AL MUHASIR	332
THE MARTYRDOM OF BURAYR IBN KHUDAYR	334
THE CURSE UPON ABDULLAH IBN HAWZAH	337
THE MARTYRDOM OF AMR IBN QURAZAH	339
THE NARROWING OF THE BATTLEFIELD	342
THE SECOND ASSAULT ON ASHURA	342
THE MARTYRDOM OF MUSLIM IBN AWSAJAH	344

THE MARTYRDOM OF AL HAJJAJ IBN MASRUQ AND ABDUL RAHMAN	346
THE ENCIRCLEMENT OF THE TENTS	348
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAYR	350
THE MARTYRDOM OF AL HURR IBN YAZID AL RIYAHI	352
THE MARTYRDOM OF WADI'H, SULAYMAN AND MUNJIH	354
THE BURNING OF THE TENTS.....	356
THE MARTYRDOM OF THREE COMPANIONS.....	359
THE MARTYRDOM OF AMR IBN KHALID AND HIS SON, KHALID	361
THE MARTYRDOM OF SA'D IBN HANZALAH AND AMR IBN MUTA	362
THE MARTYRDOM OF JAWN IBN HARITH	363
THE PRAYER BENEATH ARROWS	365
THE CALL TO DHUHR PRAYER.....	365
THE MARTYRDOM OF SA'ID IBN ABDULLAH.....	367
THE MARTYRDOM OF HABIB IBN MUZAHIR	369
THE MARTYRDOM OF ZUHAYR IBN AL QAYN	372
THE MARTYRDOM OF NAFI IBN HILAL AL JAMALI	374
THE FINAL WALL OF COMPANIONS	376
THE MARTYRDOM OF JUNADAH IBN AL HARITH AND HIS SON, AMR	376
THE MARTYRDOM OF THE TWO GHIFARI BROTHERS	377
THE MARTYRDOM OF THE TWO YOUTHS OF BANU JABIR	378
THE MARTYRDOM OF HANZALAH IBN AS'AD	379
THE MARTYRDOM OF AN ORPHANED YOUTH	380
THE MARTYRDOM OF SHABIB IBN ABDULLAH AL NAHSHALI	382
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABU THUMAMAH AL SA'DI	383
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABIS IBN ABI SHABIB AND SHAWDHAB	384
THE DEPARTURE OF AL DAHHAK IBN ABDULLAH	386
THE LAST OF COMPANIONS.....	388
THE PRINCES OF THE HASHEMITES	390
THE MARTYRDOM OF ALI AL AKBAR IBN AL HUSSEIN	390
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN MUSLIM.....	398
THE MARTYRDOM OF AWN AND MUHAMMAD IBN ABDULLAH.....	402
THE DEATH KNELL FOR THE HOUSE OF AQIL	405
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH AL AKBAR IBN AQIL	405
THE MARTYRDOM OF JAFAR IBN AQIL IBN ABI TALIB	408
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDUL RAHMAN IBN AQIL	410
THE MARTYRDOM OF MUHAMMAD IBN ABI SA'ID IBN AQIL.....	412
THE VALIANT SONS OF IMAM AL HASAN ^(a.s.)	414
THE MARTYRDOM OF AL QASIM IBN AL HASAN	414
THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN AL HASAN IBN ALI.....	421

THE TWO MUHAMMADS, THE SONS OF IMAM ALI (a.s)423

THE MARTYRDOM OF MUHAMMAD AL ASGHAR IBN ALI423

THE MARTYRDOM OF MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB425

THE HOUSE OF LADY UMM AL BANIN427

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB427

THE MARTYRDOM OF JAFAR IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB429

THE MARTYRDOM OF UTHMAN IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB431

THE LAST SONS OF IMAM ALI (a.s)434

THE PATH TO THE EUPHRATES434

THE MARTYRDOM OF AL ABBAS IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB437

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)449

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS OF THE IMAM (a.s)449

THE FINAL FAREWELL OF THE IMAM (a.s)451

THE FINAL ADVICE OF THE IMAM (a.s)452

THE FINAL WILL OF THE IMAM (a.s)454

THE FINAL SERMON OF THE IMAM (a.s)456

THE MARTYRDOM OF ALI AL ASGHAR IBN AL HUSSEIN458

THE LONE BATTLE OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)461

THE KUFAN ARMY BUCKLES464

THE ATTEMPTS TO REACH THE EUPHRATES466

THE ASSAULT ON THE TENTS468

THE EXHAUSTION OF THE IMAM (a.s)469

THE WOUNDED IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)471

THE ARROW TO THE FOREHEAD471

THE ARROW TO THE CHEST471

THE MASS BARRAGE OF ARROWS473

THE SWORD STRIKE TO THE HEAD474

THE COLLAPSE FROM THE HORSE476

THE LAMENT OF SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB (a.s)478

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN HASAN IBN ALI479

THE COLLAPSE OF STRENGTH OF IMAM (a.s)482

THE SWORD STRIKE TO THE ARM484

THE SPEAR TO THE CHEST485

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE CHIEF OF MARTYRS487

THE LONELY MARTYR, AL HUSSEIN IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB487

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF KARBALA492

THE HEAD OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)492

THE MARTYRDOM OF SUWAYD IBN AMR494

THE RETURN OF THE RIDERLESS HORSE495

THE PLUNDER OF THE BODY OF IMAM (a.s)497

THE TRAMPLING WITH HORSES501

THE SEQUEL; ‘MA’SIR AL SAJJAD’, JOURNEY OF SAJJAD (a.s)503

BACKGROUND - THE BATTLEFIELD CIRCUMSTANCES505

THE DIVINE PERMISSION OF KARBALA505

THE FORMATION OF THE TENTS507

THE ARMY OF IMAM (a.s) IN NUMBERS509

THE ESTIMATED FORCES OF UMAR IBN SA’D511

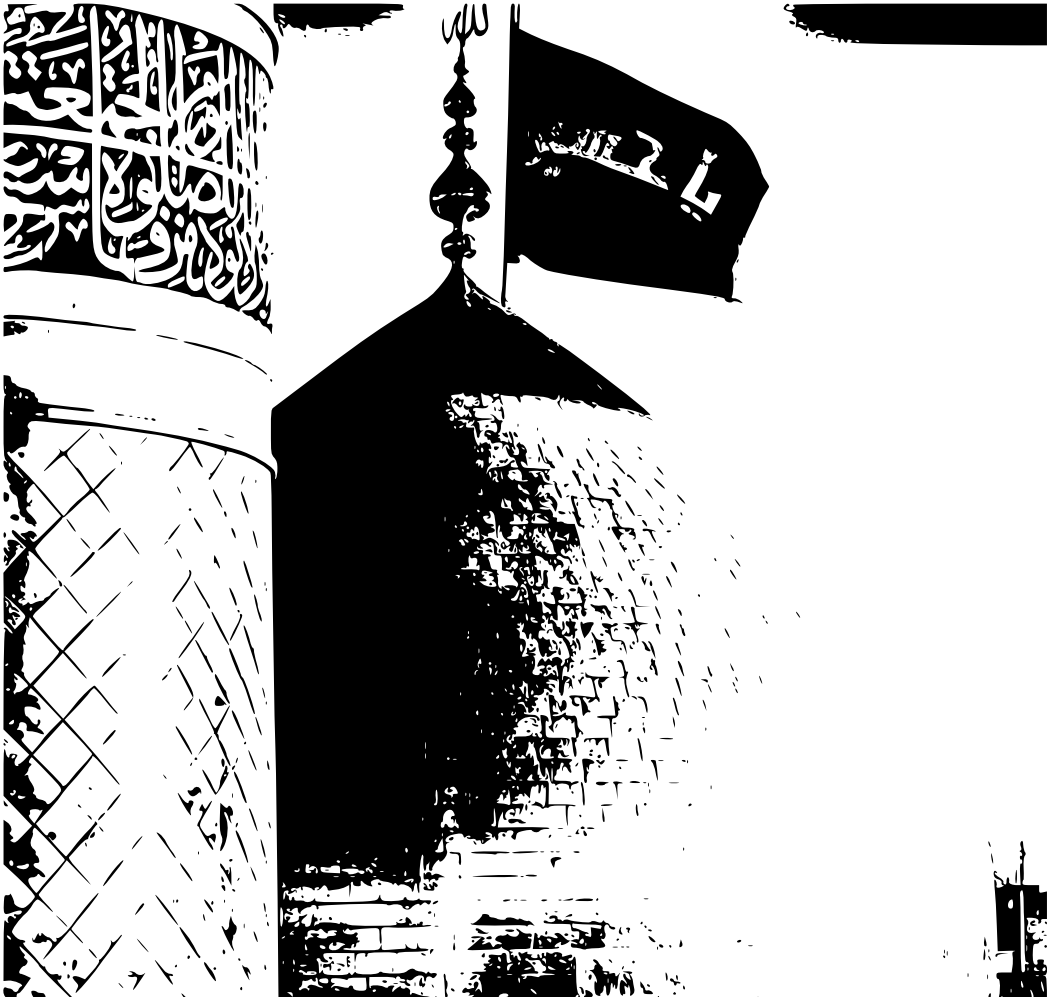
THE SEQUENCE OF MARTYRDOMS512

THE ACCOUNT OF THE MARTYRS OF KARBALA514

THE KILLERS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN (a.s)517

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT520

COMPLETION OF BOOK - HEAD OF HUSSEIN521



BACKGROUND - THE FITNAH OF BANU UMAYYAH

THE WILL OF MUAWIYAH

As the sixtieth year after the Hijrah dawned, a heavy shadow fell once more across the Muslim world. The usurped political order that had emerged after the passing of the noble Messenger of Allah ^{saws} had long drifted from the justice he had established.

Those who had deprived the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} of their rightful authority had laid the foundations of a system that would now produce its most destructive fruit.

Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, who for nearly two decades had secured his dominion through diplomacy, manipulation, and force, now lay weakened upon his deathbed. His treacherous body that had once carried the ambitions of an empire had grown frail beneath the certainty of time. In these final hours, Muawiyah summoned his son Yazid, preparing to transfer to him both the burden of authority and the dark legacy of his rule.

Muawiyah ibn Sakhr ibn Harb ibn Umayyah ibn Abd Shams had been born about twenty-five years before the Hijrah. His early life was deeply entwined with the hostility of Quraysh toward Islam. His father, Abu Sufyan, had stood among the fiercest opponents of the noble Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, leading the forces of Quraysh at Badr, Uhud, and in later campaigns. Muawiyah grew up within this atmosphere of resistance. It was only when the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} entered Mecca in triumph in the eighth year after the Hijrah that Muawiyah and his father Abu Sufyan, and their ilk, outwardly accepted Islam.

The blessed Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, in his mercy and political wisdom, included them among the ‘Muallafati Qulubuhum’, those whose hearts were to be reconciled, granting them favour not out of recognition of their sincerity, but in the hope that generosity might soften hearts long hardened by enmity. That they may forego their hatred and embrace Islam truly.

After the passing of the Prophet ^{saws}, fortune steadily carried Muawiyah upward through the ranks of authority. During the rule of Umar ibn al Khattab, Muawiyah was appointed governor of Damascus. Though this position did not initially grant him authority over all of al Sham, it placed him firmly within the structure of power.

When his brother, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, died during the plague of 18 AH, Muawiyah was elevated to the governorship of the entire region of al Sham. From that moment, he clung to this position with relentless treachery and deception. His authority survived the reign of Uthman and went into the era of Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

When Uthman was killed and the Muslims pledged allegiance to Imam Ali ^{a.s}, Muawiyah seized upon the call for vengeance as a political weapon. Cloaking his rebellion beneath the slogan of avenging Uthman, Muawiyah refused obedience to the rightful Imam ^{a.s} and unsheathed his sword against the divinely appointed successor of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

It was a notorious rebellion against the rule of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, as it sought to root out the support of the Imam ^{a.s} and to extinguish the guiding light of Islam to the Muslim world.

The confrontation culminated in the Battle of Siffin, where Muslim blood was shed on a vast scale. In one of the most infamous acts of deception in early Islamic history, the deceitful Muawiyah ordered copies of the Qur'an to be raised upon the tips of spears, exploiting the sanctity of the divine text to halt the battle and divide the ranks of Imam Ali's ^{a.s} army.

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, Muawiyah directed his hostility toward the second Hujjah of Allah ^{AZJ}, Imam al Hasan ibn Ali ^{a.s}. With his political authority consolidated and his military strength firmly established, Muawiyah, ever so venomous and serpentine, sought to extinguish another guiding light from the household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan would leave no stone unturned to bring harm to Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}.

Yet Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}, recognising the exhaustion of the Muslim community and the danger of further bloodshed, accepted a peace treaty in Jumada al Ula in the year 41 AH. The treaty contained clear conditions meant to safeguard the integrity of the Ummah and protect the rights of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. It was testament to the supreme wisdom of the Imam ^{a.s}.

That year came to be called the ‘Year of Unity’, though the unity itself was largely an illusion. Once his authority was secure, Muawiyah violated the conditions of the agreement.

For nearly nineteen years, Muawiyah maintained control over the affairs of the Muslims. By Rajab in the year 60 AH, however, the long arc of his rule had reached its end. Tarikh al Tabari narrates from al Kalbi and his father, that Muawiyah was between seventy-five and eighty-five years of age when illness overtook him. The body that had long schemed against the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} now weakened beneath the weight of age and disease.

For years, Muawiyah had carefully prepared the succession of his son Yazid, ensuring that the machinery of power would pass smoothly into the hands of Yazid. In doing so, Muawiyah imposed upon the Ummah a calamity whose consequences would echo throughout history.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah had been born around 27 AH to Maysun bint Bajdal al Kalbi. From an early age, he was groomed for succession. In the year 56 AH, Muawiyah began compelling leading figures of the Muslim world to pledge allegiance to Yazid as his heir.

Through pressure, coercion, and calculated manoeuvring, Muawiyah gradually secured submission from many delegations. By the year 59 AH, the transformation of this already usurped caliphate passed into a hereditary monarchy which had effectively been completed, extinguishing the last traces of consultation and replacing them with dynastic rule.

Ibn al Athir relates that before his final illness, Muawiyah, the merchant of falsehood, addressed the people in a sermon reflecting upon the nearness of death. He remarked that his rule had lasted so long that both he and the people had grown weary of one another, and that they would soon be separated. Muawiyah warned the people that those who would rule after him would be worse than he had been, just as those before him had been better.

The duplicitous Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan concluded by saying:

“Whoever loves to meet Allah ^{AZJ}, Allah ^{AZJ} loves to meet him.

O Allah ^{AZJ}, I love to meet You, so love to meet me and bless me in this meeting.”

When the signs of death became evident, Muawiyah summoned Yazid and delivered his final counsel. According to reports preserved in *Bihar al Anwar* and *al Tazkirah* of Ibn al Jawzi, Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan said:

“O my son Yazid! I have humbled the difficult necks for you, strengthened the lands for you, and made the kingdom ready for you to enjoy.

I do not fear that this authority will be taken from you except by certain men from Quraysh. I fear for you from four men: Al Hussein ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al Khattab, and Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Bakr.”

Muawiyah then described each of these men in turn.

Concerning Abdullah ibn Umar, Muawiyah said that devotion to worship had exhausted Ibn Umar and that, when he found no one else remaining, Ibn Umar would also pledge allegiance. Concerning Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}, Muawiyah slyly acknowledged his position as the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and warned that the people of Iraq would call to the Imam ^{a.s} for leadership. If Yazid gained power over him, Muawiyah outwardly advised that Yazid should recognise the status of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and avoid harming him, yet Muawiyah had schemed and left very turbulent instructions as to dealing with the Imam ^{a.s}. Regarding Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Bakr, Muawiyah dismissed Ibn Abi Bakr as preoccupied with worldly amusements, and a person such as him was ineffective and insignificant.

Concerning Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, Muawiyah warned that he would wait like a crouching lion for an opportunity, and that if Yazid gained power over him, he should cut him to pieces.

Nafasul Mahmoom records that Muawiyah continued advising his son regarding the governance of the regions of the Muslim world. Muawiyah urged Yazid to honour the people of Hijaz, describing them as the ‘roots of authority’. Those who visited him from Hijaz should be honoured, and those absent should be remembered for their plots and plans.

Regarding the people of Iraq, Muawiyah warned that their demands were constant and volatile, advising Yazid that replacing governors repeatedly would be easier than confronting a revolt of thousands of swords. As for the people of Syria, Muawiyah described them as the backbone of the army and the reservoir of military strength upon which Umayyad rule depended. Yet beneath all of this counsel lay a deeper duplicity.

Even as the forked tongue of Muawiyah advised restraint toward the grandson of the noble Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, Muawiyah had already left secret instructions with his servant Sarjun al Rumi that, if unrest arose in Iraq, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad should be appointed governor.

Sarjun ibn Mansur al Rumi was a Melkite Christian official who served within the administrative apparatus of the early Umayyad state as chief fiscal administrator in Syria.

Thus, in the month of Rajab in the year 60 AH, Yazid assumed authority while still in his early thirties. Some historians state that he was thirty-four years of age, having been born in 26 AH. According to *al Bidayah wa al Nihayah*, Yazid retained all of his father’s governors in their posts, ensuring the uninterrupted continuation of the same structure of power that Muawiyah had established, and a sign of his shrewdness and sly schemes.

Yazid’s rule would last only about three years before his death in Hawwarin near Damascus. Yet within those brief years, Yazid ibn Muawiyah would stain the pages of history with many disastrous crimes, the most significant of his grievous crimes being ‘The massacre of Karbala’.

Each of the four men of Quraysh whom Muawiyah warned Yazid about carried their own legacy among the Muslims, and their significance and values varied greatly.

Abdullah ibn Umar had earlier refused to pledge allegiance to Imam Ali ^{a.s} after the killing of Uthman. Thus, Imam Ali ^{a.s} is reported to have rebuked Abdullah ibn Umar, saying:

“Indeed, you have been ill-mannered in youth and in old age.”

Though Abdullah ibn Umar avoided open rebellion and restrained others from joining it, he withheld support from Imam Ali ^{a.s} and did not fight at Siffin. For all his restraint, Ibn Umar later accommodated the rule of Muawiyah and eventually submitted to the Umayyads.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had spent his childhood under the care of his grandfather, the noble Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and later lived alongside his father Imam Ali ^{a.s} for about thirty years. After the martyrdom of Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} carried the responsibility of the Imamate for roughly a decade during Muawiyah’s reign.

Historical reports indicate that Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Bakr had already died before Yazid’s succession, having passed away near Mecca around 54 AH.

Thus, the inclusion of Ibn Abi Bakr among the potential challengers may therefore reflect confusion during Muawiyah’s final illness or the preservation of differing reports.

Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, born in the first year after the Hijrah, grew up amid the political conflicts of the early Muslim community.

After the death of Muawiyah and the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Ibn al Zubayr established control over Mecca and claimed leadership, ruling for approximately twelve years until he was defeated and killed by the forces of al Hajjaj under the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik ibn Marwan. Ibn al Zubayr was an ambitious, sly man whose eyes rested on power.

Thus ended the life of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. His long reign of manipulation and political calculation concluded with a will designed to secure the throne for his son.

According to *al Tabaqat al Kubra* and *Ansab al Ashraf*, Muawiyah died in the middle of Rajab in the year 60 AH, after which the people were compelled to pledge allegiance to Yazid. The transition of power occurred swiftly, as governors across the provinces moved to secure loyalty for the new ruler and suppress any sign of opposition before it could emerge.

With this transfer of power, the affairs of the Ummah passed into the hands of a ruler whose character embodied corruption, tyranny, moral decay, and open hostility toward the sanctities of Islam. Yazid’s accession marked not merely a political succession, but the beginning of a profound spiritual and moral crisis within the Muslim community.

From that moment onward, the shadow of an immense calamity began to stretch across the horizon of history, and the events that would culminate upon the plains of Karbala drew ever closer.

THE PLANS FOR SUCCESSION

The path that led to the rule of Yazid ibn Muawiyah was not forged in a single moment of decision. Rather, it was the culmination of a long and deliberate effort, unfolding gradually over the course of a decade.

During these years, Muawiyah worked with persistent calculation to secure for his son a new form of political order of the Muslim community: a hereditary succession to power.

The earliest roots of this project can be traced to the closing years of the forties after Hijrah. At that time, Muawiyah had already begun laying the foundations for what would later become an explicit policy.

According to Tarikh al Tabari, it was during this period that al Mughira ibn Shuba, who had governed Kufa since the so-called Year of Unity in 41 AH, travelled to Damascus to meet Muawiyah. His tenure in Kufa had become uncertain, and discussion had begun to circulate regarding his possible replacement.

Among the names mentioned was Said ibn al Aas. In the midst of this uncertainty, al Mughira discerned the direction in which the political winds were beginning to blow.

Recognising the emerging design surrounding Yazid, and wishing to preserve his own position within the Umayyad administration, al Mughira aligned himself with Muawiyah's intentions. In return for his loyalty, al Mughira offered considerable value: his influence within Kufa. The city was one of the most politically sensitive centres of the empire, and the support of its notables could lend legitimacy to any developing policy.

Muawiyah understood the usefulness of such a city. Rather than replacing al Mughira, he confirmed al Mughira in his governorship, thereby ensuring that the groundwork for Yazid's succession could quietly be advanced from within Kufa itself. From this point, a subtle yet purposeful campaign began to unfold. Al Mughira returned to Kufa and began carefully cultivating the support of its leading figures.

Through private discussions and measured persuasion, al Mughira sought to prepare the city's influential men for the possibility of Yazid's future rule. Gradually, this effort bore fruit. Before long, a delegation of Kufan notables travelled to Damascus, where words of approval for Yazid were conveyed before Muawiyah. Though the matter was not yet openly proclaimed, the machinery of support had begun to move.

At the same time, Muawiyah turned his attention to another figure whose authority carried immense weight within the eastern provinces. Abu Mikhnaq reports that Muawiyah wrote to Ziyad ibn Sumayyah, the governor of Basra who had ruled the province since 45 AH. Ziyad's political skill and commanding influence over the two Iraqs made him a central figure in any undertaking of this magnitude. Muawiyah addressed Ziyad ibn Sumayyah under the guise of consultation, asking for his counsel regarding the question of Yazid's future succession.

The response that came back from Ziyad ibn Sumayyah, preserved in varying forms by the historians, was cautious and warning rather than enthusiastic approval.

Ziyad ibn Sumayyah advised that Yazid ibn Muawiyah should abandon certain habits and traits that had stirred resentment among the people.

Only by reforming these matters, Ziyad suggested, would the governors be able to call the wider community to Yazid's allegiance without provoking resistance. His reply reflected both political realism and an awareness of the delicate nature of public opinion.

Yet events soon altered the balance. In the month of Ramadan in the year 53 AH, Ziyad ibn Sumayyah died in Kufa while still exercising authority over the two Iraqs. With the passing of so powerful a figure, one of the most significant voices capable of implementing this evil succession was removed from the political scene.

A few years later, the policy that had previously advanced in quiet stages was brought openly into the light. In Rajab of the year 56 AH, Muawiyah travelled to perform Umrah. Standing before the assembled crowds, he discarded the careful ambiguity that had characterised the earlier years of preparation. In a public declaration, Muawiyah named Yazid as his successor and called upon the people to pledge their allegiance to Yazid ibn Muawiyah.

This announcement reverberated through the political order of the Muslim world. Objections soon emerged from various quarters. Among those who protested was Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan, who felt himself overlooked in the arrangement and openly criticised the decision. The situation carried the risk of widening opposition, but Yazid himself intervened on Said's behalf. Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, who was rarely unwilling to employ political accommodation when it served his purposes, placated Said ibn Uthman by granting him the governorship of Khurasan.

Yet Said was not the only figure to voice opposition. Marwan ibn al Hakam, who had governed Medinah since the year 54 AH, also resisted Muawiyah's design. His objections were not rooted in moral principle, but in political calculation and rivalry. The disagreement between the two men deepened the tensions within the Umayyad elite. According to al Tabari, Muawiyah eventually removed Marwan from the governorship in the year 57 AH. Later historians, among them al Masudi, preserved accounts of Marwan's protest, recording his words as evidence of the unease that the succession had stirred among the ruling circles.

Despite these objections, Muawiyah continued steadily to strengthen what he had already set in motion. By the closing years of the life of Muawiyah, the question was no longer whether Yazid would succeed him, but rather how firmly the provincial administrations could be bound to this new dynastic arrangement. Thus, by the year 60 AH, the policy had moved from its stage of preparation into enforcement.

In that year, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, who had governed Basra since 55 AH, demonstrated his loyalty to the established order by forwarding assurances of allegiance from his province to Damascus. Such gestures did not create Yazid's succession, for it had already been proclaimed years earlier. Instead, they marked the final consolidation of Muawiyah's long campaign, binding the machinery of government to a hereditary transfer of power that Muawiyah knew would soon face its greatest test.

THE CRIMES OF MUAWIYAH

A considerable body of early Islamic historical and biographical literature records numerous actions attributed to Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan that have been regarded by many scholars as grave violations of Islamic ethics, prophetic legacy, and the principles of justice.

These reports, preserved across a wide range of historical works, collectively portray a pattern of political manipulation, calculated violence, and moral transgression that marked his rule.

When these incidents are examined together, they reveal a consistent strategy through which power was secured and maintained at the expense of the values that the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws} had established for the Muslim community.

Among the most widely reported accusations is the poisoning of Imam Al Hasan ^{a.s}, the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}.

Numerous historians record that Muawiyah induced Ja'dah bint al Ash'ath, the wife of Imam Hasan ^{a.s}, to administer poison to her husband. This account appears in Muruj al Dhahab and Ithbat al Wasiyyah by al Masudi (vol. 2), Tarikh by Abu al Fida (vol. 1), al Iqd al Farid by Ibn Abd Rabbih (vol. 2), Rawdat al Manazir by Ibn Shahnah (vol. 2), Tarikh al Khamees by Hussein al Dayarbakri (vol. 2), al Akhbar al Tiwal by al Dinawari, Maqatil al Talibiyyin by Abu al Faraj al Isfahani, and al Istiab by Ibn Abdul Barr.

Some reports also attribute to him a role in the events that led to the assassination of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}. According to a narration cited by Hakim Sanai in Manaqib e Murtazawi, the assassin Abdul Rahman ibn Muljim himself acknowledged Muawiyah's involvement in encouraging the plot that ultimately resulted in the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

During the same turbulent period, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, a devoted supporter and companion of Imam Ali ^{a.s} and the son of Abu Bakr, was brutally murdered in Egypt. Al Tabari records that the killing took place under the authority of Muawiyah's forces, marking one of the most shocking acts of political violence in the early Muslim civil wars.

Likewise, the death of Malik ibn al Harith al Ashtar, one of the most distinguished companions and commanders of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, is frequently attributed to Muawiyah's intrigue. Tarikh al Tabari (vol. 4) reports that Malik al Ashtar was poisoned while travelling to assume the governorship of Egypt, a development that removed one of the strongest defenders of the cause of Imam Ali ^{a.s}.

Another deeply troubling episode was the execution of Hujr ibn Adi al Kindi, a companion of the Holy Prophet ^{saws}, together with a group of his loyal followers. Their crime had been their refusal to participate in the public cursing of Imam Ali ^{a.s}.

The killing of Hujr is recorded by numerous historians, including Ibn Asakir, Ibn Abdul Barr in al Istiab, Ibn al Athir in al Tarikh al Kamil, al Bayhaqi in Dalail al Nubuwwah, and Yaqut ibn Sufyan.

The persecution of Abu Dharr al Ghifari, one of the most revered companions of the Prophet ^{saws}, also stands among the early injustices linked to the emerging Umayyad authority. Abu Dharr had openly condemned the accumulation of wealth and corruption among the ruling elite.

His uncompromising criticism led to his exile and eventual death in isolation. This episode is recorded by al Masudi in Muruj al Dhahab and by al Ya'qubi in his Tarikh.

Perhaps the most notorious policy instituted during Muawiyah's reign was the systematic public cursing of Imam Ali ^{a.s}.

This practice was enforced from pulpits throughout the Umayyad territories, in mosques, public gatherings, and even during formal sermons.

The policy persisted for decades and was intended to reshape public perception of the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.

This campaign is documented in al Tarikh al Kamil by Ibn al Athir, al Iqd al Farid by Ibn Abd Rabbih, Tarikh by Abu al Fida, Rawdat al Manazir by Ibn Shahnah, Sharh al Maqasid by al Taftazani, and Khilafat wa Mulukiyyat by Abul Ala Mawdudi.

Muawiyah is also recorded as having violated the peace treaty that had been concluded with Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}.

Despite publicly accepting the terms of the agreement, which included the condition that authority would return to Imam al Hasan ^{a.s} after Muawiyah's death, he later acted in open contradiction to those provisions. This breach is noted by Ibn al Athir in al Tarikh al Kamil, Abu al Fida, and Ibn Shahnah.

Throughout his reign, widespread terror, bloodshed, and repression were carried out through governors and military commanders appointed by him.

These officials were often notorious for their harsh treatment of the population and their persecution of supporters of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. Accounts of these actions are preserved in numerous historical works, including the al Tarikh al Kamil, Tarikh Abu al Fida, Tarikh al Medinah by al Samhudi, Maqatil al Talibiyyin, Ibn Khallikan, Ibn Asakir, al Tabari, and Sharh Nahj al Balaghah by Ibn Abi al Hadid al Mutazili.

Another disturbing feature of the period was the encouragement of fabricated hadith transmissions that favoured the accursed Umayyad regime and undermined the status of the virtuous Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. Some narrators were reportedly patronised to circulate traditions supportive of Umayyad authority while disparaging their political opponents.

Muawiyah also carried out the controversial act of affiliating Ziyad ibn Abih to the Umayyad lineage by declaring him his brother.

Ziyad had been born to Sumayyah under circumstances of disputed paternity. The declaration effectively inserted him into Banu Umayyah, an act widely criticised by scholars and recorded by Abu al Fida and Abul Ala Mawdudi in 'Khilafat wa Mulukiyyat'.

In another decisive step toward consolidating dynastic rule, Muawiyah appointed his son Yazid as the successor. Yazid's conduct and reputation had already been the subject of widespread criticism among Muslims. By forcing the pledge of allegiance for his son, Muawiyah transformed the caliphate into a hereditary monarchy.

Earlier in his career, Muawiyah had also initiated the Battle of Siffin against Imam Ali ^{a.s}, a confrontation that resulted in the deaths of many devout Muslims and respected companions of the Prophet ^{saws}, among them Ammar ibn Yasir and Khuzaymah ibn Thabit.

The rule of Muawiyah increasingly resembled the style of monarchy practised by the Byzantine and Persian courts. Historians note that he surrounded himself with royal pomp and administrative structures unfamiliar to the earlier Islamic leadership.

Such observations are recorded in al Istiab (vol. 1), al Tarikh al Kamil (vol. 3), and al Bidayah wal Nihayah (vol. 8), where his conduct is contrasted with the simplicity that had characterised the earliest period of Islamic governance.

Some sources also portray a broader disregard for the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful, as noted by Raghīb al Isfahani in Muhadarat al Udaba.

Reports further exist concerning the consumption of wine, transmitted from Abdullah ibn Buraydah and recorded in Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

In addition, a number of works record accusations regarding illegitimate lineage and persistent immoral conduct, including accounts of adultery, gambling, gluttony, and corruption. Such claims appear in Rabi al Abrar by al Zamakhshari, Masalib Bani Umayyah by Ismail ibn Ali al Hanafi, and Sarguzasht e Muawiyah by Mawlawi Abdul Wahid Khan.

Taken together, these reports, preserved across numerous historical and biographical sources, have led many scholars to regard the reign of Muawiyah as a turning point in early Islamic history, marking the transformation of the political leadership of the Muslim community into a system characterised by dynastic ambition, coercive power, and sustained hostility toward the family of the Prophet ^{saws}.



THE DEATH OF MUAWIYAH

Tarikh al Tabari transmits, through Hisham ibn Muhammad al Kalbi from Abu Mikhnaf, that in the opening days of Rajab in the year 60 AH, Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, the aging ruler of the Umayyad dynasty, succumbed to illness.

With his death, a long chapter of calculated political manoeuvring, coercive diplomacy, and dynastic ambition came to its end. The announcement sent a tremor through Damascus, the centre of Umayyad power.

Al Dahhak ibn Qays al Fihri ¹, one of the leading Syrian notables and a trusted figure within the Umayyad court, came forward carrying the shrouds of the deceased.

Ascending the pulpit with the shrouds in his hands, Dahhak ibn Qays addressed the people. After praising and glorifying Allah ^{AZJ}, Dahhak ibn Qays declared:

“Indeed, Muawiyah was the pillar of the Arabs and the sharp edge of their power.

Through him, Allah ^{AZJ} cut off tribulation, granted him kingship over the servants, and opened lands through him. Now he has died.

These are his shrouds. We are wrapping Muawiyah in them, placing him in his grave, and leaving him between himself and his deeds. Then it is the Barzakh until the Day of Resurrection. Whoever among you wishes to witness Muawiyah, let him attend at midday.”

The reports concerning Yazid's presence during Muawiyah's final illness and death diverge. Some historians, among them Sibṭ ibn al Jawzi in his Tadhkira and Shaykh al Saduq in his Amali, through a report reaching Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, state that Yazid was present beside his father and witnessed the death of Muawiyah directly.

Other authorities record that he was absent. Al Khawarizmi cites Ahmad ibn Atham al Kufi to the effect that Yazid had departed on a hunting expedition in Hawarin, a well-known village near Aleppo.

Tarikh al Tabari likewise preserves a report from Hisham, through Awanah ibn al Hakam, confirming that Yazid had gone hunting and that messengers were dispatched urging Yazid to return swiftly before his father Muawiyah died.

According to this version, Muawiyah summoned al Dahhak ibn Qays al Fihri and Muslim ibn Uqbah al Murri, later notorious for his role in the massacre of al Harrah, and entrusted them with a sealed testament, instructing them,

“Convey my will to Yazid.”

¹ Al Dahhak ibn Qays al Fihri was a Syrian commander and staunch supporter of Muawiyah who fought against Imam Ali ^{a.s} at Siffin. Al Dahhak ibn Qays later held military and administrative authority in Damascus and was among the leading figures of the Umayyad court at Muawiyah's death, reportedly announcing his death and overseeing the transition to his son, Yazid. Following the deaths of Yazid and Muawiyah ibn Yazid, he sought influence in Syria during the ensuing power struggle, but was defeated and killed by Marwan ibn al Hakam at Marj Rahit near Damascus in 64 or 65 AH. Shia sources identify Al Dahhak ibn Qays among the adversaries of the Household of the Prophet, and it is reported that Imam Ali ^{a.s} would curse Al Dahhak ibn Qays by name in qunut.

Abu Mikhnaf further relates, through Hisham ibn Muhammad, from Abdul Malik ibn Nawfal ibn Musahiq ibn Abdullah ibn Makhramah, that when word of Muawiyah’s illness reached Yazid, he responded with verses filled with foreboding:

“The messenger came hastening with a letter,
And my heart trembled with fear at its message.”

Abdul Malik ibn Nawfal said to Yazid,
“Woe unto you! What is in your letter?”
Yazid replied, “The caliph has been struck with an affliction.”

According to these reports, Yazid did not return until three days after Muawiyah’s death, by which time he had already been buried.

Ibn al Athir records in al Kamil that when Yazid arrived, he went to his father’s grave and performed the funeral prayer over Muawiyah.

Because of differing accounts, some later historians suggested that Muawiyah may have issued two separate testaments, one delivered directly to Yazid, and another entrusted to his officials in Yazid’s absence, whose names appear in parallel reports.

With Muawiyah’s burial complete, authority passed formally to Yazid in Rajab of 60 AH. Outwardly, the succession appeared orderly, yet beneath the surface, deep political tensions remained. Al Tabari preserves multiple versions of Muawiyah’s final counsel.

In the account transmitted by Abu Mikhnaf, Muawiyah warned Yazid of four men who might oppose his rule: Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^[a.s], Abdullah ibn Umar, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, and Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Bakr. In another version, transmitted by Awanah ibn al Hakam, the name of Abdul Rahman is absent, as he had already died in 55 AH.

This latter testament, delivered through al Dahhak and Muslim ibn Uqbah, advised Yazid to exercise restraint and avoid bloodshed among Quraysh, urging him to proceed with patience rather than force.

Yet conciliatory counsel could not alter the course already set in motion. Muawiyah had long embedded control within the state through men he trusted and institutions he had shaped.

Among these figures was his Christian advisor Sarjun ibn Mansur al Rumi, a Melkite Christian official who served within the administrative apparatus of the early Umayyad state and remained influential after Muawiyah’s death.

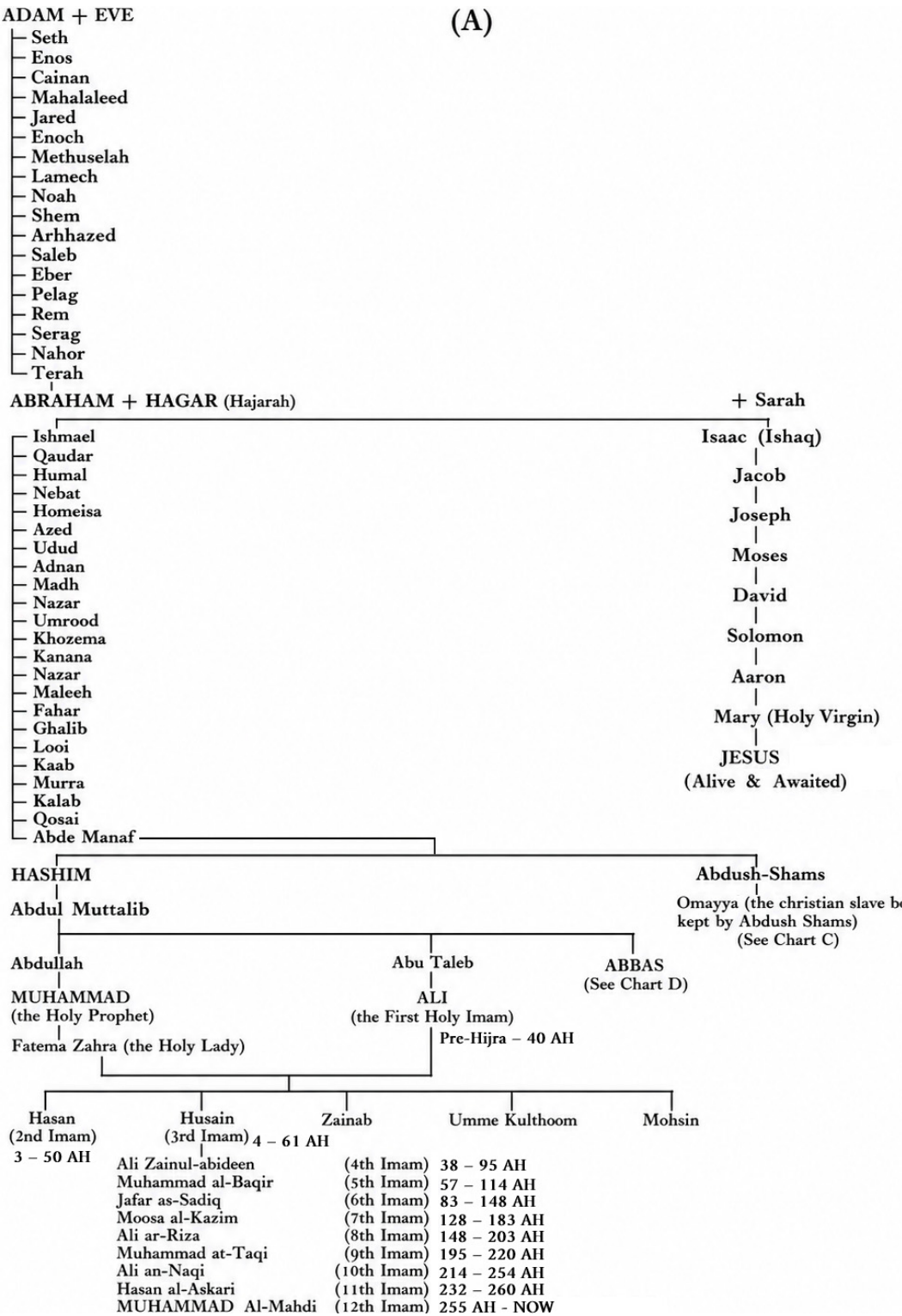
When unrest later arose under Yazid’s rule, it was through Sarjun’s counsel, and through the administrative machinery inherited intact from Muawiyah, that a decisive measure was taken: the appointment of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad over Kufa.

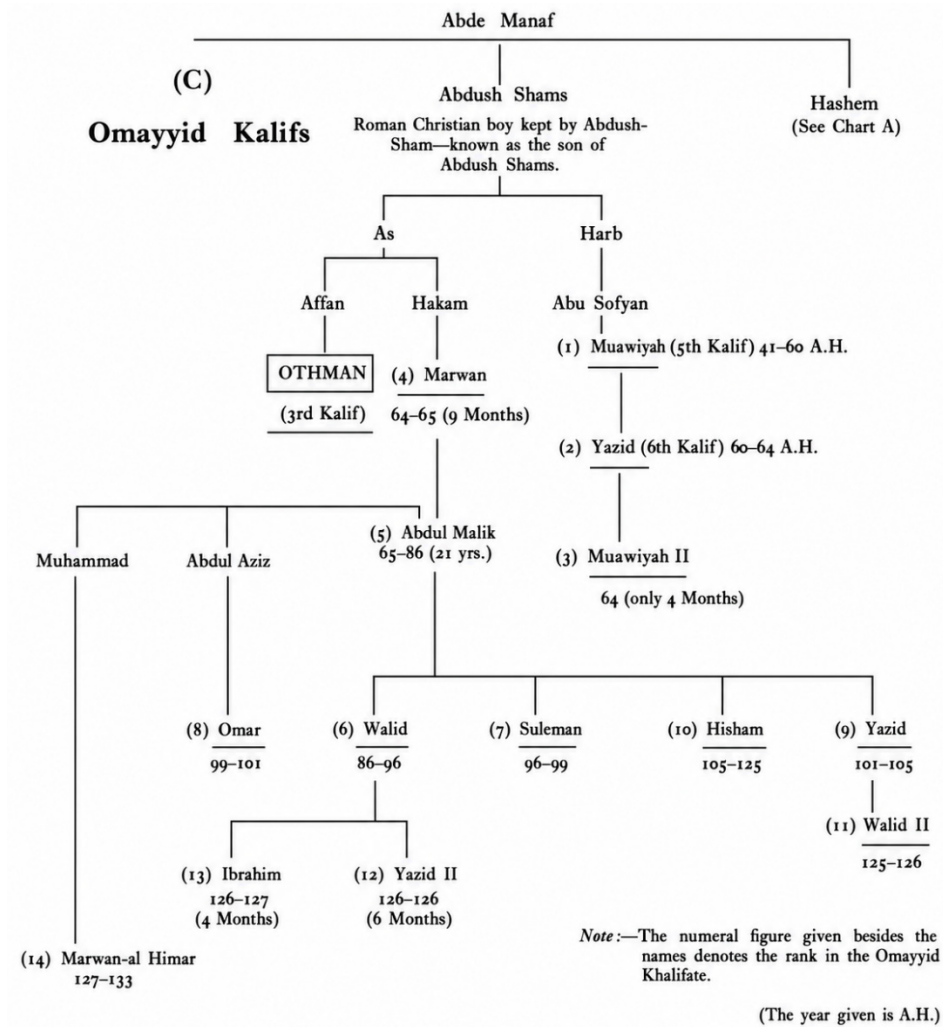
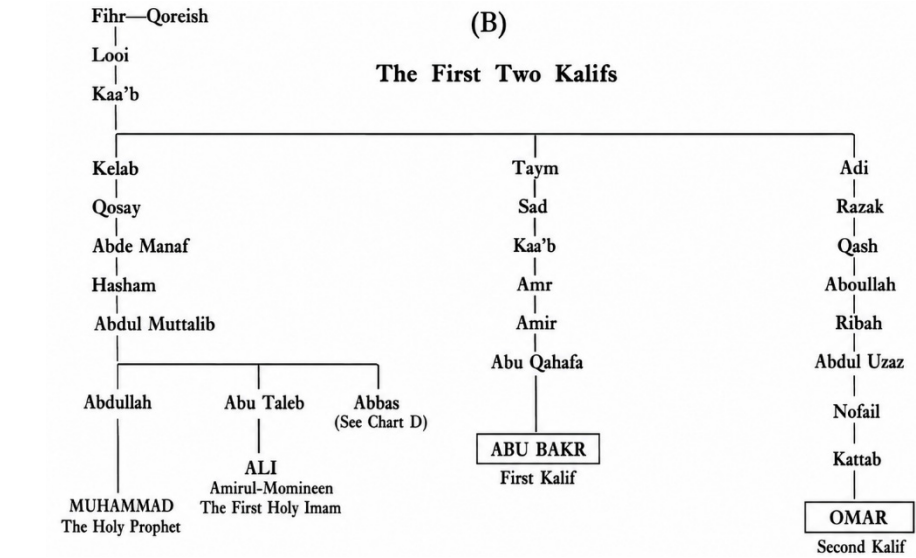
Although executed in Yazid’s name, this decision bore the unmistakable imprint of Muawiyah’s political legacy. It reflected the deep Umayyad mistrust of the Iraqis and the hardened resolve to confront opposition through coercion rather than reconciliation.

With this appointment, the groundwork was laid for events that would soon draw the Muslim world into catastrophe, carrying the consequences of Muawiyah’s rule far beyond his grave.

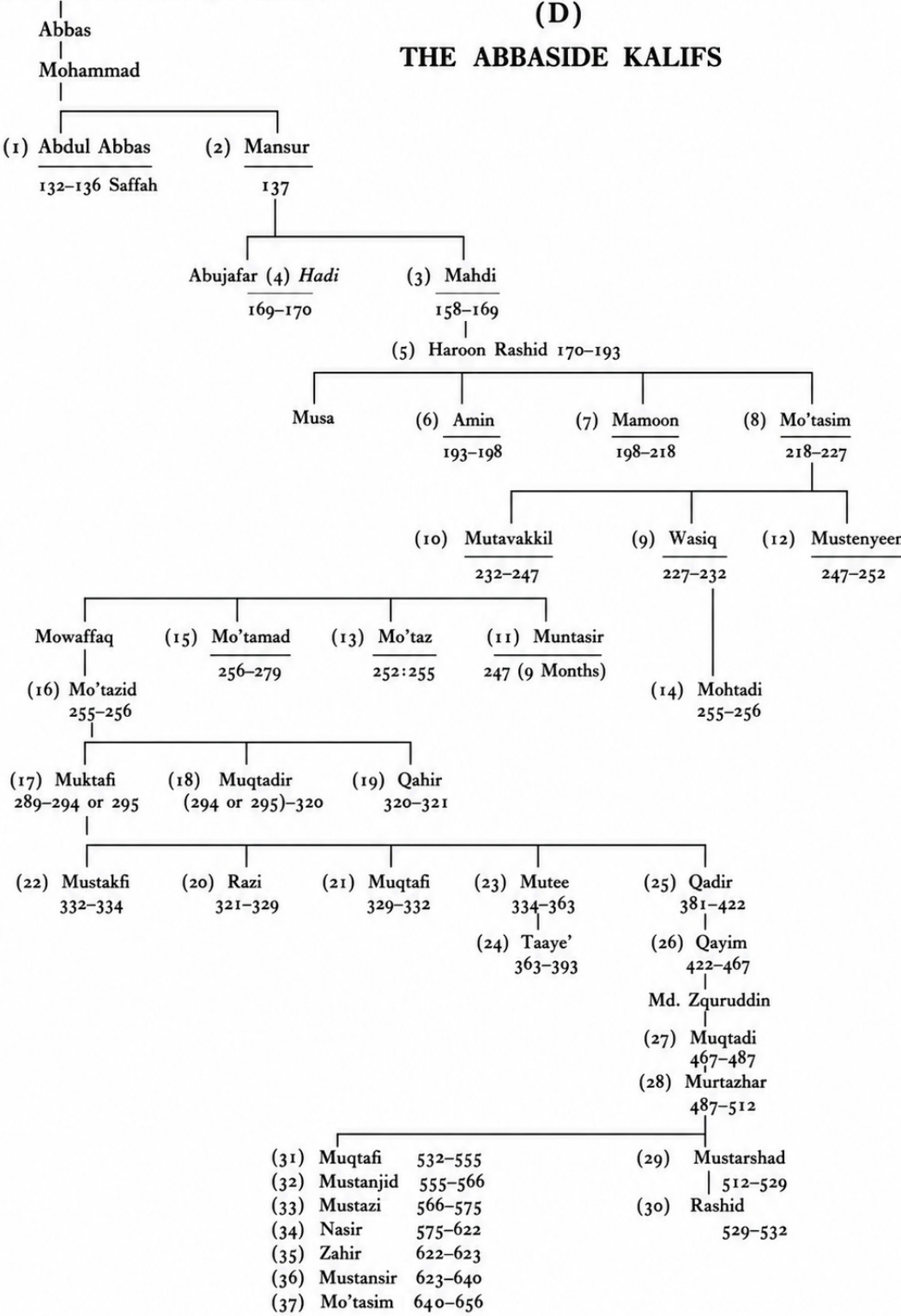
THE FAMILY TREES

The following genealogical charts are to assist the reader in understanding the familial, tribal, and political relationships that shaped the events of Karbala and early Islamic history.





ABDUL MUTTALIB (See Chart A)



THE LAND OF MEDINAH

THE FOUNDATIONS OF OPPRESSION

Yazid ibn Muawiyah ascended to the seat of power at the beginning of the month of Rajab in the sixtieth year after the Hijrah. The rise of Yazid was not sudden, nor was it the result of a spontaneous pledge from the Muslim community. Rather, it was the culmination of a calculated political design that had been unfolding for years.

Having been declared heir to the caliphate since approximately 56 AH, Yazid inherited authority from his father, Muawiyah, at a moment when the machinery of the Umayyad administration had already been firmly entrenched across the principal cities of the Islamic realm. By the time Yazid assumed power, the structure of governance that would sustain his rule was already in place. Provincial governors, military commanders, and tribal networks had been arranged in a manner that ensured loyalty to the Umayyad household.

What Yazid inherited, therefore, was not merely the title of caliph, but a fully operational system of political control designed to enforce his authority across the expanding territories of the Muslim world.

At the time of his accession, Yazid was approximately thirty-four years old. Tarikh al Ya'qubi states that his mother, Maysun bint Bahdal al Kalbi, belonged to a powerful tribal lineage whose alliances strengthened his position among the Syrian aristocracy and the tribal elites who formed the backbone of Umayyad power.

Nafasul Mahmoom records that his kunyah was Abu Khalid. He was described as being dark in complexion, with curly hair and a slender frame.

His eyes were deeply set, and his face bore the scars left by smallpox. Among his children from Fakhita bint Abi Hashim ibn Utbah ibn Rabiah were Muawiyah, Khalid, and Abu Sufyan, as well as Abdullah and Umar.

When Yazid assumed the caliphate, the most important urban centers of the Islamic world were already under the supervision of governors whose loyalties were tied to the Umayyad house. These cities formed the strategic pillars upon which imperial authority rested.

One such city was Medinah, the city of the Prophet ^{saws}.

At this time, it was governed by al Walid ibn Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan ², who had been appointed by Muawiyah in 58 AH ³.

² Tarikh al Tabari records that al Walid continued to appear in later events after the death of Yazid. When Muawiyah ibn Yazid died, al Dahhak ibn Qays called the people to pledge allegiance to ibn al Zubayr. Al Walid openly cursed ibn al Zubayr and was imprisoned by al Dahhak. Nafasul Mahmoom reports that he later led the funeral prayer over Muawiyah ibn Yazid before meeting a violent death after being stabbed and left bleeding.

³ During Muawiyah's reign (41-60 AH), Medinah was governed at different times by figures including Marwan ibn al Hakam and Sa'id ibn al As. By the end of Muawiyah's rule in 60 AH, al Walid ibn Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan held the governorship of Medinah. Upon Muawiyah's death in 60 AH, Yazid wrote to al Walid, commanding him to summon Imam al Hussein {a.s} and obtain his pledge of allegiance..

Though he occupied a position of immense responsibility in one of the most sacred cities of Islam, al Walid would come to be remembered not for firmness of leadership, but for hesitation and weakness. Particularly in the crucial matter of facing Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The inability of al Walid ibn Utbah to enforce Yazid's demand for allegiance would later cost him his position. In the month of Ramadan of that same year, Yazid dismissed al Walid ibn Utbah from office and replaced him with Amr ibn Said al Ashdaq.

The lineage of al Walid itself reflected a history of hostility toward the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}. His father, Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan had fought under Muawiyah at the Battle of Siffin against the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

Many members of this Umayyad clan had also fallen in battle at the hands of the Imam ^{a.s} during earlier conflicts, leaving behind a legacy of resentment and political rivalry that lingered within Umayyad circles against the divinely appointed Imams of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}.

Another crucial city under Yazid's administration was Mecca. Its governance was entrusted to Amr ibn Said ibn al Aas ⁴. Yazid assigned him not only authority over the city, but also the responsibility of overseeing the Hajj pilgrimage in the year 60 AH.

This appointment placed one of the most sacred centers of Islam under the authority of a man whose reputation for arrogance and ambition would soon become widely known.

The third major city was Kufa, a city whose history had long been intertwined with the supporters of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. Kufa was founded during the caliphate of Umar ibn al Khattab as a permanent garrison settlement for Muslim forces after the campaign in Iraq. Built around a central mosque and divided into tribal quarters, it became one of the principal military and political centers of the early Islamic state.

During this critical period, its governor was al Numan ibn Bashir al Ansari. Though al Numan had been counted among the Companions of the Prophet ^{saws}, his political conduct had been marked by hesitation and ambiguity.

Following the assassination of Uthman, al Numan refrained from pledging allegiance to Imam Ali ^{a.s}. Instead, al Numan aligned himself with Muawiyah and fought alongside him at the Battle of Siffin. In the years that followed, al Numan carried out raids on Muawiyah's behalf and was eventually appointed governor of Kufa in 58 AH.

Al Numan ibn Bashir continued to occupy this position through the death of Muawiyah and into the earliest phase of Yazid's rule. Al Numan proved unable to maintain firm control over Kufa. His hesitation in confronting unrest led Yazid to replace al Numan with Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

After the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, al Numan ibn Bashir would escort the noble Imam's ^{a.s} family back to Medinah.

⁴ Amr ibn Said ibn al Aas was known for arrogance and severity. When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} later sought sanctuary in Mecca, Amr was ordered to assassinate the Imam if the opportunity arose, even if the Imam were 'clinging to the curtains of the Kabah'. In 64 AH, Amr briefly emerged as a claimant to authority after the gathering of al Jabiyah, but was later assassinated in his palace by Abdul Malik ibn Marwan.

Finally, there was Basra, another of the great garrison cities of Iraq. At this decisive moment, authority there rested in the hands of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ⁵, a man whose political ascent exemplified the Umayyad reliance on force, surveillance, and dynastic patronage.

Born in 20 AH, Ubayd Allah was shaped by the influence of his father, Ziyad ibn Abihi, one of the most formidable administrators of the Umayyad state.

During Ziyad's lifetime, Ubayd Allah and his brothers were once seized by Busr ibn Artah and held as hostages in order to pressure their father. This experience left a lasting impression upon his character and political outlook.

In the year 60 AH, Yazid expanded Ubayd Allah's authority even further by appointing him governor of Kufa, while assigning Basra to the brother of Ubayd Allah, Uthman ibn Ziyad. Through this arrangement, both of the great Iraqi garrison cities effectively fell under the influence of the same household of Ziyad ibn Abihi.

This consolidation of authority would have profound consequences, for it was from Kufa, under the direct command of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, that the machinery of repression would soon be mobilized against Imam al Hussein ^{a.s.}.

At that time, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad was about forty years old.



⁵ Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, born in 20 AH and raised under the influence of his father Ziyad ibn Abihi, later became governor of Basra and Khurasan under Muawiyah. His authority expanded under Yazid, when Ubayd Allah was also appointed over Kufa. After the deaths of Yazid and Muawiyah ibn Yazid, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad briefly held power in Basra before fleeing to al Sham. Ubayd Allah later fought against the Tawwabun and the forces of al Mukhtar before being killed in battle in 67 AH.

THE LETTER OF YAZID TO AL WALID

With the death of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, Yazid ibn Muawiyah immediately turned his attention to the consolidation of power. The foremost concern of Yazid was the allegiance of those prominent figures who, during his father's lifetime, had openly resisted the controversial move to establish a hereditary succession.

Their continued refusal now posed a direct threat to the legitimacy of the rule of Yazid.

Among these figures were Imam al Hussein ^{a.s.}, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdullah ibn al Zubayr. Their opposition was not merely political; it carried immense moral and social weight. The most critical figure was Imam al Hussein ^{a.s.}, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and his open refusal to pledge allegiance could unravel the illusion of unanimity that the Umayyads had so carefully cultivated.

Determined to neutralize this danger without delay, Yazid acted swiftly.

Al Tabaqat al Kubra states that Yazid composed a letter to al Walid ibn Utbah, the governor of Medinah, and dispatched it with Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Uways al Amiri, though other reports name the messenger as Amir ibn Lu'ayy.

Tahdhib al Kamal states that the letter instructed al Walid to gather the people and take their oaths of allegiance, beginning with the leading members of Quraysh, and foremost among them, Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s.}.

Al Tabari quotes from Abu Mikhnaf that the first portion of the letter was formal, composed in the conventional diplomacy of the Umayyad court:

"In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. From Yazid, Commander of the Faithful, to al Walid ibn Utbah. Indeed, Muawiyah was a servant among the servants of Allah ^{AZJ}. Allah ^{AZJ} honored him, appointed him as caliph, endowed him with blessings, and established him in power. Muawiyah lived for a destined term and died at his appointed time. May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on him.

He lived praiseworthy and died righteous and pious. And Peace."

This introduction carefully cloaked the brutal reality of succession politics in religious rhetoric, portraying Muawiyah's death as the serene conclusion of a divinely sanctioned rule. Tarikh al Tabari states that this calm veneer concealed Yazid's true intent, which he conveyed separately in a second note, written on a small, narrow slip of paper, so slight that it was likened to 'the ear of a mouse'.

This was similarly preserved by al Akhbar al Tiwal:

"As for what follows: demand strongly from al Hussein, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdullah ibn al Zubayr their oaths of allegiance.

Be harsh with them, giving them no choice until they comply. And peace."

The meaning was unmistakable. Yazid had issued a clear order to employ coercion, to deal with these men firmly and without leniency, detaining them until they yielded in allegiance.

According to the report transmitted by Hisham ibn Muhammad from Abu Mikhnaf, as preserved by al Tabari, this was the full extent of the command.

It emphasized severity but did not explicitly authorize execution. This restrained version was also preserved by Sibt ibn al Jawzi and by Shaykh al Mufid in al Irshad, through both Hisham and al Mada'ini.

Other historians, however, record a far more explicit and brutal directive.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi reports that Yazid's letter contained the following command:

"If this letter of mine reaches you, then summon al Hussein ibn Ali and Abdullah ibn al Zubayr. Take their pledge of allegiance from them in my name. And if they refuse, then strike their necks and despatch their heads to me. And also compel the people to pledge allegiance. If any of them refuse, deal with them in the same manner as I have instructed you to deal with al Hussein ibn Ali and Abdullah ibn al Zubayr. And Peace."

Similarly, in the Maqatal of al Khawarizmi, citing Ibn Atham, reproduces the wording preserved by Tarikh al Tabari through Hisham, but adds the chilling clause:

"And whoever among them refuses you, strike his neck and send his head to me."

These divergent accounts reveal stark discrepancies in the historical record. Some limit Yazid's order to aggressive detainment, while others expose a darker reality in which execution was explicitly sanctioned.

Whether these differences stem from variation in transmission or deliberate softening of Yazid's command, what remains beyond dispute is the urgency and severity with which he moved to crush opposition, particularly that of the noble grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}.

It was now the early hours of Friday, the 26th of Rajab, 60 AH ⁶.

The letter reached al Walid ibn Utbah in Medinah, bearing immense historical weight, for with it began the final confrontation between Yazid ibn Muawiyah and the Imam ^{a.s}.

Al Walid was the son of Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan, the brother of Muawiyah, and he was the cousin of Yazid. Al Walid was overtaken with grief and publicly mourned the loss.

The announcement marked the end of an era. Muawiyah, the architect of Umayyad dominion, had passed away, and his son Yazid now sought to consolidate power in his stead. Yet al Walid's grief was not merely personal or ceremonial; it was compounded by the weight of the command that had arrived with Yazid's letter, the urgent and uncompromising demand that he extract allegiance from those who had resisted the pledge during Muawiyah's lifetime.

Troubled, al Walid turned to Marwan ibn al Hakam and summoned him to court.

This decision was not without tension. Relations between the two men were strained.

⁶ Although the exact timing of Yazid's correspondence is not specified, its logistical framework can be inferred from later reports. Tarikh al Tabari records that a messenger dispatched during the siege of Medinah completed a round trip to al Sham in approximately twenty-four nights, demonstrating the feasibility of such communication. This is supported by reports of Yazid's death in 64 AH, which occurred on 14 Rabi al Awwal, with news reaching Medinah in early Rabi al Akhir, around sixteen days later. These accounts reflect the relative speed and efficiency of Umayyad communication in matters of political importance to maintain their rulership and keep their governors informed.

When al Walid had first assumed the governorship of Medinah, Marwan came to him reluctantly. Observing this hesitation, al Walid publicly insulted Marwan before his companions. Marwan responded by withdrawing and severing relations, leaving an unhealed rift between them. Yet the gravity of Yazid's command compelled al Walid to set aside personal grievances. Now, faced with the delicate task of dealing with the Imam ^{a.s}, and others as Ibn al Zubayr and Ibn Umar, al Walid sought counsel from the very man he had previously alienated. The urgency of Yazid's demand left no room for personal discord.

Marwan ibn al Hakam ⁷, now summoned once more into Umayyad service, was a figure deeply entangled in the regime's most controversial episodes.

The Messenger of Allah ^{saws} had expelled both Marwan and his father, al Hakam ibn al As, from Medinah for their mockery and offenses.

Yet under the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan, Marwan's fortunes were dramatically reversed. Uthman drew him close, married him to his daughter Na'ila, and enriched him with vast sums, including three hundred qintars of gold from the revenues of Africa, wealth that enabled Marwan to acquire the fertile region later known as the 'River of Marwan'.

Uthman granted him further sums, and so dominant did Marwan's influence become over Uthman that Imam Ali ^{a.s} remarked that Uthman 'was led wherever Marwan wished'.

Marwan ibn al Hakam career was marked by duplicity and bloodshed. During the siege that ended in Uthman's assassination, he was struck by a sword on the collarbone.

As his attackers moved to finish Marwan, his nursemaid shielded him with her body, crying that if they intended to kill him, Marwan was already dead, and if they wished only to mutilate him, it was disgraceful. Her plea spared the life of Marwan.

Marwan ibn al Hakam later participated in the Battle of the Camel, where he reportedly called the adhan for both sides, and it was Marwan who fired the arrow that killed Talha ibn Ubayd Allah. Wounded himself, Marwan fled the battlefield and was granted refuge by Malik ibn Masma al Ghazari. Upon recovery, he joined Muawiyah in Syria and became an indispensable figure within the Umayyad court.

After the Year of Unity, Muawiyah appointed Marwan as governor of Medinah. His rule was intermittent: Marwan was removed in 49 AH, reinstated in 54 AH, and dismissed again in 57 or 58 AH in favor of al Walid ibn Utbah, a decision that deepened Marwan's resentment toward his successor. Thus, as calm settled over Medinah, the machinery of Umayyad power turned once more, now upon the household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

⁷ Marwan was in Damascus when the heads and captives were presented before Yazid. During al Harra in 62 AH, he remained in Medinah and appealed for support, leading to the dispatch of Muslim ibn Uqbah. As the Syrian army advanced, the people of Medinah revolted, besieged the Umayyads, around a thousand, in Marwan's house, and expelled them. Marwan then entrusted his family to Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, who escorted them safely to Yanbu, reflecting the moral conduct of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} even toward their opponents. After Yazid's death, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr appointed his brother Ubaydah as governor of Medinah in 64 AH and expelled the Umayyads to al Sham, where Marwan was proclaimed caliph. The rule of Marwan was brief, ending with his death in Ramadan 65 AH.

THE CONSULTATION OF AL WALID AND MARWAN

Marwan ibn al Hakam hurried through the streets toward the governor's palace, guards flanking him on either side. Marwan was ushered in without delay, and once inside, the doors were shut firmly behind them.

Within, al Walid ibn Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan remained absorbed in the contents of a letter from Damascus, struck by the weight of its implications. Tarikh al Tabari states that the messenger had taken approximately twelve days to travel from al Sham. The letter announced the death of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan and the accession of Yazid to the caliphate.

Upon reading it, al Walid uttered the words of submission to the divine decree: "Surely we belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him we shall return."

al Walid then prayed for the mercy of Allah ^{AZJ} upon the deceased Muawiyah.

Marwan too recited, "Surely we belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him we shall return," and prayed for Muawiyah.

Al Walid then turned to him and asked, "What is your opinion on how to proceed?"

The news marked the beginning of a perilous political transition, a shift whose tremors would be felt most acutely in Medinah. It was here that Yazid sought to secure his rule, for within the city were figures whose allegiance Yazid needed the most.

Marwan, seasoned in politics and ruthless in judgment, spoke without hesitation. Marwan was well aware of the precariousness of Yazid's claim and of the men whose defiance could not be easily contained, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr and others among Quraysh. Yet most notable among them all was Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari records that Marwan's words were sharp and calculated. He said:

"I see that you should summon them at once and demand their pledge of allegiance and obedience. If they comply, accept it from them and let them be.

But if they refuse, then seize them and strike their necks before word of Muawiyah's death spreads. For once they learn about the death of Muawiyah, each of them will scatter, stir opposition and revolt, and claim authority for himself."

These words are likewise recorded in al Kamil fi al Tarikh.

Al Malhuf states that al Walid pressed Marwan specifically about how to approach this matter towards Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Marwan's response was colder still:

"Al Hussein will not accept. If I were in your place, I would strike his neck instead."

At these words, al Walid trembled. His fears were confirmed.

Muthir al Ahzan states that, in anguish, al Walid muttered,

"I wish I were someone not worth mentioning and never born."

Yet despite his dread, the moment could not be averted, and al Walid commanded that the Imam ^{a.s} be summoned immediately to his court.

This exchange, transmitted by Abu Mikhnaf through Hisham ibn Muhammad and preserved by historians such as al Khwarizmi, exposes more than a political strategy.

It reveals the deep anxiety of the Umayyad establishment when confronted with moral authority they could neither coerce nor silence.

Above all, it lays bare their fear of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

The task before al Walid was immense. He stood struggling to contain the ambition, fear, and trepidation that lay beneath the outward formality of office.

At that moment, he found himself suspended between loyalty to his kinsman Yazid, the dread of revolt erupting in Medinah, and the daunting knowledge of whom he was about to confront, a man whose righteousness could not be extinguished with mere threats.



THE SUMMONS AT THE DEAD OF NIGHT

It was still the early hours of Friday, the 26th of Rajab, 60 AH, when Medinah stirred beneath a silence broken by an unusual summons.

At an hour when the governor was not accustomed to receiving visitors, al Walid ibn Utbah dispatched an envoy through the darkened streets of the city.

Al Tabari states that the man chosen for this task was Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Uthman ⁸, a callow youth scarcely beyond adolescence. His father, Amr, was the son of the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan. The instruction to Abdullah ibn Amr was precise: to summon before the governor two of the most consequential men of Medinah, Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}, the beloved grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, the ambitious rival of the Umayyads whose eyes were fixed upon power.

Abdullah ibn Amr found them together, seated in the Mosque of the Prophet ^{saws}, engaged in quiet discourse. Approaching them with hurried steps, Abdullah ibn Amr conveyed the terse order of al Walid: “The governor summons you.”

The hour itself rendered the message ominous; such business was not conducted at that time, nor were such summons ordinarily issued.

They replied with measured calm, “You go on, we are coming just now.”

When the envoy withdrew, unease surfaced at once. Tarikh al Tabari states that Ibn al Zubayr turned swiftly to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, concern etched upon his face.

“Why do you think al Walid has called us at such an hour,” he asked,

“when he does not usually sit with people?”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, “I think that their tyrant has died, and al Walid has summoned us to seize from us the pledge of allegiance before the news spreads among the people.”

Ibn al Zubayr pondered for a moment and then nodded in assent, as recorded by al Akhbar al Tiwal. “I do not think otherwise. It can only be this.”

Another report, preserved by Ibn Nima al Hilli in Muthir al Ahzan, adds further depth to the Imam’s ^{a.s} certainty. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} disclosed a vision that already weighed upon his heart: “I think their tyrant has perished, for last night I saw in a dream that the pulpit of Muawiyah lay overturned, and his house was aflame.”

Ibn al Zubayr remained seated, absorbed in the implications of this news, already calculating how best to secure his own safety and advance his path to power.

Al Tabari states that Ibn al Zubayr pressed the Imam ^{a.s} again: “So, what will you do?”

The Imam ^{a.s} declared with conviction, “I will gather my young men at once. When I reach the door of al Walid, I will keep them waiting there. Then I will go in to him, alone.”

⁸ Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Uthman, his mother was Umm Amr, daughter of Jundub of the Azd tribe, though some accounts claimed she belonged to the tribe of Daws. Abdullah lived on until 96 AH, known by the nickname al Mutarrif, and would one day suffer disgrace during the brutal episode of al Harra, when Muslim ibn Uqbah accused Abdullah ibn Amr of disloyalty to the Umayyads and plucked his beard.

Ibn al Zubayr warned, “I fear for you if you enter.”

Yet al Imamah wa al Siyasah records the Imam’s ^{a.s} firm reply: “I would not go to al Walid if I was not capable of rejecting his demand of the oath of allegiance.”

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah states that the Imam ^{a.s} rose and began to gather his family members and trusted companions, the youths of his household and his bondsmen, men loyal to the truth he embodied. Together, they walked deliberately to the residence of al Walid.

At the entrance, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} paused and turned to them. “I am going in,”

The Imam ^{a.s} instructed. “If I call out to you, or you hear his voice raised, then all of you rush your way in to me. Otherwise, do not leave your place until I come out to you.”

Ibn Shahr Ashub similarly relates that the Imam ^{a.s} further instructed the members of his household: “When I go in to al Walid, and we begin to converse and dispute with one another, remain outside the door. If you hear shouts or raised voices, then rush into the house, but do not kill anyone, nor engage in conflict.”

Shaykh al Mufid conveys the same in al Irshad, reporting the Imam’s ^{a.s} words:

“Indeed, al Walid has summoned me at this time, and I do not feel safe that he may impose something upon me to which I cannot consent, and al Walid is not to be trusted. So be with me; when I enter upon him, sit at the door.

If you hear my voice raised, then enter upon al Walid to prevent him from harming me.”

According to Ibn Shahr Ashub, al Walid had also summoned Ibn al Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Bakr while they were seated next to the grave of the Prophet ^{saws}. Abdul Rahman and Abdullah said, “We are going home and locking our doors.” Ibn al Zubayr said, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, I will never give Yazid my oath of allegiance.”

Al Manaqib states that it was only Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} who replied with solemn calm,

“I must go and see al Walid, and hear what he has to say.”

This moment, seemingly quiet and procedural, was in truth charged with grave danger. Al Baladhuri states in Ansab al Ashraf that al Walid’s request was no mere courtesy, but a calculated effort to extract allegiance for Yazid before the death of Muawiyah became public knowledge. Ansab al Ashraf further relates that the claim of Yazid was yet insecure, especially in the Hijaz, where the figure of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood as the towering symbol of prophetic legitimacy. The very timing of the summons revealed its urgency.

Though Abu Mikhnaf does not specify the hour, the broader context makes clear that it was early on Friday morning. Thus, the dual summons laid bare the governor’s intent: to secure from them a pledge of allegiance in secrecy before the people learned of Muawiyah’s death. But while Ibn al Zubayr evaded and withdrew, the Imam ^{a.s} confronted the summons directly and went to al Walid, flanked by his protectors and his trust in his Lord ^{AZJ}.

The palace gates were opened for the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} entered alone. His noble footsteps crossed the courtyard, and his presence filled the palace. His companions remained at the entrance, listening intently, for the Imam ^{a.s} had ventured alone into the dangerous enclosure of the enemy.

THE SUMMONS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

It was now Friday night, marking the beginning of Saturday, the 27th of Rajab, 60 AH.

Al Walid ibn Utbah, governor of Medinah, had ordered summons to three men whose responses would determine the course of history: Imam al Hussein ibn Ali {a.s}, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, and Abdullah ibn Umar. The summons went out from the governor's residence, and the destinies of these three men began to diverge.

Abu Mikhnaf states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} came to the residence of al Walid ibn Utbah sought permission to enter, and it was granted. When the Imam {a.s} entered the hall, he saw that Marwan ibn al Hakam was already present in the court.

Choosing conciliation, the Imam {a.s} addressed them gently, saying, "Reconciliation is better than severance. May Allah {AZJ} set right the relations between you." Neither man responded.

Their silence hung in the air, heavy, watchful, and filled with hidden intent.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} greeted them with formal salutations and took his seat. Al Irshad states that al Walid then read aloud the letter of Yazid he had received, announcing the death of Muawiyah and the instruction therein calling the Imam {a.s} to pledge allegiance to Yazid.

Upon hearing this, the Imam {a.s} sighed deeply and uttered with composed gravity, "Indeed we belong to Allah {AZJ}, and to Him do we return."

Al Futuh records that al Walid then made explicit the true purpose of the summons,

"I have called you, O Hussein, so that you may give your oath of allegiance, for the people have accepted Yazid to be the Caliph."

According to al Khawarizmi, the voice of the Imam {a.s} was solemn and steady, its calm cutting through the stillness of the room as he replied directly,

"As for what you have asked me regarding allegiance, verily a man like me does not give his oath of allegiance in private. I prefer that it be given in public, in the presence of the people.

Tomorrow, when you ask the people for their oaths of allegiance, ask for mine at the same time, so that our affairs are conducted together."

Al Walid accepted this response and said, "O Aba Abdillah! You have spoken well and replied with an answer that is worthy of you, and one that I had expected from someone like you. You may depart, with the blessings of Allah {AZJ}. I will see you tomorrow with the people."

In this, al Walid sought to avoid a direct confrontation.

Al Irshad further relates that the Imam {a.s} added,

"Then reflect upon it through the night and see what you decide."

At this point, al Futuh states, Marwan could no longer restrain himself. Marwan turned sharply to al Walid and exclaimed,

"By Allah {AZJ}, if al Hussein leaves you at this moment without pledging allegiance, you will never have power over him again until there is much bloodshed between you and him! Detain the man and do not let him leave until he pledges allegiance, or you strike his neck!"

The atmosphere changed instantly. This was no longer political pressure but a direct threat to the life of the Imam {a.s}.

Al Irshad states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} rose abruptly, his voice ringing with fearless anger:

"Woe be upon you, O son of the blue-eyed woman! Do you order my neck to be struck?! You are bluffing, by Allah {AZJ}, and you transgress!"⁹

Ibn Shahr Ashub states that the Imam {a.s} spoke clearly,

"I am not a man who would give his oath of allegiance to Yazid!"

Marwan then placed his hand upon his sword and demanded angrily,

"Give your oath of allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful!"

The Imam {a.s} replied, "Woe to you! Verily, you have attributed falsehood to the believers. Who has made Yazid the Commander of the Faithful?!"

Yet the confrontation did not end there. Al Futuh relates that the Imam {a.s}, standing firm, turned again to al Walid and declared: "We are the household of Prophethood {saws}, the place of the Messenger {saws}, the place where angels come and go, and the descent of mercy! Through us, Allah {AZJ} began His {AZJ} affair, and through us Allah {AZJ} ended it.

And Yazid is a man who has transgressed the bounds of Allah {AZJ}. He is a drinker of alcohol, a murderer of innocents, and an open debaucher; people like me do not give allegiance to people like him!

Rather, we shall see tomorrow, and you shall also. We shall wait, and you shall as well, to learn who is more deserving of the caliphate and the oath of allegiance!"

Bihar al Anwar relates that the Imam {a.s} continued,

"I shall therefore speak by the permission of Allah {AZJ}, the Mighty and Majestic.

I heard my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah {saws}, say: 'The caliphate is forbidden to the sons of Abu Sufyan.' How then can the People of the Household give allegiance when the Messenger of Allah {saws} has spoken thus concerning them?"

The situation deteriorated further. Marwan, his unsheathed sword trembling in his hand, again turned to al Walid and urged, "Order your swordsmen to smite his neck before he can escape! The responsibility of his blood will be upon my neck!"

Al Futuh records that the Imam {a.s}, incensed by Marwan's audacity, responded, "By Allah {AZJ}! If anyone were to attempt this against me, I would soak the ground with his blood before he could do so! If you wish, then strike my neck, if you have the courage!"

Ibn Shahr Ashub states that voices rose and commotion erupted at the entrance.

In accordance with the prior instruction of the Imam {a.s}, nineteen brave men from among the Hashemites rushed in with weapons drawn.

⁹ The epithet used by Imam al Hussein {a.s}, "son of al Zarqa," was not a baseless reproach. It referred to al Warqa', the daughter of Muhibb, known for her public immorality and mentioned in sources such as al Kamil. The expression echoes the Qur'anic description of al Walid ibn al Mughirah: "brute, and on top of all that, an illegitimate child" (Q68:13). In Arabic, zanim denotes one falsely ascribed in lineage, attached to a house not his own.

Having dismissed Marwan’s threats, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} left the governor’s residence. The Imam ^{a.s} passed by his companions, and together they returned from the palace.

Rawdat al Wa'izin and al Irshad similarly relate that, before the echo of the Imam’s ^{a.s} voice had faded, those waiting outside perceived the firmness of his tone and stormed into the hall with swords drawn. Yet Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} emerged calmly and instructed them to return to their homes. Tarikh al Tabari narrates, through Hisham ibn Muhammad from Abu Mikhnaf, that after the Imam ^{a.s} had departed, Marwan turned bitterly to al Walid and said, “You disobeyed me! By Allah ^{AZJ}, you will never again have such control over al Hussein!”

This is likewise recorded by al Khawarizmi. Al Walid replied with distress,

“Woe to someone other than you, O Marwan! You have chosen for me a path that leads to the destruction of my religion. By Allah ^{AZJ}, I would not wish to have everything over which the sun rises and sets from the wealth of this world if it meant that I had killed al Hussein!” ¹⁰

Al Sibt ibn al Jawzi narrates a shorter version of this exchange, in which al Walid said, “Glory be to Allah ^{AZJ}! Shall I kill al Hussein simply because he said, ‘I will not pledge allegiance’?! By Allah ^{AZJ}! I do not think that a person who will be held accountable for the blood of al Hussein will have a light scale of deeds with Allah ^{AZJ} on the Day of Judgment.”

Tarikh al Tabari records that Marwan responded tersely,

“If this is your opinion, then you have done the right thing.”

Yet even in that concession there was no warmth, only bitterness that his counsel had been disregarded. After this exchange in the court of Medinah, Bihar al Anwar states that al Walid called for his scribe and wrote to Yazid ibn Muawiyah:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

To the servant of Allah ^{AZJ}, Yazid, the commander of the faithful, from Walid ibn Utbah ibn Abu Sufyan. As for what follows: al Hussein ibn Ali does not consider the caliphate to belong to you, nor will he pledge allegiance. What is your view regarding his matter? And Peace.”

Shaykh al Mufid records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} spent that night in his home. It was the night before the day of Saturday. Thus ended the first encounter between the heir of Prophethood and the agents of a rule that sought legitimacy through coercion.

The refusal of the Imam ^{a.s} was delivered with calm and conviction.

As the Imam ^{a.s} left the governor’s hall, the city of Medinah was suspended in uneasy silence. Beyond the governor’s walls, others who had received the same summons would soon choose their own paths.

“I bear witness that you certainly established prayer, gave alms, enjoined good, forbade evil and transgression, obeyed Allah ^{AZJ}, never disobeyed Allah ^{AZJ}, and held fast to Allah ^{AZJ} and to His ^{AZJ} rope. Then, you pleased Allah ^{AZJ}, held Allah ^{AZJ} in awe, were attentive towards Allah ^{AZJ}, and were responsive to Allah ^{AZJ}. ” Ziyarat Nahiya

¹⁰ Bihar al Anwar, vol 44 states that al Walid said this as a form of rhetorical deference to Marwan, “I do not say ‘woe to you,’ but to someone other than you”, as relations between there were already strained.

THE POSITION OF ABDULLAH IBN AL ZUBAYR

As Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s} returned safely to his home following his confrontation with al Walid, the attention of the governor of Medinah and his men shifted elsewhere.

Another of those summoned was Abdullah ibn al Zubayr. He had not yet appeared, and his absence quickly became a matter of urgency.

When the initial summons reached Ibn al Zubayr, he responded with delay rather than refusal. “I will come to you now,” he said; yet instead of presenting himself, Ibn al Zubayr withdrew to his house and concealed himself there.

Al Walid, seeing that Ibn al Zubayr had not arrived, sent for him again. His messengers discovered that Ibn al Zubayr had gathered his companions and was taking precautions.

Each time, Ibn al Zubayr stalled them with assurances.

“Do not rush me,” he said. “I will come to you. Give me time.”

Thus, the entire day and the early part of the evening passed with his repeated assurances, while Ibn al Zubayr remained in hiding.

As the hours passed, it became clear that Ibn al Zubayr was not preparing to comply.

Abu Mikhnaf states that al Walid now grew frustrated and sent his personal bondsmen to confront Ibn al Zubayr more forcefully.

They shouted insults at his door and threatened Ibn al Zubayr openly, saying,

“O son of the soothsayer woman!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, you will go to the governor, or he will kill you!”

Alarmed by the pressure and the increasing number of envoys, Ibn al Zubayr replied, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, I have grown suspicious due to the many messengers and the successive arrival of these men. Do not rush me until I send someone to the governor who can bring me his opinion and his command.”

Ibn al Zubayr then sent his brother, Jafar ibn al Zubayr, to al Walid as his emissary.

When Jafar ibn al Zubayr arrived, he pleaded with the governor,

“May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you! Cease from pressuring Abdullah, for you have alarmed and frightened him with your many messengers. He will come to you tomorrow, Allah ^{AZJ} willing, so order your messengers to withdraw from us.”

Al Walid accepted this request and recalled his envoys.

It was now the depth of night on Saturday, the 28th of Rajab, 60 AH.

Al Irshad states that it was at this very time that Abdullah ibn al Zubayr quietly slipped away from Medinah. Ibn al Zubayr departed in secrecy, accompanied only by his brother Jafar and some retainers. Ibn al Zubayr took the road of al Far’, deliberately avoiding the main routes in fear of pursuit, and instead made his way along lesser-known paths.

While travelling together, Jafar ibn al Zubayr recited a verse by Sabrah al Hanzali:

“All the sons of one mother will end the night,

And none of ‘their’ descendants will remain but one.”

Ibn al Zubayr turned to Jafar sharply and said,
“Glory be to Allah ^{AZJ}! What did you intend by what you just recited?”

Jafar replied quickly,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, my brother, I did not intend anything that you would dislike.”

Yet Ibn al Zubayr was visibly unsettled and said,

“That is more hateful to me, that it came from your tongue unintentionally.”

Ibn al Zubayr took the verse as an ill omen, for in the Arab mind an unintended utterance at such a moment was feared as fate speaking without intent. Ibn al Zubayr was already acutely aware that he stood on the brink of rebellion, pursuit, and possible death, the very fate Ibn al Zubayr had left for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to face when he fled without informing anyone.

Back in Medinah, when dawn came, al Walid again sent men to summon Ibn al Zubayr. However, al Walid had been deceived; Ibn al Zubayr had slipped from his grasp.

Marwan, upon hearing this, counselled al Walid,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! Ibn al Zubayr has headed straight to Mecca! So send men after him!”

It is narrated in Al Irshad that al Walid later dispatched eighty horsemen from among the freedmen of the Banu Umayyah to pursue Ibn al Zubayr, but they were unable to locate him or Jafar, and the pursuit failed. The horsemen returned without success.

Ibn al Zubayr and his brother Jafar would continue on until they would eventually reach Mecca, where Amr ibn Sa'id would be serving as the Umayyad governor.

Upon entering the sanctuary, Ibn al Zubayr would seek to keep away from the brewing political turmoil and declare,

“I am only seeking sanctuary (in Mecca).”

And accordingly in Mecca, Ibn al Zubayr intentionally kept himself apart. It is reported that Ibn al Zubayr would not join the Meccan people in their congregational prayers, nor did he participate with them in the rites of ‘ifadah’.

Instead, Ibn al Zubayr and his companions would pray and descend separately, remaining withdrawn from the community.

Abu Mikhnaḥ states that the flight of Ibn al Zubayr brought greater spotlight upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, as Ibn al Zubayr calculatedly escaped while leaving the Imam ^{a.s} as the focal point of Umayyad attention.

The Imam ^{a.s} would remain steadfast in Medinah for another day, refusing to be hurried. Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah states that every time that al Walid sent for the Imam ^{a.s}, such as again at sunset the following day, the Imam ^{a.s} replied,

“Wait until morning; then you will see, and we shall see.”

Thus, while the governor’s attention was consumed by the flight of Ibn al Zubayr, Medinah remained in a state of uncertainty.

The focus of the authorities had shifted outward in search of Ibn al Zubayr, and in that distraction, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was making his own preparations to depart the city.

THE POSITION OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAR

As Medinah stood on the brink of transformation, a third response to the Umayyad summons quietly unfolded. Neither defiant nor ambitious, Abdullah ibn Umar regarded the matter with his customary restraint. Abdullah ibn Umar neither openly refused like Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}, nor did he flee like Abdullah ibn al Zubayr.

When the news of Muawiyah’s death became widespread across the Hijaz, al Walid ibn Utbah, the governor of Medinah, summoned Abdullah ibn Umar and presented him with the same demand: “Give allegiance to Yazid.”

Ibn Umar replied, “If the people give allegiance, I will also give allegiance.”

A man in the gathering pressed Abdullah ibn Umar, saying,

“What is preventing you from giving allegiance?”

Do you wish for the people to differ among themselves, to fight one another and perish, and then, when their suffering becomes severe, they say:

‘Go to Abdullah ibn Umar, none remains but him, so let us pledge allegiance to him?’”

Hisham ibn Muhammad relates from Abu Mikhnaḥ that Ibn Umar replied:

“I do not wish for them to fight, nor to differ, nor to perish.

But if the people give allegiance and I am the last remaining, then I will give allegiance.”

Seeing no threat in his words, the Umayyad authorities left Ibn Umar without pressure.

Alternatively, al Waqidi states that Abdullah ibn Umar was not in al Medinah at the time of Muawiyah’s death. According to his account, Ibn Umar was on the Meccan road, and this pivotal encounter took place there.

al Sibṭ also narrates a similar version, stating that when Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and Ibn al Zubayr were summoned and both departed Medinah during those nights, Ibn Umar arrived afterward and remained in the city for several days.

Only after pledges of allegiance from the various regions had been received did he step forward and give his own allegiance to Yazid.

Thus, events unfolded in the manner Muawiyah had anticipated and as Marwan had urged al Walid to secure: those whose opposition threatened legitimacy were to be neutralised swiftly, while those who posed no danger could be left to time and circumstance.

In Ibn Umar’s caution there was safety and no resistance; in Ibn al Zubayr’s flight there was ambition, yet without sacrifice; and in Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, there stood a refusal that neither sought power nor evaded danger.

With these three paths now revealed, the moral contour of the Ummah had begun to shift. Medinah, once the cradle of revelation, had become a place where conscience could no longer breathe freely.

The situation in Medinah had become untenable, and the honourable Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s} now prepared to leave the city of his grandfather ^{saws}.

THE NIGHT OF FAREWELL

THE PREPARATIONS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

By the following day, Medinah stirred with the spread of news that Abdullah ibn al Zubayr had escaped the governor’s grasp. Al Walid’s men, exhausted by their search and pursuit, scoured the outskirts of the city in vain.

Throughout the day of Saturday and into the night of Sunday that followed, the authorities remained preoccupied, their attention fixed upon the fugitive Ibn al Zubayr.

In that interval of uneasy quiet, when Medinah seemed to pause between uncertainty and anticipation, Imam al Hussein {a.s} stepped out into the streets, his course set toward the mosque of the Prophet {saws}.

Al Malhuf states that on that same morning, the Imam {a.s} went out to inquire about the state of affairs among the people, seeking to understand what had become known.

As he walked, the Imam {a.s} encountered Marwan ibn al Hakam.

Marwan approached him and said,

“O Aba Abdillah, I am indeed your well-wisher.

Listen to my advice so that you may be rightly guided.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} said,

“And what is that? Speak, so that I may hear.”

Marwan then said,

“Give your oath of allegiance to Yazid, the commander of the faithful, for it would be better for you in this world and the next.”

The Imam {a.s} responded with the verse,

“*Indeed we belong to Allah {AZJ}, and indeed to Him we return*” (Q2:156).

If the Muslim nation is made to accept the authority of a man like Yazid ibn Muawiyah, then Islam is to be bid farewell.”

Muthir al Ahzan reports that the exchange continued for some time. Marwan ibn al Hakam, unable to answer what had been said and angered by the clarity of the Imam’s {a.s} rebuke, grew visibly agitated. In the end, Marwan turned away and departed in fury.

As the sun set on Saturday, the 28th of Rajab, 60 AH, the city entered the night of Sunday, the 29th of Rajab.

Al Walid dispatched numerous men to summon Imam al Hussein {a.s} to give the oath of allegiance to Yazid ibn Muawiyah. Rawdat al Wa'izin records that when they came before him, the Imam {a.s} addressed them calmly yet decisively, saying again,

“Wait until the morning; then you shall see, and we shall also see.”

The words of Imam {a.s} left no room for further pressure.

The men withdrew and refrained from confronting the Imam {a.s} on that night of Sunday.

Al Sibt relates that while the attention of the governor alWalid and his men remained consumed by the flight of Ibn al Zubayr, few noticed that the grandson of the Prophet {saws} was quietly preparing his household.

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah states that on the night following the departure of Ibn al Zubayr, Imam al Hussein {a.s} had willed to depart with his household and the young men of Banu Hashim. No one from his family would remain behind except Muhammad ibn Ali, known as al Hanafiyyah.

It was now the night of Sunday, the 29th of Rajab, 60 AH.

Medinah lay in uneasy quiet, while the house of Imam al Hussein {a.s} stood poised for departure. As the city slept, his brother Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah came to him, and between them passed the final counsel of kinship, spoken beneath the shadow of an approaching separation.

The news of what had transpired in the court of al Walid had already reached Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah ¹¹. Muhammad ibn Ali was the son of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s} through Lady Khawla bint Jafar ibn Qays of the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa’il.

Troubled by what he had learned, al Hanafiyyah hastened to his noble brother Imam al Hussein {a.s}, his heart weighed down with both brotherly concern and the gravity of the unfolding events in Medinah.

Al Irshad states that al Hanafiyyah spoke with the tenderness of kinship and sincere counsel.

“O my brother,” he said, “you are the most beloved of people to me and the dearest. I am not one to give advice, for you are more entitled to do that.

However, withhold your oath of allegiance from Yazid ibn Muawiyah and stay away from the townships as far as you can.

Then send your envoys to the people and call them to join you.

If they obey you and pledge their allegiance to you, then praise Allah {AZJ} for that; but if they unite behind someone else, Allah {AZJ} will not diminish your religion or your intellect, nor will you lose your dignity and status by that.

I fear that you may enter one of these townships and the people begin to dispute among themselves, one party for you and the other against you.

Then they will rise against one another, and you will become the target of the first spear. As a result, the blood of the best person of this entire community, of the most noble lineage, will be utterly wasted, and his family humiliated.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} listened attentively, his gaze steady, then replied,

“Then where shall I go, O my brother?”

¹¹ Muhammad ibn al Hanafiyyah fought alongside his father at the Camel and Siffin, bearing the standard and showing notable courage, though Imam Ali {a.s} prevented him from duelling Ubayd Allah ibn Umar out of concern for his safety. Known for his restraint, al Hanafiyyah later cautioned against extremism and, during the Hajj of 68 AH, declared his neutral stance, refusing leadership that would cause division. Al Hanafiyyah died in 81 AH in al Ta’if at the age of 65, and was prayed over by Abdullah ibn Abbas.

Muhammad al Hanafiyyah continued, still seeking a path of safety for the Imam ^{a.s},

“Stay in Mecca. If it provides you with sanctuary, then that is the solution. But if you find no security there, then withdraw to the desert plains and the mountain heights. Travel from town to town until you determine the direction of the people’s opinion in this matter. You will then be in the best position to make your decision when you face matters directly.”

Hisham ibn Muhammad relates from Abu Mikhnaf that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied,

“My brother, you have given sincere counsel and shown your concern.

I hope that your judgement is correct and brings about success.”

This intimate exchange between Muhammad al Hanafiyyah and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} is also preserved by Shaykh al Mufid and al Khawarizmi, who add from Ibn al A'tham the testament of the Imam ^{a.s} to his brother: “As for what follows, I did not rise up...”

In another version, it includes a reference to the conduct of the caliphs before the Imam ^{a.s}.

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq, quoting Abdullah ibn al Mansur from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, states that during the previous night, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had gone to the Mosque of the Prophet ^{saws} to bid him farewell at his grave. When the Imam ^{a.s} reached it, he saw a light radiating from the grave, pure, steady, and otherworldly, then it returned to its place.

Bihar al Anwar states that the Imam ^{a.s} stood beside the grave of the Prophet ^{saws} and spoke in a sorrowful voice, overcome with emotion:

“Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

I am al Hussein, the son of Fatima, your grandson and the son of your daughter, the one you left among your community.

Bear witness over them, O Prophet of Allah ^{saws}. They have abandoned me, neglected me, and did not protect me. This is my complaint to you until I meet you.”

On the following night, the Imam ^{a.s} returned again to bid farewell to his grandfather ^{saws} at his grave. The Imam ^{a.s} stood there for a long time in prayer, whispering his devotion through the stillness of the sanctuary. It was a sorrowful farewell, for he was being compelled to leave the sacred city of Medinah. The Imam ^{a.s} lamented:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}, this is the grave of Your Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, and I am the son of the daughter of Your Prophet ^{saws}. A matter has been presented to me which You know well.

O Allah ^{AZJ}, I love what is good and I dislike what is evil.

I ask You, O Possessor of Majesty and Generosity, by the right of this grave and the one who lies within it, to choose for me that which pleases You and pleases Your Messenger ^{saws}.”

As the Imam ^{a.s} wept, Al Amali states that he fell into prolonged prostration, and a light sleep overtook him. In that state, the Prophet ^{saws} appeared to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in a dream. The Messenger of Allah ^{saws} took the Imam ^{a.s} into his embrace, held him tightly to his chest, kissed him between his eyes, and said,

“May my father be sacrificed for you, O Hussein. It is as if I see you drenched in your own blood, lying before a group from this nation. They will seek my intercession on the Day of Judgement, but Allah ^{AZJ} will deny them any share of it.”

The Prophet ^{saws} continued, “My dear son, proceed to your father Ali, your mother Fatimah, and your brother al Hasan; they are yearning for you. You have been stationed ranks in Paradise which cannot be attained except through your martyrdom.”

Bihar al Anwar records that the longing of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to be with his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, was immense. The Imam ^{a.s} continued gazing upon his blessed grandfather and said, “O grandfather, I have no desire to return to the world.

Take me to you and admit me to be with you in your grave.”

The Prophet ^{saws} replied with tenderness, surrounded by ranks of angels on his right, his left, and before him: “There is no path except that you return to the world until you are granted martyrdom. What immense reward Allah ^{AZJ} has decreed in it for you.

You, your father, your brother, your uncle, and the uncle of your father will be resurrected together on the Day of Resurrection as one group, until you all enter Paradise.”

Al Amali states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} awoke from his sleep in tears, the traces of the vision still upon his face. The Imam ^{a.s} returned home immediately, gathered his family, informed them of what he had seen, and, with calm, prepared to bid them farewell.

Bihar al Anwar states that when the Imam ^{a.s} prepared to depart from Medinah for the final time, he went out in the middle of the night to the grave of his mother and bade her farewell. He then went to the grave of his brother, Imam al Hasan ^{a.s} and did the same.

After this, he returned to his house.

Kamil al Ziyarat, quoting Jabir from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, relates that when the Imam ^{a.s} resolved to depart from Medinah, the women of the family of Abdul Muttalib gathered and began to lament. The Imam ^{a.s} rose and said to them, “I adjure you by Allah ^{AZJ} to cease, lest by revealing this matter of our departure you betray Allah ^{AZJ} and His Messenger ^{saws}.”

The women replied, “For whom then should we weep and lament?

For us, this is a day like the day when the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, Ali, Fatimah, Ruqayyah, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthum, the daughters of the Prophet ^{saws}, departed this world. We ask Allah ^{AZJ} to make us your ransom, O beloved of the best of men who have passed away.”

Among those present at the farewell was the younger brother of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Amr ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. ¹² Al Malhuf would later narrate this from Muhammad ibn Amr from his father, Amr ibn Ali, speaking to the family of Aqil ibn Abi Talib about that very day.

Amr ibn Ali stated that he came to meet the Imam ^{a.s} after this refusal of allegiance to Yazid. Amr found the Imam ^{a.s} sitting alone, so Amr ibn Ali said,

“May I be your ransom, O Aba Abdillah. Your brother al Hasan once narrated to me from his father ^{a.s}...”

At that point, grief overcame Amr ibn Ali, and he began to weep loudly.

¹² Amr ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as Abu Hafs, was the youngest son of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, born to Lady Sahba’ al Thalabi. Although some reports, such as al Futuh and the Maqtal of al Khawarizmi, place him among the martyrs of Karbala, stronger sources indicate he was not present, and his name is absent from the recognised lists of martyrs. Amr ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib later died in Yanbu at the age of 75 or 77.

The Imam ^{a.s} embraced Amr ibn Ali and asked,

“Did al Hasan inform you that I shall be killed?”

Amr ibn Ali replied, “Do not speak further of this, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.”

But the Imam ^{a.s} insisted, and embraced Amr closer to him, who was still sobbing,

“I ask you by the sake of your father, did al Hasan inform you about my death?”

Amr ibn Ali answered,

“Yes. Then why do you not spare yourself and submit, and give your oath of allegiance?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with certainty and submission to the divine decree:

“My father Ali told me that the Prophet ^{saws} informed him how he would be killed and how

I (al Hussein) would be killed, and that my grave would be close to his.

Do you think that you know something that I do not?

I shall never allow myself to be humiliated, even if it leads to my martyrdom.

Indeed, Fatimah will meet her father, the Messenger ^{saws}, and she will complain to him about the suffering her children endured at the hands of his community.

Indeed, none who have tormented her by harming her children shall ever enter Paradise.”

Bihar al Anwar states that al Walid, to some extent, hoped that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would leave Medinah, for this would spare him from confronting such a grave matter and shift the burden instead to the governor of Mecca. The governor had already sent messengers and spies to the house of the Imam ^{a.s} to observe whether he remained in Medinah.

When it became clear that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was preparing to depart, and his presence could no longer be sensed in his familial home, al Walid felt relief and said,

“Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}, who caused al Hussein to depart and did not test me with dealing with him or shedding his blood.”

This may explain why the departure of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his caravan from Medinah occurred without obstruction. They were neither hindered nor pursued, unlike the flight of Abdullah ibn al Zubayr. Thus, in the final days of Rajab, 60 AH, the household of the noble Prophet ^{saws} gathered beneath the weight of departure.

The farewells were now complete.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to his brother Muhammad al Hanafiyyah to entrust him with the will, after a final visit to his grandfather, the Prophet ^{saws} at the sacred grave. All that remained was the journey that would carry the household of the Prophet ^{saws} from Medinah toward the sanctuary of Mecca, the final journey of the Imam ^{a.s} was about to commence.

“You established the customs of the Prophet ^{saws}, extinguished turmoil in religion, invited people to rectitude, clarified the ways of righteousness, and truly strove in the way of almighty Allah ^{AZJ}. You were residing in the sanctuary of your grandfather Muhammad ^{saws}, detached from the oppressors, sitting in the house and the prayer niche, unattached to worldly pleasures and carnal desires, and renouncing evil in your heart and on your tongue to the extent of your strength and ability. Then the knowledge demanded you for disavowal of falsehood, and made it incumbent on you to struggle against the deviant.” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

THE FAREWELL OF LADY UMM SALAMAH

Among those who addressed Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with the deepest affection was the noble Lady Umm Salamah, the widow of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and guardian of his traditions.

Lady Hind bint Abu Umayyah ibn al Mughirah al Makhzumiyyah is famously known by her kunya, Umm Salamah. Her father was renowned for his generosity.

She emigrated from Mecca to Abyssinia with her husband, Abu Salamah, and afterwards they returned to Medinah. She was the first woman to enter Medinah in a howdah. Her husband died as a result of injuries he sustained in the Battle of Uhud.

In 4 AH, the Prophet ^{saws} took her as his wife. Lady Umm Salamah reported several traditions from the Prophet ^{saws}, most famously the event of the cloak (Hadith al Kisa’), which occurred in her apartment.

In that tradition, the Prophet ^{saws} said to her, “You are upon the right path.”

Lady Umm Salamah was a pleasant and astute woman, well known for her love for the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. She accepted their authority and upheld their wilayah. For this reason, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} entrusted her with sealed documents, as well as the arms and heirlooms of the Prophet ^{saws}, which were later collected by Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}.

She died during the reign of Yazid in 61 AH and was buried in the cemetery of al Baqi’.

When news reached Umm Salamah that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} intended to set out for Iraq, the frail noble lady hastened to him in tears and pleaded,

“O my son, do not go to Iraq.”

Al Mas'udi records in Ithbat al Wasiyyah that this encounter took place when the honourable Imam ^{a.s} had decided to depart for Kufa.

At that moment, Lady Umm Salamah implored him, saying, “I remind you not to go.”

The Imam ^{a.s} asked Lady Umm Salamah the reason, and she replied,

“I heard the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} say that my son Hussein will be martyred in Iraq, and he gave me this bottle of earth, which I have often inspected.”

The Imam ^{a.s} responded, “O dear mother, by Allah ^{AZJ}, I shall indeed be killed there.

Even if I did not go to Iraq, they would still kill me. I must face what has been decreed, for there is no refuge from destiny and no escape from death.

I know the day, the time, and the place where I will be martyred. I know the exact spot where my blood will be shed and where my companions will fall, just as I recognize you. If you wish, I will show you the place where I and my companions will rest.”

Bihar al Anwar relates that Lady Umm Salamah asked to see it. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then invoked the name of Allah ^{AZJ} and gestured toward the direction of Karbala.

The earth appeared to lower before the Imam ^{a.s} until he showed Lady Umm Salamah the place of his martyrdom, the site of his burial, the location of his camp, the ground where he would halt, and the plains upon which the battle would unfold. Upon witnessing this, Lady Umm Salamah wept intensely and submitted the matter to Allah ^{AZJ}.

The Imam ^{a.s} consoled Lady Umm Salamah and spoke solemnly of what was to come, “O mother, Allah ^{AZJ} the Mighty and Majestic has willed to see me slain, slaughtered unjustly and with aggression.

Allah ^{AZJ} has willed to see my sanctity violated, my household scattered, my women taken captive, and my children oppressed and imprisoned.

They will cry out for help, yet they will find no helper and no supporter.”

Taking a handful of the sacred soil, the Imam ^{a.s} said to her,

“Mix this with the earth that the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} gave you.”

The Imam ^{a.s} then added,

“I shall be martyred on the tenth of Muharram after the Dhuhr prayer.

Peace be upon you, O dear mother. We are pleased with you.”

Al Khara'ij wa al Jara'ih relates that Lady Umm Salamah carefully preserved his words and the blended soil, awaiting the tenth of Ashura, when the sign foretold by the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would finally appear.¹³



¹³ In the narration of Mashhadi it is related that Salmah came to the presence of Lady Umm Salamah and found her weeping. He asked, “What has caused you to weep?” She replied, “I saw the Prophet ^{saws} in a dream, and his head and beard were covered with dust. I said: ‘O Prophet ^{saws}, what has happened to you that you are covered in dust?’ He ^{saws} replied: ‘I have just witnessed the killing of my Hussein.’”

THE WILL OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN ^{a.s}

Before departing, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} gave essential instructions to those of his family who would remain behind in Medinah, particularly his brother Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah.

Bihar al Anwar records that the Imam ^{a.s} spoke to Muhammad al Hanafiyyah and said:

“O my brother, may Allah ^{AZJ} recompense you with goodness.

You have advised me sincerely and with sound judgment.

I have committed to depart for Mecca, and I am preparing for it with my brothers, the sons of my brother, and my Shias. Their matter is my matter, and their views are my views.

As for you, my brother, remain in Medinah and be my eyes there.

Inform me of their affairs, for nothing of their matters should remain hidden from me.”

Al Futuh of Ibn A'tham preserves the will of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} addressed to his brother Muhammad al Hanafiyyah. When the time of departure drew near, the Imam ^{a.s} asked for ink and paper and wrote the following testament with the verses of the Qur'an:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

This is the testament of al Hussein ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib to his brother Muhammad, known as al Hanafiyyah, the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Al Hussein ibn Ali testifies that there is no god except Allah ^{AZJ} alone, having no partner, and that Muhammad ^{saws} is His ^{AZJ} servant and messenger who came with the truth from Him.

I testify that paradise is true and that the fire of hell is true.

‘And certainly the Hour is coming, there is no doubt about it. And Allah ^{AZJ} will surely resurrect those in the graves.’ (Q22:7)

I did not rise out of arrogance, rebellion, corruption, or oppression.

Rather, I rise seeking the reformation of the nation of my grandfather Muhammad ^{saws}.

I wish to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and to follow the path and practice of my grandfather Muhammad ^{saws} and the path of my father Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Whoever accepts me with the acceptance of truth, then Allah ^{AZJ} is foremost with the truth.

And whoever rejects this from me, I shall remain patient until Allah ^{AZJ} judges between me and the people with justice, and He is the best of judges.

This is my testament to you, O my brother.

‘My success is only through Allah ^{AZJ}. Upon Him do I rely, and to Him do I return.’ (Q11:88)

Peace be upon you and upon those who follow guidance.

There is no power and no strength except with Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Great, the Most High.”

Ibn Shahr Ashub relates that when the Imam ^{a.s} finished writing the testament, he folded the letter, sealed it with his seal, and handed it to his brother Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah. After entrusting him with the document, the Imam ^{a.s} bade him farewell.

Soon after, in the stillness of the night, the Imam ^{a.s} prepared to depart from Medinah and set out toward Mecca.

Bihar al Anwar relates a narration from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wrote a letter to the Banu Hashim who remained in Medinah. The letter was brief and solemn:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

From al Hussein ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib to the Banu Hashim.

As for what follows: whoever among you joins me will be martyred, and whoever remains behind will not attain victory. And Peace.”

Kamil al Ziyarat also preserves a similar correspondence, through Muyassir ibn Abdul Aziz from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}.

Shaykh al Mufid records a narration from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} describing the moment when Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prepared to depart from Medinah.

As he set out, ranks of angels descended to the Imam ^{a.s}, bearing spears in their hands and mounted upon steeds from the mounts of Paradise.

They greeted the Imam ^{a.s} and said,

“O Proof of Allah ^{AZJ} over His creation after your grandfather Muhammad ^{saws}, your father Ali ^{a.s}, and your brother, al Hasan ^{a.s}.

Allah ^{AZJ} aided your grandfather in many places, and He now offers you our help.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied,

“The appointed place is my grave and the place where I shall be martyred, and it is Karbala. When you arrive there, then come to me.”

They said, “O Proof of Allah ^{AZJ}, command us and we shall hear and obey.

Do you fear the enemies who will confront you? If so, we shall remain with you.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied,

“They have no power over me until I arrive at the place appointed for me.”

Thereafter, groups from the believing jinn also came to the Imam ^{a.s} and said,

“O our master, we are your Shias and your helpers.

Command us with whatever you wish. If you order us to destroy every one of your enemies while you remain in your place, we will suffice you in that.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prayed for them and recited the verses,

“Have you not read what Allah ^{AZJ} revealed to my grandfather, Messenger of Allah ^{saws}:

‘Wherever you may be, death will overcome you, even if you were in fortified towers.’ ? (Q4:78)

And Allah ^{AZJ}, the Exalted, also said:

‘Even if you were to remain in your homes, those among you who were destined to be killed would have met the same fate.’ (Q3:154)

If I were to remain where I am, then with what would these people be tested?

And how would they be tried? And who would come to occupy my grave in Karbala?

Allah ^{AZJ} chose that land on the day He spread the earth and made it a sanctuary for our Shias and a place of security for them in this world and the Hereafter.

But come to me on the day of Ashura, for by its end I shall be killed.”

Then, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued to address the masses assembled before him,

“None will remain with me from my family, my offspring, my brothers, or the members of my household.

My head will be carried to Yazid, and the curse of Allah ^{AZJ} be upon him.”

The jinn replied,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, O beloved of Allah ^{AZJ} and son of His beloved, were it not that your command must be obeyed and that it is not permitted for us to oppose you, we would destroy all your enemies before they could reach you.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied to them with a verse,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we are more capable against them than you are.

But it is so that ‘*that those who were to perish and those who were to survive might do so after the truth had been made clear to both.*’” (Q8:42)

This narration is reported from the work of Muhammad ibn Abu Talib, who relates it from Hamza ibn Humran from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}.



THE DEPARTURE FROM MEDINAH

It was now the night of Sunday, the 29th of Rajab, 60 AH.

Al Amali relates that, when departing, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} himself assisted his noble sisters, his daughters, and his nephews, such as al Qasim ibn al Hasan, to mount the litters upon the camels. The caravan of the house of the Prophet ^{saws} stood ready for this sorrowful departure.

Tarikh al Tabari records that the Imam ^{a.s} departed in those same hours of darkness ¹⁴, and that the Imam ^{a.s} went forth with his sons, his brothers, the sons of his brother, and most of his household, leaving behind only Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah.

Bihar al Anwar states that the Imam ^{a.s} set out with twenty-one men from among his companions and his household. Among them were Abu Bakr ibn Ali, Muhammad ibn Ali, Uthman ibn Ali, al Abbas ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil, Ali al Akbar ibn al Hussein, and Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, ‘Zayn al Abidin’. ¹⁵

According to al Malhuf, one of the considerations that led the Imam ^{a.s} to take along his womenfolk and close kin was the grave danger of their seizure by Yazid ibn Muawiyah, had they remained behind in the Hijaz or in any other land.

The Imam ^{a.s} was acutely aware that Yazid, driven by enmity and fear of resistance, could have dispatched his agents to capture them, using their captivity as a weapon of coercion.

Once in Yazid’s grasp, the sanctity and safety of the Household of the Prophet ^{saws} would have been exposed to humiliation, harm, or even death.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} therefore foresaw that leaving them behind would grant his adversary the most potent means of leverage, one that could delay or even prevent his stand, compelling the Imam ^{a.s} to surrender rather than fulfil the divine decree of martyrdom.

Moreover, al Malhuf observes that the mere thought of the family of the Imam ^{a.s} falling under Yazid’s tyranny would have deprived the Imam ^{a.s} of inner tranquillity.

In this light, the decision of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to take the household with him was both strategic and moral: an act of protection and a declaration that his mission would be borne collectively by his household, so that the truth for which the Imam ^{a.s} rose would be witnessed, preserved, and proclaimed long after his sacrifice.

As Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} passed beyond the boundary of Medinah, al Futuh relates that the Imam ^{a.s} looked back upon Medinah in sorrow and recited the verse:

“*So Moses left the city in a state of fear and caution, praying,
‘My Lord ^{AZJ}! Deliver me from the wrongdoing people.’*” ^(Q28:21)

¹⁴ The date of this departure is reported through multiple chains. Abu Mikhnaf, via al Saqqab ibn Zuhayr from Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah, records it, while al Mufid and al Sibt state that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} departed that very night with his family and the youths of Banu Hashim, as the authorities were preoccupied with ibn al Zubayr. al Sibt, citing Ibn Ishaq and Hisham, places it on a Sunday with two nights remaining of Rajab, whereas al Khawarizmi reports it as the third of Shaban. Hisham ibn Muhammad, through Abu Mikhnaf, also transmits a supporting report.

¹⁵ Shaykh al Saduq, al Amali, through Abdullah ibn al Mansur, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, from his father Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, from Imam Ali ibn Al Hussein ^{a.s}; Bihar al Anwar, vol. 44

It was then that his cousin, Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib, said to the Imam ^{a.s},

“O son of the daughter of the Prophet ^{saws}, I have a suggestion.

What if we turn off from the road and select a course other than the main route, as Abdullah ibn al Zubayr did? We are worried that the pursuers may detect us otherwise.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied,

“No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, O cousin. We shall never leave this road until we either see the houses of Mecca, or Allah ^{AZJ} decrees for us an alternative that He prefers and is pleased with.”

As the caravan crossed the desert road toward Mecca, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his voice once more with the verse of the Qur'an:

“*And as Moses made his way towards Madyan, he said,
‘I trust my Lord ^{AZJ} will guide me to the right way.’*” ^(Q28:22)

In that recitation, his companions heard both supplication and determination. Bearing the sanctity and grief of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, the Imam ^{a.s} entrusted his course to divine guidance and pressed onward toward the sanctuary of Mecca.

This sorrow can be further understood through an incident that occurred two days before his departure from Medinah, when the Imam ^{a.s} appeared publicly in the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. Abu Mikhnaf narrates, through Abdul Malik ibn Nawfal ¹⁶, from Abu Sa'id al Maqbari ¹⁷, that he saw Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} enter the Mosque of Medinah walking slowly, leaning upon two men. At times, the Imam ^{a.s} would lean on one, and then on the other man, each supporting him step by step. As the Imam ^{a.s} moved through the sacred space, he recited a verse by Yazid ibn Mufarrigh al Himyari:

“I did not terrify the cattle at the break of dawn as a raider,
Nor was I called Yazid on the day I yielded to humiliation from fear,
While death lay in wait for me should I retreat.”

Moved by the gravity of the moment, Abu Sa'id said to himself,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, he did not recite these verses except for something he intends.”

Only two days later would the meaning of that prose become clear, It was a silent farewell to the city. The city of the Prophet ^{saws} was now empty of its most honourable household. Having entrusted his will to Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} left Medinah for the final time. It was the only opportune moment, as the pursuit of Abdullah ibn al Zubayr had occupied the governor’s men throughout that day and into the night.

Abu Mikhnaf, al Mufid, and al Sibt all transmit that the authorities were distracted from him on account of Ibn al Zubayr, allowing the departure to pass unimpeded.

Thus, as evening shadows lengthened once more over Medinah, none watched the road that would carry the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws} from his home forever.

¹⁶ Narrated by Abdul Malik ibn Nawfal ibn Musahiq ibn Abdullah ibn Makhramah from his father and from Abu Sa'id al Maqbari.

¹⁷ Kaysan Abu Sa'id al Maqbari, the owner of the cloak (al aba'), a freedman of Umm Sharik. He was a prominent narrator.

THE IMAM {a.s} ON HIS WAY TO MECCA

In the final nights of Rajab, Medinah no longer slept in peace. The city of the Messenger of Allah {saws} had become heavy with whispered oaths and fearful silence. Ibn al Zubayr had fled beneath the cover of darkness.

Ibn Umar remained behind, withholding his allegiance. Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah remained behind, instructed by the Imam {a.s} to keep watch over the city and its affairs.

The air of Medinah was thick with dread, for even if Muawiyah was dead, Yazid now exerted pressure upon the Umayyad governors to solidify his claim over the Muslim lands. Allegiance was no longer requested; it was enforced.

Summons followed summons, and threats followed refusals. The letter of Yazid was explicit, and his agents, among them Marwan ibn al Hakam, had already threatened Imam al Hussein {a.s} with execution should the Imam {a.s} refuse allegiance.

Bihar al Anwar relates that when al Walid's letter reached Yazid, he wrote a reply:

“As for what follows: When this letter of mine reaches you, then hasten your reply to me!

Let me be informed in your letter of those who remain in my obedience and those who have departed from it. Let the head of al Hussein ibn Ali accompany your reply.”

Thus, the Imam {a.s} departed from Medinah during the night of Saturday, the 28th of Rajab, 60 AH.

The Imam {a.s} bade farewell to his grandfather and set out toward the sanctuary of Mecca.

The city of Medinah would never again be graced by the radiance of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The departure of the Imam {a.s} was not due to fear; rather, it was measured and deliberate. To remain in Medinah under such conditions would have meant either submitting to an illegitimate authority or exposing the sacred city to bloodshed on his account.

The departure of the Imam {a.s}, therefore, was a necessary and deliberate act to preserve both the sanctity of Medinah and the moral clarity of his stand.

Thus, as the tension in Medinah continued to rise following the death of Muawiyah, Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned his face toward the House of Allah {AZJ}, while Medinah receded behind him, heavy with sorrow.

As the caravan progressed further and advanced toward Mecca, among those who accompanied the Imam {a.s} was Uqbah ibn Sim'an¹⁸, the freedman of Lady al Rabab bint Imru' al Qays al Kalbiyyah, the wife of the Imam {a.s} and the mother of Sayyidah Sukaynah.

Uqbah had been a freedman of her father at a time when she herself was still a young girl.

In Tanqih al Maqal, he is counted among the companions of the Imam {a.s}, and Tarikh al Tabari and others likewise mention him, noting that he was entrusted with the care of the Imam's {a.s} horses and would present them to him.

¹⁸ Muhammad ibn Ali al Ardabili mentioned him in Jami' al Ruwat, vol. 1, counting Uqbah ibn Sim'an among the companions of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Hisham ibn Muhammad narrates from Abu Mikhnaf, who relates from Abdul Rahman ibn Jundab, from Uqbah ibn Sim'an:

“We departed from Medinah and kept to the main highway. Then some of the family of al Hussein said to him,

‘Would you not avoid the main road, as Ibn al Zubayr did, so that the pursuers may not catch up with you?’

But al Hussein said,

‘No, by Allah {AZJ}! I will not leave it until Allah {AZJ} decrees what He loves best.’”¹⁹

Thereby, in this capacity, Uqbah ibn Sim'an would come to stand as a key witness to the events that unfolded along the journey of the Imam {a.s}.



¹⁹ This statement was also narrated by Shaykh al Mufid, and al Khawarizmi, who attributed the statement to Muslim ibn Aqil.

THE CARAVAN MEETS ABDULLAH IBN MUTI'

As Imam al Hussein {a.s} intended to journey further toward the sacred sanctuary of Mecca, his caravan was met by a man deeply entwined in the politics and loyalties of the Quraysh, Abdullah ibn Muti' al Adawi.²⁰

Abu Mikhnaf, through Hisham ibn Muhammad, from Abdul Rahman ibn Jundub²¹ relates that Uqbah ibn Sim'an stated:

“We set out and kept to the main road. When Ibn Muti' encountered al Hussein along the way, he greeted him with visible emotion and concern. ‘May I be your ransom,’ Ibn Muti' said, expressing his loyalty and reverence. ‘Where are you headed?’”

The Imam {a.s} replied with clarity, yet with restraint:

“For now, I am heading to Mecca; as for what comes after, I seek Allah’s {AZJ} guidance.”

Abdullah ibn Muti' persisted and offered counsel:

“May Allah {AZJ} choose the best for you, and may we be your ransom. When you arrive in Mecca, beware of approaching Kufa, for it is an ill-omened city.

There, your father was killed, your brother was abandoned, and he was treacherously struck with a blow that nearly took his life.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} listened to Abdullah ibn Muti' and remained silent.

Al Sibt states that Abdullah ibn Muti' continued:

“Remain in the Haram, for you are the master of Arabs. By Allah {AZJ}, the people of Hijaz do not consider anyone your equal. People will flock to you from every direction.

Do not leave the sanctuary. May my paternal uncle and my maternal uncle be your ransom, by Allah {AZJ}, if you perish, we shall become enslaved after you.”

These words reflected the political anxieties of the time, yet they were devoid of the insight and guidance carried by the Imam {a.s}. The mission of Imam al Hussein {a.s} transcended political manoeuvring and opportunistic calculations.

For the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}, the Haram of Mecca was sacred, a place of sanctuary, refuge, and divine protection.

With words of farewell, the caravan of the Imam {a.s} resumed its course toward Mecca. Tarikh al Tabari states that this encounter between Abdullah ibn Muti' and the Imam {a.s} would not be the last. Later, narrated through Hisham ibn Muhammad, another meeting would take place at one of the Arab watering stations after al Hajir and before Zarud.

²⁰ Abdullah ibn Muti' was born during the lifetime of the Prophet {saws}, and he had allied himself with Quraysh against the people of Medinah during their revolt against Yazid. Al Ya'qubi states that Ibn Muti' would later join ibn al Zubayr in Mecca and served as his appointed governor over Kufa. al Mas'udi notes that his political career underwent many shifts, and that Ibn Muti' was ultimately driven out of Kufa by al Mukhtar, whose movement Abdullah ibn Muti' had opposed.

²¹ al Hafiz ibn Hajar al Asqalani states in Lisan al Mizan (vol. 3), Abdul Rahman ibn Jundub narrated from Kumayl ibn Ziyad, and Abu Hamzah al Thumali narrated from him. In Jami' al Ruwat, ibn Jundub is counted as among the companions of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}.

THE ARRIVAL OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s} INTO MECCA

The caravan of Imam al Hussein {a.s} pressed onward toward Mecca with deliberate haste. Having departed Medinah when only two days of Rajab remained, the Imam {a.s} traversed the long desert road at a markedly hurried pace.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through al Saq'ab ibn Zuhayr, who narrates from Awn ibn Abi Juhaifah, that despite the distance between Medinah and Mecca being nearly five hundred kilometers, the Imam {a.s} completed the journey in only five days.

This meant that the Imam {a.s} travelled close to 100 kilometers each day, covering approximately 18 parasangs (farsakhs) daily, nearly double the customary travel distance of 8 parasangs ordinarily undertaken by caravans.

Though some among the companions suggested diverting from the main route, proposing lesser-known paths in order to avoid interception, Imam al Hussein {a.s} refused to alter his course. To abandon the main road would invite suggestions of fear or flight, and such a concession was unbefitting the dignity of the Imam {a.s}. Instead, the Imam {a.s} hastened his pace, advancing openly and entrusting his affair to the decree of Allah {AZJ}.

Al Futuh records that as Mecca drew near, the mountains of the sacred city came into view from afar. Upon seeing them, the Imam {a.s} recited the verse of the Qur'an:

“*And as Moses made his way towards Madyan, Moses said, ‘I trust my Lord {AZJ} will guide me to the right way.’*” (Q28:22)

According to Tarikh al Tabari, it was the night of Friday, the third night of Sha'ban in the year 60 AH, when Imam al Hussein {a.s} entered the sacred city of Mecca.²² Al Sibt likewise narrates that the Imam {a.s} remained in Mecca throughout the remainder of Sha'ban, the month of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al Qa'dah, until the eighth day of Dhu al Hijjah.

Shaykh al Mufid relates, on the authority of Uqbah ibn Sim'an, that during this prolonged stay, the people of Mecca began to visit the Imam {a.s} in great numbers. Not only did the residents of the city come to him, but so too did those performing Umrah and pilgrims arriving from distant regions.

Al Futuh states that his presence within the precincts of the Sacred Sanctuary drew hearts toward him; the inhabitants of Mecca were delighted at his arrival and visited him by day and by night. The Haram became a place of both worship and rising awareness.

Al Khawarizmi states that among those present in Mecca at the time was Abdullah ibn al Zubayr. It is reported that the wily ibn al Zubayr clung to the Ka'bah, devoting himself to prolonged prayers during the day and frequent circumambulation of the Sacred House.

Like others, Ibn al Zubayr too would come to Imam al Hussein {a.s}. At times, Ibn al Zubayr visited him for two consecutive days, then refrained for two, before returning once more.

²² Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Uqbah ibn Sim'an confirms this arrival, and al Saq'ab ibn Zuhayr narrated through Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah that this journey occurred as stated.

During these visits, Ibn al Zubayr would repeatedly offer counsel, seeking to advise the Imam {a.s} on the unfolding affairs, whilst also keeping a keen eye upon them.

Yet beneath this outward piety and counsel, Ibn al Zubayr carried a heavy burden within his heart. He concealed his true intentions from the Imam {a.s}, even as he prayed behind him, sat in his gatherings, and listened attentively to his words.

In truth, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr regarded Imam al Hussein {a.s} as the greatest obstacle to his own ambitions. Ibn al Zubayr knew that so long as the Imam {a.s} remained in Mecca, the people of the Hijaz would not turn toward him nor follow his claim.

In their eyes and hearts, Imam al Hussein {a.s} stood far above all others. His lineage, his character, and the enduring legacy of his father and grandfather placed Imam al Hussein {a.s} beyond any rivalry, commanding a reverence and devotion that none could equal.

Thus, within the sacred city of Mecca, beneath the shadow of the Ka'bah and the throngs of pilgrims, the days passed. Imam al Hussein {a.s} remained a figure of immense spiritual and moral gravity; however, beneath the surface of devotion, currents of political tension and impending trial began to converge around him.



THE CITY OF KUFA

When the news of Muawiyah's death reached the city of Kufa, the city stirred with rumours and anticipation. Kufa had long been accustomed to unrest and turmoil, a city burdened by memory, marked by betrayals, and scarred by the aftermath of Siffin.

With the death of this tyrant, eyes once more turned toward the noble household of the Prophet {saws}, with a sense that history had again opened a door. In the gatherings of the people, whispers spread that Imam al Hussein {a.s} and Ibn al Zubayr had refused to give allegiance to Yazid and had both departed for the sanctuary of Mecca.

This news struck a deep chord among the people of Iraq, especially in Kufa. It was a stronghold of veterans and warriors, steeped in Islamic and tribal history. Thirty thousand of its men had fought in the decisive Battle of al Qadisiyyah, and since the earliest years of Islam it had stood as a critical frontier town, shaped by conquest, governance, and conflict.

The governance of the city of Kufa was tumultuous. The second Caliph, Umar ibn al Khattab, appointed Shurayh ibn al Harith al Kindi as judge around the year 18 AH. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was dismissed in the year 20 AH after complaints were raised against him, among them the charge that he did not know how to lead the prayer.

That same year, the Jews of Najran were expelled, and many settled in Kufa. In the years that followed, Ammar ibn Yasir was appointed governor, with Ibn Mas'ud placed in charge of the treasury and Uthman ibn Hunayf entrusted with land assessments. Yet the people's discontent did not subside. Ammar himself later asked to be relieved, and his successors too were short-lived, including Abu Musa al Ash'ari and later al Mughirah ibn Shu'bah.

Militarily, Kufa carried immense weight. At one point, it housed around 100,000 fighters. Later, 40,000 remained, with 10,000 sent each year to guard the frontiers, ensuring that every man participated in a campaign once every four years. In the year 37 AH, the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}, instructed the tribal leaders to count all warriors, their sons of fighting age, slaves, and clients.

The tally presented to him reached 65,000 fighters, including 800 from Medinah.

These were divided into seven divisions: (1) Kinana and its allies; (2) Quda'a and allied tribes; (3) Madhhij and Himyar; (4) Tamim and al Rabab; (5) Asad and Ghatafan; (6) Iyad and Abdul Qays; and (7) others.

This tribal structure remained through the caliphates of Umar ibn al Khattab and Uthman, and through the divinely appointed Imam Ali {a.s}, until Ziyad later reorganised them into four quarters.

Thereafter, each quarter was placed under selectively appointed leaders. Amr ibn Hurayth was assigned the quarter of Medinah's people; Khalid ibn Arfata led Tamim and Hamadan; Qays ibn al Walid oversaw Rabi'ah and Kinda; and Abu Burda ibn Abi Musa led Madhhij and Asad.

Several of these figures would later testify against Hujr ibn Adi and his companions.

Against this backdrop, a city fractured by tribal divisions, fortified by formidable military strength, and weighed down by a heavy religious memory, the stance of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stirred. Intense fervour arose among the supporters of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his noble family, as they felt the pull of opportunity alongside the crushing weight of their past guilt of hesitation and delay.

Tarikh al Tabari records that during these fateful days, a significant gathering ²³ took place in the house of Sulayman ibn Surad al Khuzai ²⁴.

There, they spoke of the death of Muawiyah, praised Allah ^{AZJ} for it, and sought to determine the next steps for the inhabitants of Kufa.

Sulayman ibn Surad was among the foremost of the Tabi'in, and a companion of both the Prophet ^{saws} and Imam Ali ^{a.s}. Though he had once been reproached by the Imam ^{a.s} for hesitation during the Battle of the Camel (Jamal), he later fought bravely under his command at Siffin and was counted among the leading Shi'ah of Kufa.

Abu Mikhnaf related that al Hajjaj ibn Ali narrated from Muhammad ibn Bishr al Hamdani ²⁵ that Sulayman ibn Surad addressed those gathered before him:

“Indeed, Muawiyah has perished, and al Hussein, peace be upon him, has refused to give those people his oath of allegiance and has departed for Mecca.

Now you are his Shi'ah, and the Shi'ah of his father, Ali. So if you know that you will support him and fight his enemy, then write to him. But if you fear weakness and failure, then do not deceive the man with regard to his own life!”

The word used was ‘wahal’. It carried the meaning of fright, terror, and spiritual exhaustion. With it, Sulayman ibn Surad warned the Kufans against promises born of momentary emotion, and against cowardice dressed in the language of devotion.

Those present responded with fervour, declaring,

“No, rather we will fight his enemy and sacrifice our lives for him.”

²³ Abu Mikhnaf narrates this from al Hajjaj ibn Ali, who narrates from Muhammad ibn Bishr al Hamdani. al Hajjaj ibn Ali also narrates from Abdullah ibn Abbad ibn Yaghuth in ‘Lisan Al Mizan’, written by Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani.

²⁴ Abu al Muttarrif Sulayman ibn Surad al Khuzai was a leading Tabi'i, known for his devotion and counted among the companions of the Prophet ^{saws}, Imam Ali ^{a.s}, and Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. Despite his status, he hesitated to support Imam Ali ^{a.s} at the Battle of the Camel and was criticised for it, though later entrusted with command at Siffin, where Sulayman fought bravely. Imam Ali ^{a.s} also appointed him governor of Jibil and praised his faith. During the time of Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}, Sulayman remained among his companions and advised action against Muawiyah, though this was not accepted. In 64 AH, Sulayman ibn Surad led the Tawwabun in repentance for failing to support Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, declaring their regret and calling for vengeance. Sulayman ibn Surad fought against Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and was martyred in 65 AH at around 93 years of age.

²⁵ Muhammad ibn al Sa'ib ibn Bishr ibn al Nadr al Kalbi al Kufi, is from the noble companions of Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, and that Muhammad ibn al Sa'ib is the father of Hisham, the genealogist and well-known scholar famous as al Kalbi al Nassabah, as this appears from Lisan al Mizan (vol. 5), where it is stated: Muhammad ibn Bishr from Amr ibn Abdullah al Hadrami, and from him ibn Ishaq. al Bukhari gave him a separate entry, and ibn Abi Hatim narrated from his father that he is Muhammad ibn al Sa'ib al Kalbi. Abu Ishaq ascribed him to his grandfather, as he is Muhammad ibn al Sa'ib ibn Bishr.

Sulayman ibn Surad observed their resolution, yet he remained cautious,

“Then write to him!”

This was one of the earliest letters from Kufa, penned in the house of Sulayman ibn Surad:

“In the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

To al Hussein ibn Ali, from Sulayman ibn Surad, al Musayyib ibn Najabah ²⁶, Rifa'ah ibn Shaddad ²⁷, Habib ibn Muzahir ²⁸, and his Shi'ah from among the believers and Muslims of the people of Kufa.

Peace be upon you. We praise before you Allah ^{AZJ}, there is no God but He ^{AZJ}.

As for what follows:

Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ} who has broken your enemy, the obstinate tyrant who had leapt upon this Ummah, stripped it of its authority, plundered its fay (booty for distribution), and seized control of it without its consent.

Then he killed its virtuous ones, kept its wicked ones alive, and made the wealth of almighty Allah ^{AZJ} circulate among its tyrants and the wealthy.

He was destroyed as Thamud were destroyed. Indeed, we have no Imam over us.

So come to us; perhaps Allah ^{AZJ} may gather us together with you upon the truth.

As for al Nu'man ibn Bashir, he is in the governor's palace, and we do not gather with him for Friday prayer, nor do we go out with him for the Eid.

If we were to learn that you are coming toward us, we would expel him until we send him back to Sham, if Allah ^{AZJ} wills.

And peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah ^{AZJ}.”

Thus began the fateful letters of Kufa, written by men who had long endured Umayyad rule. They agreed to invite Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to come to their city, to pledge allegiance to him, and to depose al Nu'man ibn Bashir.

These letters were intended to demonstrate the supposed stirring of conscience among the people of Kufa.

²⁶ Al Musayyib ibn Najabah ibn Rabiah al Fazari was a veteran who saw the Prophet and fought at al Qadisiyyah and in the conquest of Iraq. Al Musayyib was among the leading Tabiin and companions of Imam Ali ^{a.s} and Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. Al Musayyib was known as an early defender of the Imam ^{a.s}, and his name appears in campaigns against injustice. In 65AH, Al Musayyib was killed with the Tawwabun, and al Hussein ibn Numayr sent his head with Adham ibn Muhriz al Bahili to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

²⁷ Rifa'ah ibn Shaddad was a prominent companion of Imam Ali ^{a.s}. Rifa'ah helped bury Abu Dharr, fought at Siffin representing Bajilah, and later escaped the persecutions of Ziyad ibn Abihi. Rifa'ah ibn Shaddad rose among the Tawwabun as their final commander, rallying and organizing the right flank and continuing the fight as others faltered. Rifa'ah later corresponded with al Mukhtar al Thaqafi but broke with him over ideological differences. Rifa'ah ibn Shaddad refused to align with those who distorted the cause and died in ascetic isolation at Hammam al Mahbadhan.

²⁸ The legacy of Habib ibn Muzahir would become immortal on the plains of Karbala. His valor was so admired that Hussein ibn Tamim would later boast of hanging Habib's severed head from the neck of his horse. Habib's son, al Qasim ibn Habib, later avenged his father's death by killing Budayl ibn Suraym al Tamimi during the campaign of Bajmira while serving under Musab ibn al Zubayr.

THE LETTERS FROM KUFa

Tarikh al Ya'qubi states that the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had only stayed in Mecca for a few days when the people of Iraq began writing letters to him. These letters arrived in abundance, especially from Kufa, carried in saddlebags. The people of Kufa believed they were acting swiftly, eager to demonstrate their sincerity to the Imam ^{a.s}.

They dispatched their first emissaries to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in Mecca: Abdullah ibn Saba' al Hamdani and Abdullah ibn Wal al Tamimi. They instructed them to travel in haste. Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that the two loyal messengers set out with the letters in hand, crossing the sands with urgency until they reached the Imam ^{a.s} in Mecca on the 10th of the month of Ramadan, 60 AH.

These messengers were chosen with deliberate intent, for the messages they carried were of great consequence. Abdullah ibn Saba' al Hamdani, also recorded as Ibn Masma' or Ibn Subay', would later be martyred alongside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the battlefield of Karbala. His companion, Abdullah ibn Wal al Tamimi, would go on to become the third commander of the Tawwabun, dedicating his life to the cause of redemption through the blood of the martyrs. Their names, recorded in al Sibt and al Khawarizmi, stood as a symbol of those whose deeds matched their oaths.

Back in Kufa, scarcely two days had passed before the Kufans sent a second delegation, still impatient and eager to solidify their call to the Imam ^{a.s}. In light of their past betrayals, they sought to demonstrate the breadth of support gathering for the Imam ^{a.s}.

This second group of emissaries consisted of Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi ²⁹, Abdul Rahman ibn Abdullah ibn al Kudn al Arhabi ³⁰, and Amarah ibn Ubayd al Saluli.

These messengers carried with them a torrent of scrolls, some penned by the nobles and tribal leaders of Kufa, amounting to around 150 in number. They were written by individuals and by small groups: some bearing a single signature, others signed by two men, and still others by four. Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that each scroll bore testimony to the yearning of the people of Kufa, inscribed with words of allegiance and longing for justice. It was a deluge of pledges, intended to overwhelm any hesitation in the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

This second delegation, Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi and Abdul Rahman ibn Ubayd al Arhabi, arrived on the same day as the first delegation sent by the people of Kufa.

²⁹ Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi was a man of unshakable loyalty, would soon become one of Imam's ^{a.s} most trusted couriers. After initially accompanying Muslim ibn Aqil back to Iraq, Qays al Saydawi remained at the heart of the unfolding mission. Later, when the situation in Batn al Madhiq grew precarious, Muslim ibn Aqil sent Qays al Saydawi forward with a letter to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The Imam ^{a.s}, then at Batn al Hajir, entrusted Qays al Saydawi with yet another message, this time addressed to the people of Kufa.

³⁰ In the manuscript copies, Abdullah ibn Shaddad al Arhabi, but a few lines later he is named as Abdul Rahman ibn Abdullah al Arhabi. The sources agree on the latter. Tarikh al Tabari vol. 5, Ansab al Ashraf of al Baladhuri vol. 3, al Futuh of ibn A'tham, Waq'at al Taff of Abu Mikhnaf, Tadhkirat al Khawass, and al Akhbar al Tiwal, where he is named ibn Ubayd.

Qays ibn Mushir was a man of unshakable loyalty and would soon become one of the Imam's ^{a.s} most trusted couriers. The second messenger, Abdul Rahman al Arhabi, was a steadfast companion who would later journey with Muslim ibn Aqil to Iraq and remain among those loyal until the end.

Also among the messengers was Amarah ibn Ubayd al Saluli; like the others, he would accompany Muslim ibn Aqil on the path to Iraq and was present in the house of Hani ibn Urwa, a key location in the early planning stages of the Kufan movement.

After this, his fate becomes uncertain and is lost from the record of history.

As for the number of scrolls they carried, the reports are not uniform. Al Tabari records the number as 53, yet the prevailing consensus among later scholars, such as Shaykh al Mufid, al Sibt, and al Khawarizmi, based on narrations from Hisham and Ibn Ishaq, places the number at around 150 letters. ³¹

Sayyid Ibn Tawus relates that each of the four messengers carried approximately one hundred and fifty letters from the people of Kufa. In this way, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was soon confronted with nearly six hundred letters calling him to come to them.

The flow of correspondence did not cease, and in the days that followed, the letters continued to arrive in growing numbers, until they eventually reached as many as twelve thousand separate messages.

These scrolls were written from every alley of Kufa. Seemingly, the movement had begun, swelling like a tide toward its destined shore. And at the centre of it all stood the virtuous Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in Mecca, watching.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi states that after another brief pause of two days, the people of Kufa once again acted with urgency. They sent forth a third delegation to the Imam ^{a.s}.

This time, the emissaries dispatched were Hani ibn Hani al Sabi'i ³² and Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi ³³. The message they carried reflected the intense anticipation and hope burning within the hearts of the Kufans:

“In the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

To al Hussein ibn Ali, from his Shi'ah among the believers and Muslims.

As for what follows: come without delay.

Verily, the people are awaiting you, and they have no opinion concerning anyone other than you. So hasten, hasten!

And peace be upon you.”

³¹ The discrepancy, it appears, stems from a textual error in the manuscripts of al Tabari, where “three” (thalatha) was miswritten in place of “hundred” (mi'a).

³² Hani ibn Hani al Sabi'i, the emissary, would later vanish from the pages of history, his fate unknown. He was noted as the messenger amongst the third delegation sent from Kufa to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

³³ Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi would remain true to his pledge. Sa'id would join Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and ultimately attain martyrdom at Karbala. Sa'id ibn Abdullah was noted as the messenger amongst the third delegation sent from Kufa to the Imam ^{a.s}.

That same night, Tarikh al Tabari records a letter that would later acquire a uniquely infamous place in history. It was written by prominent tribal leaders of Kufa.

Among the signatories were those who explicitly affixed their names to the letter and adorned it with poetic imagery. Among them were Shabath ibn Ribī³⁴, Hajjaj ibn Abjar³⁵, Yazid ibn al Harith ibn Yazid ibn Ruwaym³⁶, Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi³⁷, Muhammad ibn Amr al Tamimi³⁸, and Uzrah ibn Qays³⁹.

They wrote: “As for what follows: The gardens have turned green, the fruits have ripened, and the banks have overflowed. So if you wish, come forward to an army that is already assembled for you. And peace be upon you.”

Al Malhuf states that behind these words and names lay a deeper and more tragic complexity. It was regarding this very letter that Imam al Hussein^{a.s} asked Hani ibn Hani and Sa'id ibn Abdullah,

“Tell me, who are the individuals who are in agreement concerning the letter you two brought to me?”

³⁴ Shabath ibn Ribī had once been the mu'adhdhin for Sajah al Mudariyyah, the woman who falsely claimed prophethood. After embracing Islam, Shabath joined the ranks of Imam Ali^{a.s}, fighting valiantly at Siffin and Nahrawan, and even serving as a messenger between Imam Ali^{a.s} and Muawiyah. Shabath had publicly displayed joy at Imam al Hussein's^{a.s} killing, and even built a mosque as gratitude for that very purpose. In time, Shabath ibn Ribī would fight al Mukhtar in Kufa with three thousand men under the Zubayri governor, Abdullah ibn al Muti.

³⁵ Hajjaj ibn Abjar was the son of a Christian father and a prominent Kufan. Hajjaj had once raised the banner of safety during the uprising of Muslim ibn Aqil but would later deny writing to the Imam^{a.s}. Like Shabath, Hajjaj too participated in the suppression of Hujr ibn Adi and later fought against al Mukhtar and Abdullah ibn al Hurr. Though a political opportunist who shifted allegiances between Musab and Abdul Malik ibn Marwan, his final years ended in obscurity after the year 71 AH.

³⁶ Yazid ibn al Harith ibn Yazid ibn Ruwaym, known as Abu Hawshab al Shaybani, denied writing to the Imam^{a.s} on the Day of Ashura. When Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad left Amr ibn Hurayth in charge of Kufa, he openly rejected allegiance, but was spared imprisonment through the intervention of Banu Bakr ibn Wail. Yazid ibn al Harith later advised Abdullah ibn Yazid al Khatmi to suppress unrest and imprison al Mukhtar. He then opposed al Mukhtar, blocking access to Kufa before being defeated. He served under Musab and Abdul Malik, and was eventually killed by the Kharijites while governing al Rayy.

³⁷ Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi, related to Hani ibn Urwah through his sister, was among the signatories. After Hani's killing, he arrived with forces from Madhhij but withdrew when Shurayh falsely claimed Hani was alive. Amr ibn al Hajjaj was later sent with five hundred horsemen to block the Euphrates from the Imam^{a.s} and his companions on the 7th of Muharram. On the tenth, Amr led the right flank near the river, attacked the camp of Imam al Hussein^{a.s}, and urged his killing. Amr carried the heads of the martyrs to Kufa, later fought al Mukhtar, and fled after defeat, disappearing from the records.

³⁸ Muhammad ibn Amr al Tamimi, son of Umayr ibn Atard who commanded under Imam Ali^{a.s} at Siffin, had a shifting career. He testified against Hujr ibn Adi, opposed al Mukhtar, then later pledged to him and was appointed over Azerbaijan. Muhammad ibn Amr fought the Azariqah under al Harith ibn Abi Rabi'ah and later served the Umayyads. By 75 AH he was back in Kufa under al Hajjaj, after which his fate is unclear. His record is also marked by his role in the killing of Amr ibn al Hamq al Khuzai.

³⁹ Uzrah ibn Qays, an Uthmani who had testified against Hujr ibn Adi, wrote to the Imam^{a.s} but later stood against him. When sent by Umar ibn Sa'd to question the Imam^{a.s}, he felt ashamed. On the eve of Ashura, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn rebuked men like him, declaring he had never written or promised support. Uzrah commanded the cavalry, guarding them through the night, but when they were scattered on Ashura, he urged Umar ibn Sa'd to deploy infantry and archers instead. He later carried the heads of the slain to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and then disappeared from the records.

Muthir al Ahzan records that the messengers both replied to the Imam^{a.s},

“O son of Allah's Messenger^{saws}! The ones who have written are Shabath ibn Ribī, Hajjaj ibn Abjar, Yazid ibn al Harith ibn Yazid ibn Ruwaym, Uzrah ibn Qays, Amr ibn al Hajjaj, and Muhammad ibn Amr ibn Utarid.”

Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that in these same days, the messengers had brought so many letters from Kufa that, in the end, there were enough to fill two saddlebags.

The professed support of Kufa appeared overwhelming. Each letter clamoured for the grandson of the Prophet^{saws} to hasten toward them, toward Kufa, the formidable city whose condition had always been tumultuous.



THE RESPONSE OF IMAM {a.s} TO KUFA

As the messengers from Kufa gathered before him, Imam al Hussein ibn Ali {a.s} received them with solemn attention. They came bearing a tide of letters, each inscribed with pleas, declarations, and promises.

With calm, the Imam {a.s} read through every letter that had arrived in his blessed hands. Tarikh al Tabari states that the Imam {a.s} questioned the emissaries about the condition of the people in Kufa, probing their sincerity, their resolve, and their present circumstances.

Sayyid Ibn Tawus narrates that before composing his reply, Imam al Hussein {a.s} arose and performed prayers between the Rukn and the Maqam at the Ka'bah, seeking guidance and goodness from Allah {AZJ}, the Almighty.

Only after this act of devotion did the Imam {a.s} turn again to the matter before him.

After examining the contents of the correspondence and consulting the messengers, the Imam {a.s} composed a reply. This reply was entrusted to the hands of Hani ibn Hani al Sabi'i and Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi, two noble individuals who were among the last of the Kufan envoys to reach him in Mecca. Al Shaykh al Mufid relates that at this juncture, Imam al Hussein {a.s} summoned his cousin, Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib, informed him of the unfolding situation, and began preparing Muslim for the mission that lay ahead.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that the Imam {a.s} entrusted them with a single response letter addressed to all of the people of Kufa:

“In the name of Allah {AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From al Hussein ibn Ali to the group among the believers and Muslims.

As for what follows: Indeed, Hani ibn Hani and Sa'id ibn Abdullah have come to me with your letters, and they were the last of your messenger envoys to reach me.

I have understood all that you have related and mentioned, and the statement of most of you that: ‘There is no Imam over us, so come, perhaps Allah {AZJ} will unite us with you upon guidance and truth.’

I have sent to you my brother, my cousin, and the one in whom I place my trust, one from among my household, Muslim ibn Aqil.

I have instructed him to write to me about your condition, your affair, and your views.

So if he writes to me that the opinion of your dignitaries and people of merit and sound judgment has indeed united upon what your messenger envoys have brought to me and what I have read in your letters, I shall come to you soon, if Allah {AZJ} wills.

By my life, the Imam is none but he who acts by the Book, upholds justice, adheres to the truth, and dedicates himself wholly to Allah {AZJ}. And Peace.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Another narration of the same letter preserves a variant phrasing: “From Hussein ibn Ali to the noblemen among the Muslims and believers... I swear by my life, that he is not an Imam and guide except he who judges in accordance to the Book of Allah {AZJ}, and establishes justice, and professes the True Religion and dedicates himself to the will of Almighty Allah {AZJ}. And Peace.”

This pivotal response, preserved by Abu Mikhnaf through the chain of narration from al Hajjaj ibn Ali, who narrated from Muhammad ibn Bishr al Hamdani, was also documented by al Shaykh al Mufid in his Irshad and by al Sibt ibn al Jawzi.

It marked not merely Imam al Hussein's {a.s} acknowledgment of the Kufan appeal, but the gravity with which the Imam {a.s} understood leadership and spiritual responsibility. His words were a declaration of principle, a reminder of the true nature of Imamate, and a reflection of the sacred trust the Imam {a.s} bore upon his blessed shoulders.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that Muslim ibn Aqil had accompanied the Imam {a.s} from Medinah to Mecca. Now, the Imam {a.s} drew Muslim aside and instructed:

“O cousin, I want you to go to Kufa and find out what the people there have settled to do. If it is as described in their letters, then send me a message immediately so that I may join you without delay; but if the situation is different, then return at once.”

By sending a close confidant in Muslim ibn Aqil, Imam al Hussein {a.s} was responding not only to a political invitation, but also fulfilling a moral obligation, testing the sincerity of the people with caution and insight.

For in the vision of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the ‘Imam’ was not one appointed by majority sentiment or tribal allegiance, but one defined by the Book of Allah {AZJ}, the upholding of justice, and complete devotion to divine truth.



THE JOURNEY OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

The letters of allegiance from the people of Kufa reached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in overwhelming numbers. Though their words spoke of devotion and readiness, the Imam ^{a.s} remained ever mindful of the gravity of these letters.

He reflected deeply upon the sincerity of their appeals, aware that the fate of Islam, his own life, and the lives of his family would hinge upon the truthfulness of these pledges. It was therefore decided that the matter must be verified directly by a man whose integrity and insight could be trusted.

For this mission, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} chose his cousin and trusted confidant, Muslim ibn Aqil, a man distinguished by noble lineage, steadfast faith, and unwavering loyalty to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}.

According to Tarikh al Tabari, citing Abu Mikhnaf, the Imam ^{a.s} entrusted Muslim with assessing the unity, and sincerity of the Kufans. Upon the outcome of this assessment would rest the Imam's ^{a.s} decision to advance toward Iraq with his household.

Alongside Muslim ibn Aqil, the Imam ^{a.s} dispatched three additional trusted emissaries: Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, Amarah ibn Ubayd al Saluli, and Abdul Rahman Abdullah ibn al Kudn al Arhabi. These were the same messengers who had earlier carried some 150 letters of allegiance from Kufa to the Imam ^{a.s} in Mecca.

Al Irshad records that before Muslim ibn Aqil departed, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} offered him solemn and weighty counsel.

The Imam ^{a.s} instructed Muslim to fear Allah ^{AZJ} in all matters, to proceed with prudence and discretion, to conceal the true purpose of his mission, and to carefully observe the condition of the people. If he were to find them united, sincere, and firm in their loyalty, he was to write back without delay so that the Imam ^{a.s} might act upon what had been revealed through his report.

With these instructions, and with immense trust placed upon his shoulders, Muslim ibn Aqil prepared himself for the journey. Muslim first proceeded to Medinah, where he entered the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

There, standing in quiet supplication, Muslim ibn Aqil bade farewell to the resting place of the Prophet ^{saws} and to his family, fully aware that the path before him was one of trial and destiny.

From Medinah, Muslim ibn Aqil journeyed onward toward Iraq by way of Mecca, accompanied by his companions. The route from the Hijaz to Kufa was arduous, stretching across vast deserts and stony plains, yet Muslim's pace remained unwavering.

Historical records attest that Muslim ibn Aqil departed from Mecca on the 15th of the month of Ramadan and reached Kufa by the 5th of Shawwal, a journey completed in approximately twenty days, covering nearly 70 kilometers each day.

Such swift and disciplined progress leaves little room for the fables later advanced by unreliable narrators, claims that Muslim ibn Aqil was lost in the desert, that his guides perished of thirst, or that Muslim wrote to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} seeking to be relieved of his mission.

Examination of isnad reliability across the traditional accounts in Tarikh al Tabari, al Bidayah wa al Nihayah, and al Irshad establishes that these reports are unfounded and lack any credible chain of transmission.

Indeed, the historical evidence affirms that Muslim ibn Aqil's determination never wavered. The distances traversed and the time required render any exchange of letters between Mecca and the desert routes of the Hijaz implausible.

Moreover, it is inconceivable that Muslim ibn Aqil, a man chosen for this mission, would have interpreted ill omens or recoiled from a duty entrusted to him by the Imam ^{a.s}.

In this light, the claims that Muslim ibn Aqil faltered or sought to withdraw from his task are historically baseless. They contradict his known character, his conduct throughout the journey, and the explicit trust placed in Muslim by the Imam ^{a.s}.

Scholars have long established that such accounts are later fabrications, likely originating from Umayyad-leaning circles, intended to diminish the stature of Muslim ibn Aqil and to obscure the clarity and purpose of his mission.

Thus, Muslim ibn Aqil pressed onward with determination, enduring the rigors of the desert until Muslim reached the land of Iraq. His footsteps traced a path of loyalty, his endurance bore witness to his faith, and his arrival in Kufa marked the opening of one of the most consequential chapters in the unfolding tragedy of Karbala.



THE ARRIVAL OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL INTO KUFA

Muruj al Dhahab records that it was on the fifth day of Shawwal when Muslim ibn Aqil reached the outskirts of Kufa. Muslim was accompanied by three trusted companions: Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, Amarah ibn Ubayd al Saluli, and Abdul Rahman ibn Abdullah ibn al Kudn al Arhabi. The city was already restless; its atmosphere was heavy with anticipation and suspicion, as the patrols of Nu'man al Bashir kept vigilant watch.

The envoy entered Kufa, crossing its threshold without fanfare, and proceeded directly to the house of al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd al Thaqafi ⁴¹. The residence stood adjacent to the mosque, close enough to the heart of the city to command influence, yet discreet enough to serve as a temporary headquarters for a movement still shrouded in secrecy.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that within this house, the Shi'ah of Kufa began to arrive in small groups, one after another. They came quietly and cautiously, yet with hearts drawn by hope. Whenever a considerable number had assembled, Muslim ibn Aqil would take out the letter of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and read it aloud to them.

Al Kamil fi al Tarikh states that, as the words of the Imam ^{a.s} reached their ears, tears flowed freely down the faces of those present. The letter settled deeply into their hearts, and they vowed to defend him and to fight alongside him against oppression.

Some historical reports indicate that the Imam ^{a.s} had instructed Muslim ibn Aqil to reside in the house of Hani ibn Urwah and to establish it as the central hub for correspondence and organisation. Yet the majority of accounts agree that upon his arrival in Kufa, Muslim first stayed at the house of al Mukhtar al Thaqafi. This appears to have been a deliberate and calculated decision. By dispersing appearances and concealing the true headquarters of the movement, Muslim ensured that the Umayyad authorities remained unaware that the house of Hani was, in reality, the nerve centre of the developing uprising.

This veil of secrecy protected the movement during its most vulnerable early stages.

During one such gathering with the leading men of Kufa, after Muslim ibn Aqil had finished reading the letter of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri rose to his feet. He praised Allah ^{AZJ} and glorified Him, then spoke with sincerity:

“As for what follows, I will not speak to you about the people, for I do not know what is in their hearts, nor will I deceive you regarding them. But by Allah ^{AZJ}! I will tell you what I have fixed upon for myself. By Allah ^{AZJ}! I shall answer your call when you summon me, and I shall fight alongside you against your enemy. I will strike with my sword on your behalf until I meet Allah ^{AZJ}. I desire nothing by this except what is with Allah ^{AZJ}.”

⁴¹ al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd ibn Masud al Thaqafi (Abu Ishaq) was born in the first year after the Hijrah. Though al Mukhtar lived during the time of the Prophet ^{saws}, he did not meet him and narrated no traditions. His father was respected among the Thaqaf, and his uncle Sad ibn Masud al Thaqafi appointed him deputy over al Madain in 37 AH, where al Mukhtar remained until after the Year of Unity in 40 AH. While Sunni scholars differ on his motives, they generally regard him as a man of ability. Among the Shiah, al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd is remembered as the avenger of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

No sooner had he spoken than Habib ibn Muzahir al Faq'asi al Asadi stood and said, “May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you! You have expressed what is in your heart in brief yet comprehensive words.”

Then Habib ibn Muzahir added,

“And I, by Allah ^{AZJ}! There is no god but He ^{AZJ}! I am upon what this man has stated.”

Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi, the envoy of the people of Kufa to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, also affirmed the same resolution. Sa'id ibn Abdullah had only recently returned after delivering the noble Imam's ^{a.s} reply and stood as the link between Kufa and the Imam ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari preserves a revealing exchange between al Hajjaj ibn Ali and Muhammad ibn Bashir in this very meeting. Al Hajjaj ibn Ali relates,

“I said to Muhammad ibn Bashir, ‘Did you say anything of your own accord?’”

Ibn Bashir replied,

“Although I wished for my companions to be honoured by Allah ^{AZJ} with victory, I did not wish to be killed, therefore I could not bring myself to lie.”

In these words lies a subtle but telling tension, an early sign of the fragile resolve that would later fracture under fear and pressure.

The fervour of Kufa, though loud, was not yet free from hesitation.

Shaykh al Mufid records in al Irshad that by this stage, 18,000 men had pledged their allegiance to Muslim ibn Aqil. ⁴² They placed their hands in his and swore their loyalty, promising aid, obedience, and support.

The scale of this response signalled a visible weakening of Umayyad authority in Kufa and gave the appearance of a city ready to receive Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi states that, acting upon the Imam's ^{a.s} instructions, Muslim immediately wrote to inform the Imam ^{a.s} of the pledges and urged him to come to Kufa.

Exercising utmost caution, Muslim ibn Aqil entrusted this letter to Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, who set out to deliver Muslim's message to the Imam ^{a.s}.

It is also noteworthy that several early sources record that when the people of Kufa first wrote to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, they claimed that one hundred thousand men stood ready to fight on his behalf. Shaykh al Mufid narrates that they wrote,

“There are one hundred thousand swords for you here, so do not delay.”

This declaration, however, should not be taken as a precise measure of pledged allegiance. Rather, it reflects the intensity of their enthusiasm and an attempt to convey the scale of support they claimed existed within the city of Kufa.

⁴² Historical sources differ on how many pledged allegiance to Muslim ibn Aqil, with reports ranging from 12,000 to over 30,000. However, the majority of early and authoritative sources, including al Akhbar al Tiwal, al Irshad, Tarikh al Tabari, al Thiqaat, Ansab al Ashraf, and al Tabaqat al Kubra, report 18,000, making it the most reliable figure. Reports of 12,000 likely reflect the early stage of his mission before numbers grew, while higher figures appear in fewer sources and seem to be estimates rather than verified accounts.

Bihar al Anwar relates from Dawood Abu Hind, from al Shaby, that forty thousand from the people of Kufa pledged themselves to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], declaring that they would fight those whom he fought and make peace with those with whom he made peace. In response to their letters, a reply was sent accepting their call and promising a swift arrival, and the noble Imam ^[a.s.] dispatched Muslim ibn Aqil.

Thus, in the shadowed lanes surrounding the house of al Mukhtar, the people of Kufa once again stood at the threshold of a decisive moment, as the tide of their allegiance gathered with urgency yet remained uncertain beneath the surface.



THE KHUTBAH OF AL NU'MAN IBN BASHIR

The presence of Muslim ibn Aqil was not destined to remain concealed for long. Al Irshad states that the Shi'ah began to visit Muslim in such numbers that the house in which Muslim resided soon became widely known throughout Kufa, and its location was inevitably reported to the Umayyad governor, al Nu'man ibn Bashir ⁴³.

Rawdat al Wa'izin states that al Nu'man had governed the city since the era of Muawiyah, and that Yazid ibn Muawiyah had merely confirmed him in that post. Yet al Nu'man was a man inclined toward restraint and conciliation rather than harsh repression.

As unrest began to thicken the air of Kufa, Tarikh al Tabari narrates, through Abu al Waddak ⁴⁴, that the troubled al Nu'man ibn Bashir emerged from his residence and ascended the pulpit. The city was restless, its streets murmuring with dissent.

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah states that al Nu'man stood before the assembled people, praised Allah ^[AZJ], glorified Him, and then addressed them with measured words:

“As for what follows:

Fear Allah ^[AZJ], O servants of Allah ^[AZJ], and do not hasten toward sedition and division, for indeed in them men are destroyed, blood is spilled, and wealth is seized.

I will not fight those who do not fight me, nor will I attack those who do not attack me.

I will not insult you, nor provoke you.

I shall not arrest anyone based on suspicion, second-guessing their intentions, or rumour.

However, let it be clear that if you display defiance, renege on your oaths of allegiance, and oppose your leader and imam, then by Allah ^[AZJ], other than Whom there is no deity, I shall strike at you with my sword as long as it remains in my hand, even if I have no helper from among you.

Yet I hope that those among you who recognize the truth are more than those who have been deluded by falsehood.”

A heavy silence settled over the gathering. According to Tarikh al Tabari, the hush was soon broken by a figure closely allied to the Umayyads, Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Sa'id al Hadrami, whose name also appears among those who bore witness against Hujr ibn Adi.

⁴³ al Numan ibn Bashir ibn Sad al Khazraji al Ansari was a later companion of the Prophet ^[saws]. His mother, Amrah bint Rawahah, was the sister of Abdullah ibn Rawahah, martyred at Mutah. Al Numan is said to have been the first child born among the Ansar after the Hijrah, as Abdullah ibn al Zubayr was among the Muhajirun. His father, Bashir ibn Sad, was the first of the Ansar to pledge allegiance to the first tyrant Abu Bakr at Saqifah and was later killed at Ayn al Tamr.

Al Numan, from a notable family, was also a poet. He supported Uthman and opposed the people of Kufa for their loyalty to Imam Ali ^[a.s.]. At Siffin, al Numan was the only Ansari to fight for Muawiyah, who later appointed him governor of Hims and then Kufa, a post al Numan retained under Yazid.

After the death of al Dahhak ibn Qays at Marj Rahit, al Numan called the people of Hims to support Abdullah ibn al Zubayr over Marwan, but they refused. He fled and was captured and killed in 65 AH.

⁴⁴ The narrator Abu al Waddak was regarded by both Sunni and Shia biographical traditions as a dependable and respected transmitter, whose narrations carried authority within early Kufan scholarship.

Rising before the people, Abdullah ibn Muslim challenged the governor's posture of restraint and declared:

"What you see will not be rectified except by force.

This stance of yours between you and your enemy is the opinion of the weak."

Al Irshad states that al Nu'man did not hesitate in his reply and retorted:

"To be among the weak in obedience to Allah ^{AZJ} is more beloved to me than to be among the mighty in disobedience to Allah ^{AZJ}."

With that, al Nu'man ibn Bashir descended from the pulpit.

He left behind a courtyard heavy with unease and a city further divided, as the undercurrents of dissent continued to gather strength beneath the surface of Kufa.



THE LETTERS OF ALARM

The restrained words of al Nu'man ibn Bashir did not soothe Kufa; rather, they ignited its adversaries. From within the Mosque of Kufa, the Umayyad partisan Abdullah ibn Muslim rose in visible fury.

To him, the governor's forbearance was not wisdom but a betrayal of Umayyad loyalty. Without delay, he withdrew and set about composing a letter that would help seal the fate of the city. It was dispatched at once to Yazid ibn Muawiyah in Damascus:

"As for what follows:

Indeed, Muslim ibn Aqil has entered Kufa, and his Shi'ah have pledged allegiance to him on behalf of al Hussein ibn Ali.

So if you have any claim over Kufa, then send to it a strong man who will carry out your command and act toward your enemy as you would act. For al Nu'man ibn Bashir is a weak man, or he feigns weakness."

Thus, Abdullah ibn Muslim became the first to sound the alarm from Kufa. Yet his voice was not solitary for long.

Almost immediately, a second letter followed, sent by Amarah ibn Uqbah ⁴⁵, echoing the same warning: Umayyad authority in Kufa was eroding, and the situation was slipping beyond control.

According to Tarikh al Tabari, a third letter soon arrived, written by a name that history would bind forever to infamy, Umar ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas ⁴⁶.

Al Irshad relates that, driven by ambition, fear, and loyalty to power, these men urged Yazid to act decisively and without delay.

They warned him that should Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} himself reach Kufa, it would spell their ruin and the collapse of Umayyad dominion in Iraq.

Within two days, Damascus was flooded with these letters of alarm, and the fate of Kufa hung suspended between rebellion and repression.

⁴⁵ Amarah ibn Uqbah, brother of al Walid ibn Uqbah ibn Abi Muayt, came from a family closely tied to the history of the Prophets household. During Hudaybiyyah, Amarah and his brother went from Mecca to Medinah to demand the return of their sister Umm Kulthum al Muhajirah, but the Prophet ^{saws} refused. Amarah later settled in Rahbat al Kufah. His daughter Umm Ayyub married al Mughirah ibn Shubah and, after his death, Ziyad ibn Abihi.

Amarah incited Ziyad against Amr ibn al Hamq. His father, Uqbah ibn Abi Muayt, had been executed by order of the Prophet after pleading for his children and being told, "The Fire." Amarah ibn Uqbah later appeared in the governors palace on the day of Muslim ibn Aqil's martyrdom and denounced al Mukhtar to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. After this, Amarah ibn Uqbah disappears from the sources.

⁴⁶ Umar ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was born to Bushrah bint Qays ibn Abi al Kaysam, a captive from the wars after the death of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. Umar ibn Sa'd was born in the early second decade after Hijrah, making him about fifty years old on the day of Ashura. In his youth, his father Sa'd sent him with Iyad ibn Ghanm in the campaigns of al Jazirah. During the arbitration in 37 AH, Umar ibn Sa'd urged his father to attend the council at Adhruh in 'Dumat al Jandal' and claim the caliphate, saying, "O my father, attend and testify, for you are a companion of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and among the Shura, and the most deserving of it."

Hisham relates, on the authority of Awanah, that when the letters accumulated with such alarming speed, Yazid summoned Sarjun ibn Mansur al Rumi ⁴⁷, the Melkite Roman Christian scribe who had served Muawiyah as chief fiscal administrator of the diwan al kharaj. Fluent in both Arabic and Greek, Sarjun was among the most trusted and seasoned of the Umayyad counsellors. Yazid opened the audience with evident agitation:

“Al Hussein has set out toward Kufa, and Muslim ibn Aqil is in Kufa taking pledges of allegiance for al Hussein. It has reached me that Nu'man is a feeble man, and there are other troubling reports regarding him. Read his letters.

What do you see? Whom should I appoint over Kufa?”

Though displeased with Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, Yazid knew well his ruthlessness and administrative competence. Still, he hesitated.

Sarjun replied with deliberate calculation: “Tell me, if Muawiyah were brought back to life for you and gave you advice, would you accept his counsel?”

Yazid answered, “Yes.”

At this, Sarjun produced a sealed letter of appointment written by Muawiyah, designating Ubayd Allah governor of Kufa.

“This,” he said, “is the advice of Muawiyah. For when he was near death, he intended to grant the governorship of both Basra and Kufa to Ibn Ziyad.”

Al Futuh states that Yazid responded, “By my life, this is the correct view,” and he yielded to the counsel placed before him.

Years later, this sequence of events would be recounted by Ammar al Duhni ⁴⁸ in precise detail: Yazid conferred with Sarjun, it was suggested that Ubayd Allah was the sole man fit to deal with Kufa, and Yazid accepted this counsel and issued the fatal order to kill Muslim ibn Aqil if he were found.

According to al Kamil fi al Tarikh, Yazid ibn Muawiyah entrusted the letter to Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili ⁴⁹, commanding him to deliver it with all haste to Ubayd Allah in Basra.

⁴⁷ Sarjun ibn al Mansur al Rumi, also known as Sergios or Sir John, was a Melkite Arab Christian whose father had served as a financial official under the Byzantines. Originally a freedman of Muawiyah, Sarjun became his trusted secretary and continued in this role under Yazid and Abdul Malik ibn Marwan. Though Sarjun remained Christian for much of his life, Sarjun was permitted to maintain a private chapel behind Bab al Faradis in Damascus after its conquest, and some reports say he later accepted Islam. Sarjun was close to Yazid and reportedly advised him to appoint Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad as governor of Kufa when Muslim ibn Aqil's influence grew. Sarjun remained a key official under Abdul Malik, overseeing state finances, and after his death the office of secretary went from non Muslims to Muslims.

⁴⁸ Ammar al Duhni, also known as Abu Muawiyah ibn Ammar, was a companion of Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} and Imam al Kadhim ^{a.s}. Ammar was regarded as trustworthy by the general body of scholars. His father Ammar was likewise known as Abu Muawiyah and considered reliable in transmission.

⁴⁹ Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili's career spanned shifting allegiances. After escorting Ibn Ziyad to Kufa, Muslim ibn Amr urged Hani ibn Urwah to surrender Muslim ibn Aqil and later insulted the captive at the palace gate. Muslim ibn Amr later served Musab ibn al Zubayr as a close advisor and died with him at Dayr al Jathaliq in 71 AH during the conflict against Marwan. Known for his love of wealth, Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili left seven sons who later aligned with al Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Among them, Qutaybah, appointed governor of Khurasan in 86 AH, led major campaigns across Transoxiana and reached the borders of China before being killed with his brothers in 96 AH.

Al Khawarizmi preserves the text of the letter Yazid ibn Muawiyah wrote to Ibn Ziyad:

“Peace be upon you.

From the servant of Allah ^{AZJ}, Yazid, commander of the faithful, to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Sometimes the deserving becomes blameworthy, and at other times, the blameworthy becomes deserving; you have merits and shortcomings. But you are familiar with, and have become ready to fulfil, important roles, just as the poet said:

‘You have risen until you are higher than the clouds,

Now you deserve no less than a seat next to the sun.’

Of all possible times, your time, and of all possible locations, your location, has been beset with the matter of al Hussein; and out of all possible officials, it is you who has been chosen to face this challenge. You will either fulfil my directives and retain your freedom, or you will be subjugated and made to serve like other slaves.

Now, my followers, ‘shia’, among the Kufans have informed me that Muslim ibn Aqil is gathering supporters in Kufa, seeking to sow discord among the Muslims.

A large number of the followers, ‘shia’, of Abu Turab Ali have gathered around him.

So when you receive this letter of mine, make haste. Once you have read my instructions, go to Kufa and relieve me of concern regarding its affairs.

I have appointed you as its governor and annexed it to your current duties of Basra and Kufa. Make sure to search for Muslim ibn Aqil high and low.

When you find him, obtain his bay'ah, or kill him if he refuses to pledge it.

Know that no excuse will be accepted from you if you fail me in what I have commanded you to do. So hurry, hurry, without delay. And Peace.”

Tarikh al Tabari states that Muslim ibn Amr delivered both the authorisation and the letter to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad in Basra. Upon reading its contents, heavy with threat and command, Ibn Ziyad ordered immediate preparations. The governor of the two cities armed himself without delay and decided to ride for Kufa the very next morning.

Al Irshad states that in this manner, Yazid ibn Muawiyah extended the authority of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad from Basra to include Kufa, explicitly informing Ibn Ziyad of the presence of Muslim ibn Aqil and the looming arrival of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and instructing him to apprehend and to kill Muslim ibn Aqil to halt the movement.

Thus, through a convergence of secret letters, inherited enmities, and urgent counsel, Yazid's decree sped across the desert.

Al Nu'man ibn Bashir's conciliatory voice was to be silenced, Kufa was to be seized, and Muslim ibn Aqil, was to be tracked, bound, and slain if necessary. The blade of policy had been placed in the hands of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, and the roads of Iraq would soon echo with the hoofbeats of his arrival.

“When tyranny became wide-spread, injustice removed its veil, wickedness called upon its followers, and you were residing in the sanctuary of your grandfather, detached from the oppressors, sitting in the house and the prayer niche.” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

THE CITY OF BASRA

THE FIVE CHIEFS OF BASRA

As the winds of trial gathered over the Islamic world, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned his attention toward Basra, which stood among the great garrison cities, influential in wealth, tribal power, and military strength. It was governed by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, and it contained individuals and tribal leaders known for their devotion to the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}. Recognising its political and strategic importance, the Imam ^{a.s} sought to invite them toward the truth, as the Imam ^{a.s} became increasingly surrounded by Umayyad tyranny.

From his position of moral clarity and prophetic inheritance, the Imam ^{a.s} addressed the people of that city, dispatching his message by way of his servant, Sulayman. ⁵⁰

Abu Mikhnaf transmits the account through Abu Uthman al Nahdi ⁵¹ that copies of the letter were sent to the chiefs of Basra’s five tribal divisions, the ‘Ru’us al Akhmas’. Among those addressed were Malik ibn Masma al Bakri ⁵², al Ahnaf Sakhr ibn Qays ⁵³,

⁵⁰ Most sources differ on the identity of the emissary who carried Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} letter to Basra. name him Sulayman, as reported by Ibn al Atham and al Khawarizmi, while al Luhuf calls him Abu Razin and names his father. Akhbar al Tiwal records him as Salman.

Sulayman ibn Abi Razins mother, Kabsha, was a bond woman of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} who had served Umm Ishaq al Tamimiyya. Abu Razin married her, and she bore Sulayman. Other reports differ, with Ibn Nima naming Dhari al Sudusi, and Sayyid al Amin mentioning both names together.

⁵¹ Abu Mikhnaf transmits this account through al Saqqab ibn Zuhayr, from Abu Uthman al Nahdi. al Saqqab ibn Zuhayr al Azdi al Kufi narrated from Ata ibn Yasar and Amr ibn Shuayb; among those who transmitted from him were his nephew Lut ibn Yahya (Abu Mikhnaf) and Abu Ismail al Azdi.

⁵² Malik ibn Masma al Bakri al Jahdari was a politically active figure whose early status was shaped by his loyalty to Marwan ibn al Hakam after his defeat, earning the favor of the Banu Marwan. He generally leaned toward the Umayyads but showed shifting loyalties. He refused to support Ziyad ibn Abihi against ibn al Hadrami, yet after Yazids death, Malik first pledged to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, then broke with him and joined in the plundering of the treasury. He was appointed over the Bakr ibn Wail confederation, overseeing major tribal groups of the region. When the Azd settled in Basra, he renewed their alliance and in 64 AH joined them in revolt to restore Ibn Ziyad’s authority, but the rebellion failed and his house was burned. Despite this, he retained influence. He later defended al Mukhtars followers out of tribal loyalty and was made commander over the Bakr ibn Wail contingent against Musab ibn al Zubayr. He later protected Khalid ibn Abdullah, envoy of Abdul Malik, and lost an eye in battle. Seeking safety, he accepted amnesty from Musabs deputy, but Khalid was expelled. Fearing reprisals, Malik fled to Thaj. Musab then demolished his house, and Malik ibn Masma disappears from the historical record.

⁵³ Al Akhnaf Sakhr ibn Qays Abu Bahr al Sadi was a prominent leader of Basra who reportedly narrated from al Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib. His rise began in 17 AH when Utba ibn Ghazwan sent him to Umar ibn al Khattab, who later trusted him with the banner of Khurasan. He fought the Persians, pursued Yazdegerd, secured Herat in 31 AH, and concluded agreements with Marw Rud and Balkh.

Before the Battle of the Camel, Aisha wrote to him. Al Akhnaf Sakhr met Imam Ali ^{a.s}, who urged him to restrain his people, and he prevented Banu Tamim from joining the battle. Afterward, he entered Basra with the Imam ^{a.s}, renewed his allegiance, and later joined him at Siffin, commanding major tribal contingents. He opposed aspects of the arbitration, warned Abu Musa, and helped prevent internal conflict. He remained a trusted figure, even joining the Imams ^{a.s} private councils. In 50 AH, he visited Muawiyah and was rewarded, and in 59 AH returned again. After Yazids death, Al Akhnaf Sakhr briefly supported Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad but withdrew and later backed ibn al Zubayr. He led Banu Tamim against the Azd, killing their leader and forcing Ibn Ziyad to flee, then pledged to ibn al Zubayr. In 67 AH, he fought with Musab ibn al Zubayr against al Mukhtar and advised executing his followers. Al Akhnaf Sakhr died by 71 AH, remembered as a skilled and influential tribal statesman of Basra.

al Mundhir ibn al Jarud ⁵⁴, Mas'ud ibn Amr ⁵⁵, Qays ibn al Haytham ⁵⁶, and Amr ibn Abdullah ibn Mamar.

Malik ibn Masma' was the chief of Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il in Basra and a politically active notable during the volatile period following the death of Muawiyah.

Al Ahnaf Sakhr ibn Qays was a distinguished leader of Banu Sa'd from Tamim, renowned for intellect, prudence, and political acumen.

Al Mundhir ibn al Jarud was a prominent chief of Abdul Qays and an early supporter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

In the Battle of the Camel (Jamal), al Mundhir ibn al Jarud stood with the Imam ^{a.s} and led the contingents of Jadha' and Bakr from among the Abdul Qays in defence of his cause.

Mas'ud ibn Amr was the chief of the Azd in Basra, wielding considerable tribal authority. Qays ibn al Haytham likewise held notable influence within the city’s political order.

Each of these men held influence within the city; each represented a potential avenue through which the call of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} might yet find a response.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that the letter of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to the nobles of Basra was composed with clarity, gravity, and a deeply rooted moral call.

⁵⁴ Al Mundhir ibn al Jarud al Abdi was linked to the Umayyads through his daughter Bahriyya (or Hind), wife of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. When the poet Yazid ibn Mufarrigh satirised the family of Ziyad, al Mundhir granted him protection, but Ibn Ziyad refused to honour it, straining their relationship. Despite this, Ibn Ziyad later appointed him governor of al Sind, where Al Mundhir ibn al Jarud remained until his death in 62 AH, dying in office away from Basra.

⁵⁵ Masud ibn Amr ibn Adi al Azdi was chief of the Azd in Basra after the death of Yazid ibn Muawiyah. During the uprising, Masud ibn Amr commanded the Azd and held major influence. When Basra turned against Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, Masud granted him refuge. Thus, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad remained here for about ninety days before departing for al Sham, leaving Masud as his deputy over Basra. Masud then assumed authority from the governors palace. During his rule, Kharijites entered Basra and attacked him while Masud was taking pledges in the mosque. The assault was backed by 400 to 500 Asawirah led by Mah Afridun. In the fighting that followed, Masud was killed. The Azd retaliated, defeating the attackers and expelling them from the city.

Some reports say men from Banu Tamim had aided the insurgents, leading to a violent clash between the Azd and Banu Tamim with heavy losses. Peace was later reached through compensation, with the Azd receiving 100,000 dirhams for the death of Masud ibn Amr.

⁵⁶ Al Qays ibn al Haytham al Sulami had a fluctuating career during the Umayyad period. In 32 AH, Al Qays was appointed governor of Khurasan alongside his cousin Abdullah ibn Khazim, but during a rebellion he ceded authority to him to avoid division and returned to Basra. Before Uthmans death, Al Qays urged the people of Basra to support the Caliph, but the effort ended upon news of his assassination. In 41 AH, he became chief of police in Basra and later governed Khurasan, but resigned when facing dismissal for delays in tax revenues. Al Qays was then flogged, humiliated, and imprisoned by Ibn Amir, before being released through his mothers intercession. Despite this, Al Qays ibn al Haytham was later reinstated and strengthened ties with the Umayyads through marriage to Muawiyahs daughter, though he was again dismissed. He was later assigned to frontier command and, after the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, briefly served as deputy over Khurasan under Yazid before being removed. After Yazids death, he returned to Basra, was consulted in leadership matters, and later aligned with ibn al Zubayr. He suppressed pro Mukhtar movements, commanded forces under Musab ibn al Zubayr, and remained active in conflicts against Abdul Malik ibn Marwan. His final record is in 71 AH, when Al Qays likely died fighting alongside Musab ibn al Zubayr.

The letter read as follows:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

From al Hussein ibn Ali to Malik ibn Misma, al Ahnaf ibn Qays, al Mundhir ibn al Jarud, Mas'ud ibn Amr, and Qays ibn al Haytham: Peace be upon you.

As for what follows: Verily, Allah ^{AZJ} has chosen Muhammad ^{saws} over His creation, honoured him with prophethood, and selected him for His message. Then Allah ^{AZJ} took him to Himself after he had advised His servants and conveyed what he had been sent with.

We are his family, his close ones, his executors, his inheritors, and the most deserving of the people for his position among mankind. Yet our people withheld it from us, and we accepted that, disliking division and preferring peace.

We knew ourselves to be more deserving of that rightful claim than those who took it.

I have sent my messenger to you with this letter, and I invite you to the Book of Allah ^{AZJ} and the Sunnah of His Prophet ^{saws}. Surely, the Sunnah has been put to death, and innovation has been revived. If you listen to my words and obey my command, I will guide you to the path of righteousness. And peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah ^{AZJ}.”

Measured in tone yet heavy with meaning, the letter carried within it a restrained lament. It acknowledged the profound tragedy that had unfolded with the sidelining of the Household of the Prophet ^{saws} from the position to which they had been divinely entitled.

Yet the Imam ^{a.s} had not responded with rebellion or hostility, but had borne the loss for the sake of Islam.

The Imam ^{a.s} clarified that they had borne this injustice deliberately, not in approval of what had occurred, but out of a principled fear for the unity of the Muslim community and the preservation of Islam from internal fracture. Their forbearance, as the Imam ^{a.s} made clear, was neither weakness nor acquiescence. It was a conscious sacrifice, undertaken to ward off division at a time when the ummah was still fragile.

Soon thereafter, the letter reached the hands of the notables of Basra, those whom Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had addressed in careful sequence. Each man who read that letter concealed it, whether out of fear, political calculation, or an unwillingness to entangle himself in what he perceived to be a perilous confrontation with the ruthless Umayyad governor.

All, that is, except for al Mundhir ibn al Jarud.

Al Mundhir alone reacted differently, though not in a manner that would lend support to the Imam ^{a.s}. According to what he later claimed, al Mundhir feared that Sulayman, the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, might be a spy sent by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to test his allegiances. Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that al Mundhir disclosed the letter because his daughter Hind (or Bahriyah) was married to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Thus, whether driven by fear or loyalty to the regime, al Mundhir's next act would prove fatal.

On the night before Sulayman's intended departure, al Mundhir brought him before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and informed the governor about the letter, revealing its contents.

This was a letter not meant for Ibn Ziyad, and its disclosure sealed the messenger's fate.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad listened intently, now aware of the simmering dissent within his city. Ibn Ziyad then ordered that the messenger, Sulayman, be brought forward and commanded that his neck be struck. Nafasul Mahmoom states that Ibn Ziyad ordered that Sulayman be crucified. The messenger Sulayman, the son of Abu Razin and Kabsha, thus would become the first blood shed on the path to Karbala.

The execution heightened Ibn Ziyad's vigilance. Ever more wary of dissent in Basra, he tightened his grip on the city. Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu al Mukhariq al Rasibi ⁵⁷ that a group of the faithful Shi'ah would gather secretly in the house of Mariyah, daughter of Sa'd (or Munqidh), of the Abdul Qays tribe. Mariyah was known for her devotion to the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}, and her home became a refuge where the followers of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} could meet in secret and speak freely of their hopes.

When murmurs of these gatherings reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, he ordered the roads to be watched so that no one might escape Basra to join Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Among those present in Mariyah's home was Yazid ibn Nubayt of Abdul Qays, a man blessed with ten sons. A yearning took hold of Yazid ibn Nubayt, he could not ignore the call of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Turning to his sons, Yazid ibn Nubayt asked,

“Which of you will go out with me?” to support Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Only two responded: Abdullah and Ubayd Allah. They volunteered to accompany their father and decided to ride out from Basra and make their way to the Imam ^{a.s} in Mecca. When others warned Yazid ibn Nubayt of Ibn Ziyad's agents watching the roads,

Yazid ibn Nubayt replied with tenacity, “I have committed to depart. By Allah ^{AZJ}, if the hoofs of our camels reach solid ground, their pursuit will not concern us.”

Tarikh al Tabari relates that Yazid ibn Nubayt set out from Basra and hastened until he reached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, entering his camp at al Abtah. When the Imam ^{a.s} was informed of his arrival, the Imam ^{a.s} personally arose and went to meet Yazid ibn Nubayt. Not finding Yazid among the tents, the Imam ^{a.s} returned and sat in his camp, waiting for the traveller.

When Yazid ibn Nubayt was informed that the Imam ^{a.s} himself had gone out in search of him, he hastened after the Imam ^{a.s}. As Yazid approached, he saw Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} seated, awaiting his arrival. Overcome with joy, Yazid ibn Nubayt recited the verse,

“*Say, O Prophet, In Allah's grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever wealth they amass.*” (Q10:58)

They greeted one another, and Yazid ibn Nubayt explained his purpose.

The Imam ^{a.s} prayed for him, and Yazid ibn Nubayt thereafter remained in his company, alongside his two sons until the fateful day of Ashura.

⁵⁷ Abu al Mukhariq al Rasibi, mentioned here by Abu Mikhnaf, is more accurately Abu al Ajlan al Muharibi. The confusion between the two names occurs in several biographical works: al Dhahabi (al Kashif, vol.3; al Mughni, vol. 2) and ibn Hajar (Tahdhib al Tahdhib, vol. 12). al Hakim Abu Ahmad notes that Abu Mukhariq Mughra al Abdi narrated from ibn Umar, and from him narrated Abu Ishaq al Sabii and al Hasan ibn Ubayd Allah al Nakhai. Later authorities confirm the correction to Abu al Ajlan.

THE SERMON OF UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD

The dawn light of Basra had scarcely broken when Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad strode toward the pulpit. The intercepted letter of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and the murder of his emissary, Sulayman, weighed upon Ibn Ziyad, for the danger was now nearer. His bearing betrayed no hesitation as the sandaled feet of Ibn Ziyad struck the steps of the minbar. Ibn Ziyad ascended the pulpit without ceremony, pausing only long enough for the murmurs of the gathered congregants to subside, until the mosque fell into a tense and expectant silence.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad cast his gaze over all those seated before the minbar. Nafasul Mahmoom states that Ibn Ziyad then praised Allah ^[AZJ] and glorified Him. Then, lifting his voice, harsh and threatening, he spoke so that his words carried to every corner of the mosque:

“As for what follows! By Allah ^[AZJ]! The wild she-camel, ‘al Sa’bah’, does not throw me off, nor does the sound of armor cause me to tremble in fear. Indeed, I am a punishment, al Qa’qa’ah, to whoever opposes me, and poison to whoever fights me!

‘Fair is the land to whoever dares to strike it.’ ⁵⁸

O people of Basra! The Commander of the Faithful, Yazid, has appointed me over Kufa, and I depart for it this very morning. I have appointed over you my brother, Uthman ibn Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan. Beware of opposition and of causing alarm! By the One ^[AZJ] besides whom there is no God!

If it reaches me that any one of you has opposed me, I will surely kill him. I will kill his tribal leader and his guardian, and I shall hold the nearest accountable for the furthest, until you all submit to me. None among you will oppose or dispute with me!

I am the son of Ziyad, the one who most resembles him among all those who have walked upon the earth!

And no likeness of a maternal uncle or cousin has stripped me of this resemblance!”

The imagery Ibn Ziyad employed was deliberate, and each phrase was calculated.

To declare that ‘the wild she-camel does not throw me off’ was to liken Basra itself to al Sa’bah, the notoriously unmanageable beast, and to boast that he alone could mount it and bend it to his will.

When Ibn Ziyad spoke of armor not rattling in fear of him, using the term ‘al Qa’qa’ah’, Ibn Ziyad referred to the ominous clanging of mail that echoes when men whisper dissent. By this, Ibn Ziyad warned that no murmuring against his authority would be tolerated, and that even the first sound of sedition would be met with violence.

⁵⁸ The boast of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, “Fair is the land to whoever dares to strike it,” alludes to a well-known pre-Islamic verse. In the Age of Ignorance, a marksman of the tribe al Qarrah confronted a rival and offered wrestling, racing, or archery. The challenger chose the bow. The man of al Qarrah recited: “Fair is the Qarrah tribe to whoever dares to challenge it. When we encounter a group, we drive its front back upon its rear.” He then loosed an arrow that pierced his opponent’s heart. By invoking this verse, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad likened the Umayyads to the peerless archers of al Qarrah, proclaiming that any rumour or uprising who faced them would meet the same fate.

When he named himself a ‘punishment,’ he employed a term reserved for vengeance unleashed without restraint, swift, merciless, and exemplary.

It was a declaration that his retribution would not merely suppress opposition, but annihilate it, leaving terror in its wake.

Yet even as Ibn Ziyad appeared to exalt Umayyad authority, he deliberately distinguished himself from certain members of the Umayyad house.

‘No likeness of a maternal uncle or cousin has stripped me of this resemblance,’ he declared, underscoring that he mirrored his father, Ziyad, in severity, vengeance, power, and harsh domination, not the indulgence for which his cousin Yazid was notorious: singing, music, hunting, and idle amusement. Al Sibṭ in his Tadhkirah also narrates this statement.

In the gathering hush, the meaning was unmistakable: Basra would know no softness, only the unyielding rule of Ziyad’s son.

Al Malhuf and Muthir al Ahzan relate that Ibn Ziyad ended his sermon without flourish. He descended from the pulpit, issued his orders, and began preparations for his march.

That night Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad remained in Basra; by morning, he would depart, leaving his brother, Uthman ibn Ziyad, to take charge over the people of Basra.

Behind Ibn Ziyad, the people of Basra remained still, hearing in every echoed footstep the warning Ibn Ziyad had etched into their fates: all insurrection or rumour-mongering would be crushed, and the nearest dissenter would answer for the farthest.



THE CALL OF DESTINY; YAZID IBN MASUD AL NAHSHALI

Among those to whom Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wrote in Basra was Yazid ibn Masud al Nahshali, one of its prominent nobles. Upon receiving the letter, Yazid ibn Masud gathered the clans of Tamim, Hanzala, and Sa'ad, seeking their counsel and support.

When they assembled, Yazid ibn Masud addressed the clan of Tamim, saying,

“O clan of Tamim, how do you regard my standing among you and my ties with you?”

They replied, “You are the strength of our backbone and the summit of our honour.

You stand foremost among the nobles, and none surpasses you in rank.”

Yazid ibn Masud said,

“I have gathered you for a matter upon which I seek your counsel and your support.”

They answered,

“We will advise you sincerely and stand with your judgment. Speak, and we will listen.”

Yazid ibn Masud then said,

“Muawiyah has died. With his death, a door of tyranny has been broken and the pillars of injustice shaken. Yet Muawiyah bound the affair with a pledge he believed secure, but Muawiyah failed in it. Now Yazid ibn Muawiyah has risen, a drinker of wine and a leader in corruption, claiming authority over the Muslims while ruling with ignorance and weakness.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah knows nothing of the truth beyond the measure of his own steps.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, striving against Yazid in the cause of religion is greater than striving against the polytheists. And here is al Hussein ibn Ali, the son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, possessing noble lineage, sound judgment, and unmatched virtue.

Al Hussein's knowledge is vast, his right is established, and he is most deserving of this matter due to his precedence, his age, and his closeness to the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. He is gentle with the young and compassionate toward the old. Through him, the affairs of the people would be set aright, and in him Allah ^{AZJ} has placed a binding proof and a far-reaching call.

Do not remain distant from the light of truth, nor linger in the depths of falsehood. Sakhr ibn Qays held you back on the day of the Camel, so cleanse that stain by rising to support the son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, no one abandons him except that Allah ^{AZJ} will leave disgrace among his descendants and weakness within his clan.

As for me, I have prepared myself for war and equipped myself with its armour. The one who is not killed will still die, and the one who flees will not escape death.

So respond well to this call. May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy upon you.”

The clan of Hanzala replied,

“O Abu Khalid, we are your arrows and your steeds. If you call upon us, we will answer, and if you fight, we will stand with you.

We will not shrink from hardship, nor will we leave you to face it alone.

We will support you with our swords and protect you with our lives.”

The clan of Sa'ad ibn Zayd said,

“O Abu Khalid, nothing is more difficult for us than opposing you. Yet Sakhr ibn Qays instructed us to refrain from fighting, and by that our honour remained intact.

Give us time to reflect, and we will return with our decision.”

The clan of Amir ibn Tamim said,

“O Abu Khalid, we are bound to you. We do not oppose you, nor do we hold back when you advance. Command us, and we will obey, for the matter rests with you.”

Yazid ibn Masud responded,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, O clan of Sa'ad, if you turn away now, the sword will never be lifted from you, nor will it cease to afflict you.”

According to al Malhuf, Yazid ibn Masud then wrote back to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with a letter filled with devotion and promise:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Your letter has reached me, and I have understood your message.

You have called me to prosper through obedience to you and to attain felicity by assisting you. Allah ^{AZJ} never leaves the earth without one who calls to righteousness and guides to the path of salvation.

You are the proof of Allah ^{AZJ} over His creation and His trust upon the earth. You come from the blessed tree of Ahmad; he is its root and you are its branch. So proceed with your affair with the confidence of the highest-flying birds.

I have secured for you the commitment of the Banu Tamim and left them more eager to follow you than thirsty camels rushing toward water.

I have also secured for you the Banu Sa'ad, and I have cleansed the stain from their hearts with pure water until they shine with loyalty.”

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} read these words, he responded with deep premonition:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} grant you security on the day of fear, honour you, and give you water on the day of the great thirst.”

Yet Yazid ibn Masud would never reach Karbala. As Yazid prepared to depart from Basra to join Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, news arrived that the Imam ^{a.s} had already been martyred.

The journey Yazid ibn Masud had intended to make was never begun, and the weight of that loss fell upon him with devastating finality.



THE DEPARTURE OF UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD

The caravan of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad set out from Basra after he entrusted the outward administration of the city to his brother, Uthman ibn Ziyad.

From the outset, the procession bore the marks of severity rather than splendour: a sparse column of riders cutting northward through the open land, their passage announced only by rising dust and the relentless rhythm of hooves. At its head rode Ibn Ziyad, accompanied by Yazid ibn Muawiyah's emissary, Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili, together with members of Ibn Ziyad's household, his servants, and no more than a dozen additional men.

Al Tabari relates, on the authority of Isa ibn Yazid al Kinani, that when the letter of Yazid ibn Muawiyah reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, he selected five hundred men from among the people of Basra to accompany him to Kufa.

Among those chosen were Abdullah ibn al Harith ibn Nawfal and, most notably, Shurayk ibn al A'war al Harithi ⁵⁹, men whose hearts inclined toward Imam Ali ^[a.s] and whose loyalties, concealed beneath outward obedience, leaned toward Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

As the ranks closed and the march pressed onward, the desert absorbed their trail. Behind them, Basra lay subdued beneath its newly imposed authority; ahead, the road to Kufa shimmered beneath an unforgiving sun, heavy with dust and foreboding.

When Shurayk ibn al A'war departed Basra, he was already aware of reports that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was journeying toward Kufa. From this knowledge, he conceived a plan to delay Ibn Ziyad's advance for as long as possible.

Along the road, Shurayk began to feign exhaustion and distress, deliberately slowing his pace in the hope that Ubayd Allah might be compelled to halt, or at least reduce the caravan's speed, thereby granting Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] time to reach Kufa before Ubayd Allah.

But Ibn Ziyad, driven by ambition and hardened by command, showed no inclination to pause. His tenacity was unyielding.

Without so much as a glance toward the faltering rider, Ubayd Allah urged the column onward. Shurayk's stratagem thus came to nothing, and he was the first to fall behind.

Soon thereafter, Abdullah ibn al Harith devised a similar ruse to impede the relentless progress of the caravan. He too deliberately lagged behind, drawing others with him in the hope that Ibn Ziyad might turn back, make camp, or wait for the stragglers.

Once again, Ibn Ziyad paid no heed. Ubayd Allah drove his horsemen forward without compromise until they reached al Qadisiyyah.

⁵⁹ Shurayk ibn al Awar al Harithi was appointed over Istakhr in Persia, where he built a mosque in 31 AH. Shurayk fought at Siffin alongside Imam Ali ^[a.s], showing strong support for Shiism and standing with Ammar ibn Yasir, and became known for his debate with Muawiyah. In 38 AH, Imam Ali ^[a.s] sent Shurayk with Jarir ibn Qudamah and men from Banu Tamim to Basra against ibn al Hadrami and Muawiyah's supporters. Shurayk was later sent by Abdullah ibn Amir with 3000 cavalry from Rabi'ah to fight al Mustawrid al Khariji, and in 59 AH, Shurayk was appointed governor of Kirman by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Shurayk arrived in Kufa but died of illness within days, and Ibn Ziyad led his funeral prayer.

There, even his servant Mihran collapsed beneath the strain of the merciless pace. Ibn Ziyad dismounted beside him and said,

"O Mihran! If you restrain yourself in this state until you see the palace of Kufa, you shall have a hundred thousand."

Mihran, gasping for breath, replied, "No, by Allah ^[AZJ], I cannot."

Realizing at last that his men could endure no more, Ibn Ziyad drew out patched garments from Yemen, coarse, travel-worn cloth, and wrapped his head in a Yemeni headcloth. Mounting his mule, he dismissed the others and proceeded alone toward Kufa, cloaked in disguise. He wore a black turban, and his face was covered as he advanced.

The city awaited, unaware that the son of Ziyad was drawing near, veiled, yet carrying the shadow of tyranny in his steps.



THE FITNAH OF UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD

THE DEPOSING OF AL NU'MAN

As the caravan approached Kufa under the thinning veil of night, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad passed silently by the guards who lined the road. Each time their eyes fell upon Ibn Ziyad, none doubted that he was perhaps Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. The people called out joyously,

“Welcome, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{[saws]!}”

Yet Ibn Ziyad offered no reply. He held his tongue in restraint, lest its forked nature betray him, lest a single word expose the arrogance of his spirit and reveal the vast chasm that separated his haughty self from the noble grandson of the Prophet ^[saws].

News had already spread among the people of Kufa that the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] was on his way. Anticipation coursed through the city like a living current. Men, women, and children emerged from their homes, pressing into the streets, eager for a glimpse of him. When al Nu'man ibn Bashir, the governor of Kufa, heard the cries and joy of the people, al Nu'man withdrew into his palace with those closest to him, being convinced that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] himself was nearing the gates of the Kufan palace.

Al Malhuf states that, disguised beneath a black turban and a veiled face, Ibn Ziyad pressed onward. The darkness concealed his features, and with every step the illusion deepened. More people were deceived into believing that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was approaching the governor's palace, and whenever Ibn Ziyad passed a gathering, they greeted him with reverence, saying,

“Welcome, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{[saws]!} You have come with the best arrival!”

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Abu Uthman al Nahdi, relates that Ibn Ziyad saw the joy upon their faces and the yearning in their eyes, and within him something smouldered.

Their longing for Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] burned him with envy and fury, yet Ibn Ziyad concealed it beneath a measured calm. This masquerade, born of deceit, served Ibn Ziyad well: it revealed to Ibn Ziyad the depth of the people's devotion to the Prophet's ^[saws] grandson and the scale of the challenge that lay ahead in wresting control of Kufa.

Thus, beneath the shadows of night, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad entered the outskirts of Kufa and continued through its dim streets. The people, still deceived by his veil and by the rumour of Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s.] arrival, followed in excitement as the city stirred with whispers of hope. Through winding lanes Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad passed, borne forward by the crowd's anticipation, until the night waned and dawn began to pale. By the time Ibn Ziyad neared the governor's palace, the sun had risen, and the gathering around him had swelled, each person convinced they were escorting the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

When Ibn Ziyad reached the palace, still cloaked in disguise and surrounded by the people's jubilation, al Nu'man ibn Bashir, believing this to be Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] himself, ordered the gates bolted and refused them entry.

Ibn Ziyad halted before the fortified doors as the murmurs thickened behind him. By midday, he stood before the gate with slightly more than ten of his loyal men beside him. One of them called out, demanding that the gate be opened.

Al Nu'man appeared upon the balcony, leaning out toward the clamouring crowd, and called down, “I invoke Allah ^[AZJ] before you! Do not come near me! By Allah ^[AZJ], I will not hand over my trust to you, and I have no desire to fight you.”

Tarikh al Tabari states that Ibn Ziyad did not respond to him. Instead, he stepped forward. While al Nu'man still leaned over the battlements, Ibn Ziyad called out in a voice that cut through the midday air, “Open, may you never be opened. Your night has already been long,” a rebuke laden with scorn for his inaction and weakness in governance.

A man standing behind Ibn Ziyad, upon hearing the sharp and unmistakable voice, froze. Turning to the people, he cried out,

“O people, by the One ^[AZJ] besides whom there is no god, this is Ibn Marjanah.” Yet the people refused to believe him and rebuked him, saying, “Woe to you, it is only al Hussein.”

The cries of welcome rose higher, and the crowd surged forward, nearly overwhelming the rider. Bihar al Anwar relates that they pressed in upon Ibn Ziyad, even seizing the tail of his mount, convinced that he was Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Ibn Ziyad, already angered by the fervour of the Kufan public for the Imam ^[a.s.], had restrained himself until now, for Ibn Ziyad had reached the gates of the palace safely to secure his position.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad cast aside his veil and barked, “I am Ubayd Allah!”

At that moment, the envoy of Yazid who had accompanied Ibn Ziyad, Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili, also shouted, “Stand back. This is the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.”

Abu Mikhnaq relates, through al Suq'ab ibn Zuhayr from Abu Uthman al Hindi, that when Ibn Ziyad entered the palace and the people realized who Ibn Ziyad truly was, a heavy gloom descended upon them and sorrow seized their hearts. Al Irshad and al Khawarizmi likewise record this moment of stunned dismay.

Shaykh al Mufid, citing al Mas'udi, adds that when the people recognized Ibn Ziyad, they began hurling stones at him in rage and despair. Yet Ubayd Allah escaped their grasp. Al Nu'man, perceiving the truth, now opened the gate for him, and Ibn Ziyad entered swiftly, sealing the door behind him. Deprived of hope, the crowd dispersed in silence and grief.

Tarikh al Tabari records that within the palace, Ibn Ziyad's fury smouldered. Hearing the murmurs of the people fade beyond the walls, he muttered bitterly,

“Will I ever see from these people what I just saw for al Hussein?” His gaze lingered upon the courtyard beyond, where moments earlier their joy had turned to dust.

According to al Malhuf, when Ibn Ziyad neared the city of Kufa, he halted until evening and then entered under cover of night.

The inhabitants, believing him to be Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], rejoiced at his arrival and gathered around him. But when they realized that it was Ibn Ziyad, they dispersed in sorrow.

Ubayd Allah then entered the governor's mansion and remained there for the night.

THE SERMON OF IBN ZIYAD IN KUFA

Abu Mikhnaf relates, on the authority of Abu Waddak, that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad entered Kufa under the cover of night, seized control of the governor's palace (al Qasr), and remained there until dawn.

When morning broke, the city awoke in a state of tense anticipation. A public call rang out through the streets, 'as-salatu jami'ah', the summons for all to gather.

A herald repeated the cry loudly within the alleys and streets, "The prayer is gathering!" and the people of Kufa streamed toward the great mosque.

The first light of day fell upon a city unsettled by fear and confusion. The echo of hurried sandals rang through Kufa's narrow lanes as men hastened toward the mosque, uncertain whether they were about to hear words of mercy or proclamations of terror.

Ibn Ziyad emerged wearing the same black turban that had sown confusion the night before. Still unsettled by the people's recent expressions of loyalty toward the Imam ^[a.s.], he ascended the pulpit, praised Allah ^[AZJ], and addressed the assembly:

"As for what follows! O people of Kufa!

Verily, the Commander of the Faithful, Yazid, may Allah ^[AZJ] reform him, has appointed me as the governor of your city and entrusted me with authority over this land.

Yazid has commanded me to establish justice for the oppressed among you, to give to the deprived among you, to show kindness to those among you who listen and obey, and to be severe with those who harbour suspicion or disobedience. I shall act among you according to his command and carry out his instructions concerning you."

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad then proceeded to add open threats of life to the masses,

"To the righteous and obedient among you, I shall be as a compassionate father. But my whip and my sword are upon whoever abandons my authority and breaks his pledge!

So let each person safeguard his own self!

Truthfulness (sidq) will speak on your behalf, not threats (wa'id)."

Muthir al Ahzan reports that these words thundered through the mosque, hollowing the hearts of those who had only days before whispered the name of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] with hope. Ibn Ziyad rebuked the tribal chiefs, admonished the masses, and issued dire threats against those he labelled rebels.

Ibn Ziyad ranted at length, unleashing a torrent of intimidation and menace.

Bihar al Anwar states that Ibn Ziyad again promised clemency to the obedient while warning of severe punishment for the disobedient.

In one report, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad added with scorn,

"Take my words to that Hashemi!", referring to Muslim ibn Aqil,

"And let him beware of my wrath!"

In another account, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad concluded by declaring:

"O people! I know that some of those who marched with me and showed obedience are in truth enemies of al Hussein, believing that al Hussein had already entered the city and gained control of it, and thus you celebrated. By Allah ^[AZJ], I have not recognized any one of you."

The words were carefully calculated, easing the immediate anxiety of the crowd while binding Kufa firmly under his authority. Later, he would deal with its people through coercion, bribery, and brute force, as he deemed fit.

When he descended from the pulpit, he returned to the palace. The deposed al Nu'man ibn Bashir was humiliated and departed for Damascus. Ibn Ziyad immediately began consolidating his rule with an iron hand. He summoned the tribal registrars and chiefs, nearly one hundred officials responsible for maintaining population rolls and distributing stipends from the public treasury (Bayt al Mal). For years, these men had bound Kufa's clans into a rigid administrative structure, their allowances issued annually in Muharram and their fay distributed after the harvest. Ibn Ziyad now tightened that structure into a noose.

Tarikh al Tabari records that Ibn Ziyad addressed the chiefs with undisguised hostility: "Write for me the names of the strangers and those among you whom the Commander of the Faithful, Yazid ibn Muawiyah, is searching for.

Also write the names of those who support the Khawarij (Haruriyyah) and the waverers, whose aim is to cause divisiveness and sedition.

Whoever provides us with these names shall have security from harm."

Surveying their terrified faces, he followed with explicit threats, echoing the cruelty he had earlier displayed in Basra:

"As for those who do not provide any names, they will have to guarantee to us that no member of his tribe (irafah) will oppose us or rise up against us!

Whoever does not do so, we will have nothing more to do with him. We shall consider it lawful for us to seize his property and spill his blood!

Furthermore! If any tribal leader (arif) finds that one of the tribesmen in his tribe stands against the Commander of the Faithful Yazid and does not hand him over to us, he shall be hanged at the door of his house! And the allowance of that tribe shall be cancelled!

Or he shall be exiled to the wilderness of al Zararah in Oman!"

Nafasul Mahmoom preserves an even more chilling variant:

"If a rebel of the Commander of the Faithful Yazid is ever found in any area under the control of a tribal leader and he does not report him to us, he shall be hanged on the door of his house! His stipends will be stopped! And he will be fed to the lions!"

The invocation of the 'Haruriyyah', the Khawarij, who had gathered at 'Harura' near Kufa after returning from Siffin, was deliberate.

Under Ibn Ziyad's rule, neutrality itself became a crime. Silence invited suspicion.

Exile, execution, and crucifixion loomed, while the scorching coastal wastes of al Zararah were held over the city as a threat against any tribe deemed disloyal.

Al Kamil records that on that very morning Ibn Ziyad imprisoned and executed a number of Kufans. Abu Mikhnaf likewise transmits the dread of that dawn through al Mualla ibn Kulayb from Abu Waddak, an account also preserved in al Irshad and al Khawarizmi.

Such was the terror that seized Kufa. In Ibn Ziyad's decree, justice was reserved for the obedient alone; confiscation and death awaited the defiant.

Al Fusul al Muhimmah states that Ibn Ziyad immediately initiated a web of intrigues to locate Muslim ibn Aqil, to seize him and put Muslim to death.

From that morning onward, every gate, every marketplace, and every secret gathering in Kufa felt the crushing weight of his edict, as the city braced itself for the approaching fate of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], still journeying from Mecca.

Al Futuh relates that Ibn Ziyad further consolidated his control by stationing patrols and lookout posts at every entrance to the city, allowing no one to enter or depart without scrutiny. This calculated measure soon yielded its grim consequence.

Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] to Muslim ibn Aqil, attempted to enter Kufa and was apprehended.

Bound in ropes, Qays ibn Mushir was brought before Ibn Ziyad, as the atmosphere of Kufa began to darken, its fragile hope giving way beneath the cruelty and calculated ruthlessness of the newly appointed Umayyad governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.



THE CHANGING WINDS OF KUFA

THE TRANSFER OF MUSLIM TO THE HOUSE OF HANI

The news reached Muslim ibn Aqil of the arrival of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, and of the incendiary sermon he had delivered, laden with threats, intimidation, and malice against the tribal leaders (urafa). The atmosphere of Kufa grew heavy with dread.

Ibn Ziyad's design was deliberate and calculating. By invoking fear and collective punishment, he sought to ensnare the city itself, provoking tribes and individuals alike to betray the whereabouts of Muslim ibn Aqil.

With cold cunning, Ibn Ziyad transformed the very support of Muslim ibn Aqil among the Kufans into a weapon against Muslim, making any association with him a peril.

Tarikh al Tabari, citing Ammar al Duhni, relates on the authority of Imam al Baqir ^[a.s.] that when Muslim ibn Aqil perceived the shifting winds and sensed the tightening danger, he quietly departed from the house of al Mukhtar al Thaqafi, for his presence there had become widely known.

In the stillness of the night, Muslim ibn Aqil set out alone, moving cautiously through the darkened streets of Kufa until he reached the dwelling of Hani ibn Urwah al Madhhiji ⁶⁰.

This account is likewise recorded in Tahdhib al Kamal.

Tarikh al Tabari further reports, on the authority of Abu al Waddak, that Muslim ibn Aqil entered through the outer gate of Hani's house and called out to him, saying,

"Come out." When Hani ibn Urwah emerged and saw Muslim ibn Aqil standing before him, a pallor spread across his face. Hani ibn Urwah was not pleased.

The poisonous words of Ibn Ziyad had already begun to seep into the hearts of Kufa's nobles, corroding their determination and replacing feeble courage with fear.

Tarikh al Tabari and Ansab al Ashraf relate that Muslim addressed Hani with solemn dignity, saying, "I have come to you seeking protection and hospitality."

Hani ibn Urwah replied, his voice weighed down with grave concern,

"May Allah ^[AZJ] have mercy on you, Muslim. Indeed, you have burdened me with a grave matter. Were it not that you have entered my home and placed your trust in me, I would have preferred, and would have asked you, to leave me.

Yet now the sacred duty of hospitality binds me, and one such as I does not turn away one such as you in ignorance. Come in."

⁶⁰ al Masudi records that Hani ibn Urwah was the chief of Murad, able to muster 4000 armored men and 8000 foot soldiers, rising to 30,000 with allied tribes. This explains why Muslim ibn Aqil moved to his house. Yet when the trial came, most abandoned Muslim out of fear, leaving only their leader. Hani, a companion of the Prophet, was martyred at around eighty or ninety, as noted by Ibn Sad in al Tabaqat. al Mubarrad relates that Hani's father had supported Hujr ibn Adi, and Ziyad ibn Abihi had spared him. Later, Ibn Ziyad would remind Hani ibn Urwah of this incident, saying that his father (Ziyad) had killed all the Shiah except Hani's father and Hujr ibn Adi, and had treated Hani ibn Urwah well, and then asking, "Is my reward that you shelter in your house a man (Muslim ibn Aqil) who seeks to kill me?"

Abu Mikhnaf narrates, on the authority of al Mualla ibn Kulayb from Abu al Waddak, that Hani thus granted Muslim refuge beneath his protection.

From that day onward, the supporters of Muslim began to visit him in secrecy, arriving under the cover of night and departing unseen, whispering their pledges of allegiance within the guarded walls of Hani's house, ever wary of the spies and watchful eyes of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

In al Manaqib it is stated that the number of those who had by now pledged allegiance to Muslim ibn Aqil reached 25,000 men. It was a formidable multitude, and for a time, the tide of Kufa still appeared to be in his favour.

Yet beneath this outward swell of support, Ibn Ziyad's grip continued to tighten unseen.

Encouraged by the growing number of pledges, Muslim felt compelled to act swiftly, to strike before the noose closed entirely upon Kufa.

However, Bihar al Anwar records that Hani ibn Urwah, apprehensive of the consequences, restrained Muslim ibn Aqil and cautioned,

"Do not make haste."

Abu Mikhnaf also transmits, from Jafar ibn Hudhayfah al Ta'i, that when Muslim ibn Aqil had settled in the house of Hani ibn Urwah, and 18,000 men had already sworn allegiance to him, Muslim ibn Aqil would then dispatch a momentous letter to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] through Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri.

Tarikh al Tabari, and al Tabaqat al Kubra preserve the text of this letter:

"As for what follows:

Verily, the scout does not lie to his people. Eighteen thousand from the people of Kufa have pledged allegiance to me.

So hasten to come when my letter reaches you, for the people are all with you, and they have no opinion nor desire for the family of Mu'awiyah. And peace."

According to Lisan al Arab, the phrasing employed by Muslim ibn Aqil in this letter is deliberate and precise.

His statement, 'the scout does not lie to his people,' echoes a well-known Arab proverb.

The scout (ra'id) was the one sent ahead by his tribe to search for water or pasture, entrusted with their survival, and such a man could never return bearing falsehood.

Yet even as this message journeyed toward its destined hands, the ink upon it had not yet dried when the unseen decree of betrayal had already begun to unfold, quietly and gradually.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Muhammad ibn Qays, records that this letter was written only twenty-seven days before that fateful and tragic day of Muslim ibn Aqil, now drawing ever near. Such was the fleeting measure of days in which the tides of Kufa turned, and the shadow of betrayal descended upon its people.

"They set up their most malicious deceptions against al Hussein, and fought you with their deceit and viciousness. They confronted al Hussein with injustice and aggression. You were the straightest path, the most generous of creation, and had the brightest record." ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

BACKGROUND - THE ALLEGED COUNCIL FOR KILLING IBN ZIYAD

As the balance of power in Kufa began to tilt decisively in favour of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, a number of reports surfaced alleging that a council had been convened to plot his assassination.

The governor's swift and ruthless measures to suffocate support for Muslim ibn Aqil gradually strangled the spirit of resistance within the city. Fear spread through its quarters, and those who had once spoken openly of allegiance withdrew into silence.

Within this atmosphere, it was claimed that Sharik ibn al A'war al Harithi stood at the centre of a clandestine scheme.

Sharik had arrived in Kufa in the company of Ibn Ziyad from Basra and was outwardly counted among his associates.

In reality, however, Sharik was said to be a devoted adherent of Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ^[a.s.]. When illness overtook Sharik, he took refuge in the house of Hani ibn Urwah, the very house in which Muslim ibn Aqil was concealed.

According to al Tabaqat al Kubra, Sharik sought to exploit his cordial relationship with the governor in order to draw Ibn Ziyad into a position of vulnerability.

Ibn Ziyad, now entrenched within the palace and surrounded by guards, was otherwise beyond reach. Sharik's illness, however, offered a rare opening, for it was expected that the governor, out of courtesy or calculation, would come to enquire after his health.

When Sharik's condition worsened, Ibn Ziyad did indeed visit him at Hani's house, unaware that Muslim ibn Aqil lay hidden beneath the same roof.

The same source relates that Muslim's supporters had prepared a group of thirty armed men, poised to ambush and kill Ibn Ziyad upon his entry.

When the governor arrived and stood by Sharik's bedside, Sharik recited verses that had been agreed upon as the signal to strike:

"Why do you wait to greet Salma?

Quench my thirst, even if it brings my death."

Hearing these strange words, Ibn Ziyad looked about him in confusion and asked,

"What is he saying?"

Those present replied that illness had driven Sharik into delirium. Unease nevertheless settled in Ibn Ziyad's heart, and he withdrew hastily.

Shortly thereafter, supposedly Ibn Ziyad would later summon and question a bondsman of Hani ibn Urwah, from whom he learned about the talk of a plot had indeed taken place in the house of Hani.

His expression hardened, and Ibn Ziyad returned to the palace agitated and suspicious.

Another account, transmitted by Abu Mikhnaf through al Mu'alla ibn Kulayb from Abu al Waddak, attributes the initiative not to Sharik but to Umarah ibn Ubayd al Saluli, one of the envoys who had carried fifty-three letters from the Kufans to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

In this version, when Hani fell ill and Ibn Ziyad came to visit him, Umarah said,

“Our gathering and our plan are to kill this tyrant.

Allah ^[AZJ] has now given you power over him, so kill him.”

Hani, however, refused, replying, “I do not wish that he be killed in my house.”

Ibn Ziyad soon departed, and the opportunity passed unused.

It is also related that when Sharik first arrived in Kufa, he persistently encouraged Hani to support the mission of Muslim ibn Aqil. Sharik urged Hani,

“Ask Muslim to remain with me, for Ibn Ziyad will come to visit me.”

Turning directly to Muslim ibn Aqil, Sharik asked,

“If I give you access to Ibn Ziyad, will you strike him with the sword?”

Muslim answered, “Yes, by Allah ^[AZJ].”

When word arrived that Ibn Ziyad intended to visit that evening, Sharik instructed Muslim,

“When Ibn Ziyad sits, emerge and kill him, then take control of the palace.

If I recover, I will go to Basra and manage its affairs on your behalf.”

As evening fell, Muslim ibn Aqil stood ready, and Sharik whispered urgently,

“When Ibn Ziyad enters, do not let him escape your grasp.”

At this point, Hani intervened, disturbed by the prospect of bloodshed in his home, and declared, “I do not consent that Ibn Ziyad be killed in my house.”

Ibn Ziyad entered, inquired gently after Sharik's condition, and lingered beside him.

The servant Mihran stood nearby, oblivious to the tension that filled the room.

As the moment slipped away, Sharik again recited his coded verses:

“What do you wait for? Greet Salma!

Give it to me to drink, even if my soul lies within it!”

Sharik repeated them insistently. Startled, Ibn Ziyad asked, “Is he delirious?”

Hani quickly replied, “Yes, may Allah ^[AZJ] set your affairs aright, he has been in this state since dawn.” Finding nothing overtly suspicious, Ibn Ziyad departed unharmed.

When Muslim ibn Aqil emerged, Sharik reproached him:

“What prevented you from killing him?”

Muslim answered, “Two things: Hani's aversion to his being killed in his house, and a narration from the Prophet ^[saws]:

‘Indeed, faith restrains from treachery, and a believer does not commit assassination.’”

Hani then said, “By Allah ^[AZJ], had you killed him, you would have killed a rebellious and wicked man. Yet I disliked that he be slain in my house.”

A further report, attributed to ibn Nima al Hilli, adds that Muslim was on the verge of striking when Hani's wife began to weep and pleaded with him not to spill blood in her home. Overcome by her distress, Muslim ibn Aqil sheathed his sword.

Hani ibn Urwah then cried out,

“Woe to that woman! She has destroyed herself and me, what I feared has now come to pass.”

Sharik survived only three days after this incident.

When Sharik died, Ibn Ziyad himself led the funeral prayer over him.

Later, when Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah were executed, Ibn Ziyad recalled the strange verses uttered during Sharik's illness and grasped their true intent.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad was infuriated, and his anger was immense as he swore,

“By Allah ^[AZJ], after this day I will never lead the funeral prayer of any Iraqi! Were it not that my father Ziyad is buried beside him, I would have ordered Sharik's grave to be exhumed.”

These are the varying reports preserved by the historians, in Ibn Sa'd's al Tabaqat, in the transmissions of Abu Mikhnaf recorded by al Tabari, in al Kamil of ibn al Athir, and in other works. Yet careful reflection reveals within them contradictions and improbabilities.

The notion that Ibn Ziyad would knowingly expose himself by visiting a house associated with the supporters of Muslim conflicts with his reputation for vigilance and calculation.

The claim that thirty armed men lay in wait undermines the secrecy upon which any such undertaking would depend.

Above all, the portrayal of Muslim ibn Aqil, the trusted envoy of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], as one who advanced to the brink of a clandestine killing only to retreat upon sudden recollection of a hadith strains reason and diminishes the gravity of his moral and spiritual stature.

For these reasons, the narrative of an assassination plot bears the unmistakable marks of Umayyad fabrication, a tale fashioned to legitimise the cruelty and suspicion that soon engulfed Muslim ibn Aqil and the noble leaders of Kufa.

Its inconsistencies betray not the actions of Muslim, but the political craft of those who sought to blacken his name and sanctify their own oppression.



THE SHAMI SPY, MA'QIL

The air of Kufa had grown heavy with suspicion and shifting allegiance. The streets were watched, conversations weighed, and every encounter between Muslim ibn Aqil and the people of the city carried with it the peril of exposure.

Access to the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was therefore restricted with increasing severity, for his life now stood in imminent danger.

Tarikh al Tabari relates, on the authority of Abu al Waddak, that when Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad became aware of the growing presence of Muslim ibn Aqil in Kufa, and of the quiet pledges of allegiance being taken on behalf of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], Ibn Ziyad fixed to uncover the concealed network of loyalty forming around Muslim ibn Aqil.

Though the streets of the city appeared calm, the governor remained deeply unsettled. His campaigns of intimidation had not extinguished devotion to the Imam ^[a.s], and the elusive presence of Muslim ibn Aqil lay stubbornly beyond the reach of public threats and coercion.

Tarikh al Tabari and al Irshad both state that, fearful of this silent expansion, Ibn Ziyad summoned one of his own bondsmen, a man named Ma'qil.

Into his hands, Ibn Ziyad placed three thousand dirhams and charged Ma'qil with a task steeped in deception. Ibn Ziyad said to Ma'qil,

“Take these three thousand dirhams and search for Muslim ibn Aqil. Seek out his followers for us also, and give them this money, and say to them,

‘Use this to help in the war against your enemy.’

Give them the impression that you are one of them.

For if you give them the money, you will gain their confidence and trust, and they will not hide any aspect of their affair from you. Visit their gatherings by day and by night.”

Ma'qil the Shami took the money and proceeded to the Grand Mosque of Kufa.

There he observed Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi, a leading figure from the tribe of Banu Sa'd ibn Tha'labah. Muslim ibn Awsajah was standing in prayer, and nearby, hushed voices murmured among the worshippers,

“This is the man who is receiving the allegiance (bay'ah) for al Hussein.”

Tarikh al Tabari records that Ma'qil sat waiting until Muslim ibn Awsajah completed his prayer, then approached him with deliberate humility, carefully crafted to disarm suspicion. Ma'qil said, “O servant of Allah ^[AZJ], I am a man from al Sham, a client of Dhu al Kila.

Allah ^[AZJ] has placed love for this noble Household in my heart and love for those who love them. I have with me three thousand dirhams which I wish to give to a man from this House, whom I heard has arrived in Kufa to take allegiance for the son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws]. I have long sought to meet him but could find no guide to him or any who knew his dwelling.

While I was sitting here, I heard some believers saying that you are acquainted with this House, so I have come to you that you may take this money and guide me to your master.”

Muslim ibn Awsajah regarded Ma'qil with measured reserve, weighing how best to respond to this sudden approach from a stranger.

Sensing his hesitation, Ma'qil pressed further, seeking to secure his confidence.

“If you wish,” he said, “take my pledge of allegiance before I meet him.”

Then Ma'qil feigned tears. He pretended to weep, allowing the semblance of emotion to lend gravity to his words. Muslim ibn Awsajah's heart softened, though he stayed cautious.

He replied, “Praise be to Allah ^[AZJ] that you have met me, for it pleases me that you may attain what you seek and that Allah ^[AZJ] may strengthen the Household of His Prophet through you. Yet I am troubled that you should know of my involvement in this matter before it has spread, because I fear this tyrant and his influence.”

Ma'qil pressed his claim of sincerity and insisted, “Take my pledge now.”

Muslim ibn Awsajah then accepted his allegiance (bay'ah) and bound him with firm oaths of loyalty and secrecy. Convinced by his apparent devotion, Muslim ibn Awsajah told Ma'qil,

“Visit my house regularly for several days, while I seek permission for you to meet your master, Muslim ibn Aqil.”

From that time, Ma'qil began to come and go regularly among the faithful. He gained their trust while concealing his true allegiance, arriving first at their gatherings and departing last, listening intently to their discussions and committing every word to memory.

When permission was granted, Muslim ibn Awsajah introduced him to Muslim ibn Aqil, this occurring after the death of Sharik ibn al A'war. Once again, Ma'qil rehearsed the tale of his supposed devotion and renewed his pledge before Muslim ibn Aqil himself.

Ma'qil then presented the sum of three thousand dirhams to Muslim ibn Aqil, which was accepted. Muslim instructed Abu Thumamah al Sa'idi ⁶¹ to receive the money.

Abu Thumamah was responsible for the funds and provisions of those loyal to Muslim ibn Aqil, using such contributions to purchase weapons, for Abu Thumamah was skilled in their use and numbered among the noble Shi'ah warriors of Kufa.

Tarikh al Tabari states that from that point onward, Ma'qil became a constant presence in their midst. His outward piety, disciplined attendance, and apparent zeal deceived even those most wary of infiltration.

Yet every secret Ma'qil gathered, he conveyed in private to Ibn Ziyad. Through this calculated treachery, the governor came to know the locations, movements, and numbers of the supporters of Muslim ibn Aqil. Thus did betrayal coil through the alleyways of Kufa. Ibn Ziyad's silver bought whispers, and Ma'qil's false allegiance pierced the circle of loyalty that surrounded Muslim ibn Aqil. The city's nights grew heavy with omen, and loyalty to the cause of Muslim ibn Aqil would now be tested as Kufa moved towards its destined hour.

⁶¹ Abu Thumamah al Saidi was tasked to collect funds from the people so that they might assist one another, and he used those funds to purchase arms. Abu Thumamah was a knight (faris) of the Arabs, and one of the notables of the Shi'ah. Muslim ibn Aqil appointed Abu Thumamah al Saidi over the quarter of Tamim and Hamadan in Kufa when the uprising occurred in Kufa.

THE SUMMONS OF HANI IBN URWAH

The surveillance of Muslim ibn Aqil gradually exposed to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad the network of men who surrounded him in quiet loyalty.

Among them was Hani ibn Urwah, a figure whose name carried particular weight and was personally unsettling to the governor. The history between their families was layered with unsolved grievances.

Abu Mikhnaf, alongside al Irshad and Tadhkirat al Khawass, relates that Hani ibn Urwah had once been a familiar and unremarkable presence within the governor's palace.

Hani would enter upon the court of Ibn Ziyad with ease and return without hindrance, received with the courtesies accorded to a man of standing and influence.

Yet when Muslim ibn Aqil came secretly to his home and sought refuge beneath his roof, that rhythm was broken. From that moment onward, Hani's footsteps no longer crossed the threshold of the court. Hani claimed illness and withdrew into his house, closing his doors and sealing himself away from the life of the city.

Tarikh al Tabari, citing Ammar al Duhni on the authority of Imam al Baqir ^[a.s.], recounts that one morning Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad sat in the audience hall of Kufa, surrounded by the assembled tribal chiefs. The chamber was heavy with silence.

The governor's gaze moved slowly across their ranks, measuring faces and reading absences. Then, breaking the quiet with a sudden edge in his voice, he asked:

"Why is Hani ibn Urwah not among those who have come to see me today?"

Uneasy glances passed between the men. No one answered at first.

The tension lingered until, at last, subdued voices replied, as preserved by the historians,

"We do not know, and it has been said to us that Hani has health complaints."

Ibn Ziyad's gaze narrowed. In a tone outwardly composed yet inwardly probing, he replied, "Had I known he was ill, I would have gone to visit him."

The words hung in the air, heavy with implication.

His expression tightened, and the mask of courtesy fell away.



Turning deliberately, Ibn Ziyad fixed his gaze upon three of Kufa's most prominent men, figures whose names carried weight and whose loyalties could tilt the balance of the city itself.

Their relationships were complex, and their positions precarious.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates through Mujalid ibn Sa'id al Hamdani, from al Sha'bi, that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad summoned them by name: Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath ⁶², Asma' ibn Kharijah ⁶³, and with them he sent Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi ⁶⁴.

Ansab al Ashraf notes that among those dispatched to fulfil this order were Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath and Asma' ibn Kharijah al Fazari, whose long and conflicted path through Kufa's turbulent politics is well documented. Also among them stood Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi, bound to Hani by both tribe and kinship.

With a command that left no room for hesitation, Ibn Ziyad instructed again,

"Go and seek what is preventing Hani ibn Urwah from coming to us."

They answered obediently, though uneasily,

"May Allah ^[AZJ] set you right. Indeed, Hani is complaining of illness."

But suspicion still coiled around Ibn Ziyad's words. His distrust, once stirred, was not easily appeased. With slow deliberation, Ibn Ziyad said,

"It has reached me that he has recovered, and that he sits at the door of his house.

Go to him and tell him not to neglect the duty he owes in this matter, for I do not wish that someone like him, from among the nobles of the Arabs, should fall from my favour."

Thus the summons of Hani ibn Urwah was issued, as recorded by Abu Mikhnaf, from al Mu'alla ibn Kulayb, from Abu al Waddak.

⁶² Muhammad ibn al Ashath ibn Qays al Kindi was a leading chief of Kufa. Ziyad tasked him with securing the surrender of Hujr ibn Adi, for whom he sought protection to be judged by Muawiyah, though he was later rebuked in poetry for abandoning him. When Muslim ibn Aqil arrived, he raised a banner of amnesty for Kinda and Hadramawt. Though sent against Muslim with men from Qays, he granted him amnesty and reported it to Ibn Ziyad, who rejected it. He also interceded for Hani ibn Urwah, but without success. Kinda later supported Umar ibn Sad due to kinship, but wavered after Yazids death. When news of Karbala reached Kufa, Muhammad withdrew in disillusionment, saying the matter had changed from what they had expected. Ibn al Zubayr later appointed him governor of Mosul, but he withdrew to Tikrit as al Mukhtars power rose, then pledged to him. When Ibn Ziyad advanced and Kufa wavered, his son joined an uprising that failed. Muhammad fled, sought refuge with Musab ibn al Zubayr, and was later sent to fight al Mukhtar. Commanding cavalry of expelled Kufans, he showed harshness toward al Mukhtars followers, killing captives and defeated men. Muhammad ibn al Ashath was ultimately killed fighting alongside Musab, ending a life marked by shifting loyalties and conflict.

⁶³ Asma ibn Kharijah al Fazari's legacy reflects both complicity and protest. He testified against Hujr ibn Adi and later informed al Hajjaj about Kumayl ibn Ziyad and Umayr ibn Dhabbi, leading to their execution. Yet when he saw Ibn Ziyad's treatment of Hani ibn Urwah, he openly objected and was imprisoned for it. After a long confinement, Asma ibn Kharijah was released and continued in political unrest, first aligning with Abdullah ibn Muti and later with Musab ibn al Zubayr in 68 AH. His legacy remains marked by this tension between support and resistance.

⁶⁴ Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi was linked to Hani ibn Urwah by both tribe and marriage. Abu Mikhnaf reports that his sister Ruah was Hani's wife and the mother of Yahya ibn Hani. Amr ibn al Hajjaj was among those in Kufa who wrote to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], inviting him to come, a fact later remembered with gravity in light of his role on the Day of Karbala.

The envoys departed the palace and made their way through the streets of Kufa to Hani's house. Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath approached with a group from his tribe and found Hani ibn Urwah seated at the doorway of his home.

The afternoon light was fading, its glow thinning into the stillness of dusk. There sat Hani upon the threshold, a man outwardly recovering, yet within him, perhaps concealing an affliction far heavier than illness.

As the governor's envoys approached, the air cooled and their manner grew formal, edged with insistence. They greeted him and said,

"What is preventing you from meeting the governor? Ibn Ziyad has mentioned you and said, 'If I had known he was sick, I would have visited him.'"

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath pressed further, his tone sharpened by authority.

"The governor is asking about you and says you are overdue, so go to him."

Hani replied, his voice rough with genuine fatigue, "My illness is what prevents me."

They did not relent. Their words grew firmer, almost coercive.

"News has reached him," they said, "that you sit every evening at the door of your house. He has grown impatient with your delay, and aloofness is not something a ruler tolerates. We adjure you by oath to come ride with us."

Bound by the weight of their oath, Hani could refuse no longer. He rose, summoned his garments, and dressed himself. He then called for his mule to be brought forward.

Yet as the palace drew nearer, a foreboding unease stirred within him.

Turning to his nephew, Hisan ibn Asma ibn Kharijah, he whispered,

"O son of my brother, by Allah ^[AZJ], I fear this man. What do you think?"

Hisan sought to calm Hani ibn Urwah. "O uncle," he replied, "by Allah ^[AZJ], I fear nothing for you. Why burden yourself when you are innocent?"

It is said that Hisan ibn Asma ibn Kharijah was unaware of the snare Ibn Ziyad had prepared. Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, however, knew well what awaited.

Tarikh al Tabari states that together they advanced until the gates of the governor's palace loomed before them. When Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad saw them approach, a cold satisfaction crossed his face. Ibn Ziyad uttered a dark proverb, one that hung in the air like a curse:

"Here he comes walking to his death. At last his own two feet have brought him here, to his doom!" ⁶⁵

Hani ibn Urwah crossed the threshold of the palace, and with each step the walls seemed to close in upon him. The palace doors were slammed shut behind him, and Hani ibn Urwah was unaware of the plan that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had prepared for him.

⁶⁵ Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad used the expression 'al hain', meaning "the fool" or "the doomed one," a phrase used in moments of certain ruin and recorded in al Fakhar. Some later copyists altered it to 'bi khain', but this is incorrect. Another report states that Ubayd Allah said, "A traitor has come to you on his own two feet." At the time, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had married Umm Nafi, daughter of Amarah ibn Uqbah.

In another version, when Ibn Ziyad first summoned Hani, those present in his court replied, "He will not come except under a guarantee of safety."

"And what need has he of safety?" Ibn Ziyad answered. "Has Hani committed any crime? Go to him. If he will not come except with a guarantee, then grant it to him and bring him."

They went again to summon Hani ibn Urwah. Hani said plainly,

"If I go to him, he will kill me."

Yet they persisted, pressing Hani ibn Urwah until he finally agreed to come.

At that time, Ibn Ziyad was delivering the Friday sermon.

Hani ibn would arrive and sat in the mosque, having combed his hair and braided his two locks, composed in outward appearance though burdened inwardly with foreboding.

When Ubayd Allah completed the prayer, he turned and called out, "O Hani!", summoning him to his court. It is related that Hani rose, greeted Ibn Ziyad with peace, and followed him.



THE RUSE OF IBN ZIYAD

Hani ibn Urwah advanced until he stood before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. The hall was wide and austere, its stone floor cold beneath Hani’s feet, the chill rising through his body as the eyes of the governor fixed upon him, steady and calculating.

Al Kamil and al Irshad both relate that beside the governor Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad sat Shurayh ibn al Harith al Kindi ⁶⁶.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad turned toward Shurayh, then recited the words of Amr ibn Madi Yakrib al Zubaydi:

“I desire that he live, but he desires to kill me.”

As Hani ibn Urwah drew closer, the governor Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad repeated the verse, his voice edged with mockery:

“I seek his friendship, yet he seeks my death. The one who offers you excuses is one of your own, from the tribe of Murad.”

With these words, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad alluded to the favours once shown to Hani, now twisted into accusations. Bihar al Anwar relates that when Hani ibn Urwah entered the court, he maintained outward composure and courtesy. Hearing the governor’s words, Hani asked, “And what is that, O Amir?”

Tarikh al Tabari records this exchange in detail through Ammar al Duhni from Imam al Baqir ^[a.s.]. Ibn Ziyad spoke first, his tone controlled and direct:

“O Hani ibn Urwah, where is Muslim ibn Aqil?”

“I do not know,” Hani replied instantly.

Ibn Ziyad shifted his manner, seeking to draw confession through persuasion.

“Do you not know,” Ibn Ziyad said, “that my father came to this land and left none of these Shi'ah alive, except your father and Hujr?

And you know well what befell Hujr. Yet despite that, my father continued to treat you with kindness. He even wrote to the governor of Kufa, saying: ‘My need from you is Hani.’ He was grateful to you, and he commanded the governor to deal justly with you.”

“Yes,” Hani answered.

“So was my reward,” Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad snapped,

“that you hid in your house a man who seeks to kill me?!”

“I did no such thing,” Hani ibn Urwah replied.

⁶⁶ Shurayh ibn al Harith was a long serving judge in Kufa, appointed by Umar in 18 AH. He urged support for Uthman and testified against Hujr ibn Adi, though he later described Hujr as a devout man. His career spanned shifting regimes. When Ziyad consulted him on punishing a leper, he refused, citing the Prophets teaching that one who is consulted is entrusted. He declined a judicial post under ibn al Zubayr, later accepted under al Mukhtar, but withdrew after criticism by feigning illness, and was replaced. After al Mukhtars’ fall, he resumed his post under ibn al Zubayr. In 79 AH, he retired under al Hajjaj, naming Abu Burdah as successor. He served nearly sixty years, balancing survival over principles.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad’s voice rose, sharp and cold.

“Woe to you, O Hani ibn Urwah! What is this plot that has arisen in your house against the Commander of the Faithful and against the muslims? You brought Muslim ibn Aqil into your home, sheltered him, gathered men and weapons for him, and thought that all of this would remain hidden from me?!”

Hani ibn Urwah met the accusation without flinching.

“I did not do that,” Hani said, “and Muslim is not with me.”

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad pressed, “Yes, indeed you did,”

“I have not done anything,” Hani ibn Urwah replied.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad insisted, “Yes, you did!”

As their words grew heated, Tarikh al Tabari records that, at Ibn Ziyad’s signal, the guards brought forward a servant of the Banu Tamim.

It was Ma'qil, the very spy who had infiltrated Hani’s household.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad asked, “Do you recognize this man?”

“Yes,” Ma'qil replied, a wry smile on his face.

For a moment, Hani stood bewildered. Then recognition struck him like a blow, the plan was now exposed. Comprehension followed swiftly: this spy, Ma'qil, had lived among them, prayed with them, listened to them, and carried every secret of his house to the governor. Yet even then, Hani did not lose his dignity.

Turning back to Ibn Ziyad, Hani spoke urgently, swearing by Allah ^{AZJ}:

“Listen to me and believe what I say. By Allah ^{AZJ}, I do not lie to you!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, there is no God but He ^{AZJ}, I did not invite Muslim ibn Aqil to my home, nor did I know anything of his affair until I saw Muslim sitting at my door.

Muslim ibn Aqil asked for shelter, and I was too ashamed to turn him away. So I received him and offered Muslim hospitality. As for what has reached you, if you wish, I will give you a firm pledge, whatever eases your mind, that I will not harm you.

Or, if you wish, I will provide a hostage of my own kin until I go to Muslim and command him to depart wherever he chooses, thus freeing me of his protection and guardianship.”

“No, by Allah ^{AZJ}!” Ibn Ziyad roared. “You will never leave until you bring him to me!”

“No, by Allah ^{AZJ},” Hani ibn Urwah answered, steady and unwavering,

“I will never bring him to you. Should I deliver my guest to you so that you may kill him?!”

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad shouted “By Allah ^{AZJ}, you will bring Muslim to me!”

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, I will not bring Muslim to you!” Hani replied, his voice firm as stone.

Ibn Nima relates that Hani declared, “By Allah ^{AZJ}! Even if Muslim was (hidden) beneath my feet, I will not lift them up and hand him over to you!”

Their words collided, the tension drawing tighter, until Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili rose and, with a gesture of courtesy toward the governor, said, “May Allah ^{AZJ} set right the affairs of the governor. Leave Hani ibn Urwah to me, and I will speak with him.”

Muslim ibn Amr was the only man in Kufa from al Sham or Basrah. Seeing how firm and defiant Hani stood, Muslim ibn Amr drew Hani aside, saying softly but urgently:

“O Hani, I beseech you by Allah ^[AZJ], do not bring ruin upon yourself and affliction upon your tribe. By Allah ^[AZJ], I grieve to think of you being killed.

This man, Muslim ibn Aqil, is the cousin of the people of authority, the Umayyads.

They will not kill Ibn Aqil nor harm him. So hand him over to the governor.

There is no disgrace upon you in that; you are merely delivering Ibn Aqil to the state.”

But Hani ibn Urwah answered swiftly:

“Yes, by Allah ^[AZJ], there is disgrace upon me in that! Shall I hand over my neighbour and guest while I am alive, sound, hearing and seeing, with a strong arm and many supporters?

By Allah ^[AZJ], even if I were alone without any helper, I would never hand Muslim ibn Aqil over until I died defending him.”

Trusting that his tribe would rally to him, Hani ibn Urwah stood firm as Muslim ibn Amr pleaded again and again, and each time Hani replied,

“No, by Allah ^[AZJ], I will never hand Muslim ibn Aqil over to him!”

The governor overheard their exchange. “Bring Hani close to me!” he commanded.

They brought Hani ibn Urwah forward, and Ibn Ziyad pronounced his final threat:

“By Allah ^[AZJ], either you bring him to me, or I will strike your neck!”

Hani ibn Urwah faced him with unshaken calm. His every word had already been an act of defiance.

“Bring Hani closer to me!” Ibn Ziyad thundered.

Ansab al Ashraf records that they dragged Hani ibn Urwah forward, and the governor battered Hani ibn Urwah with a rod, or a crooked staff, splitting his face, shattering his nose, and gashing his forehead and cheeks until the cane itself splintered.

Flesh scattered upon his blood-soaked beard, and his nose was broken.

Ibn al Athir writes that Hani ibn Urwah reached toward the hilt of a guard’s sword to defend himself, but the guard wrenched it away.

“Are you becoming a Haruri today?!” Ibn Ziyad sneered,

“You have brought this upon yourself, Allah ^[AZJ] has made your blood lawful!”

There was a brief pause as Hani lay aghast at his wound. “Seize him!” Ibn Ziyad roared.

The guards seized Hani ibn Urwah and hurled him into a side chamber. They bolted the door and stationed soldiers outside. Shaykh al Mufid states that Ibn Ziyad then ordered Hani to be imprisoned in one of the palace rooms under guard watch.

In another narration, when their quarrel reached its height, Ibn Ziyad threatened,

“O Hani, I will strike your neck!”

Hani ibn Urwah answered, “If you do so, by Allah ^[AZJ], many swords will be unsheathed around your house. The warriors of Baraqah will gather around your house!”

For Hani ibn Urwah believed his clan Madhhij would not abandon him in this hour.

Ibn Ziyad’s fury blazed. “Do you make me fear the swords of your clansmen?!

Woe to you! Do you seek to frighten me with the warriors of Baraqah?!”

Al Mas’udi recounts an alternative scene of how Hani ibn Urwah was confronted. He relates that Hani, bloodied yet still standing, said,

“I do not ignore the favours you have shown me. Your father indeed obliged me, and I am wealthy, I would wish to repay you for that. Shall I offer you good counsel?”

“And what is that?” Ibn Ziyad replied.

Hani spoke again: “You and your family should take your wealth and provisions and return to Syria, for the man who is more worthy and deserving of this honour than you and Yazid has now come,” inferring to the incumbent arrival of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

At this, Ibn Ziyad lowered his head. It is reported that Hani ibn Urwah stumbled back, and Mihran, the governor’s servant, stood over Hani with a cane in hand.

Mihran said, “What shame, what disgrace, that a nomad slave should grant you protection in your own dominion!” Then Mihran flung a cane toward Ibn Ziyad, saying, “Take it!”

Seizing Hani by the hair, Mihran wrenched his head back, forcing his face upward. Ibn Ziyad then brought the cane down with brutal force across his brow; the crack echoed through the chamber as the iron tip snapped free and shot into the wall, lodging there.

The blow split the skin open, and blood began to pour down over Hani’s face, soaking into his beard and dripping from his chin.



THE ARREST OF HANI IBN URWAH

Al Kamil narrates that when Asma' ibn Kharijah witnessed the brutality inflicted upon Hani ibn Urwah, Asma' ibn Kharijah could no longer restrain himself. Rising from his place, Ibn Kharijah stepped forward and cried out with righteous fury,

“O deceiver! Release Hani! You promised us his safety. Yet when we brought him to you, you struck his face, shed his blood, and now you intend to kill him!”

Asma' ibn Kharijah had been among those dispatched by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to summon Hani ibn Urwah, alongside Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath. Unlike his companion, however, Asma' had been unaware of the treachery carefully woven by the governor to capture Hani.

Ibn Ziyad turned upon Asma' in rage. His eyes burned as he shouted,

“And you dare to speak here?!”

At the command of Ibn Ziyad, the guards seized Asma' ibn Kharijah. They struck him, subjected him to a ‘violent shaking’ (al Tati'ah), and beat ‘heavy blows upon him’ (al Lahaz). The guards battered Asma' ibn Kharijah and then cast him into confinement beside Hani. It is reported that Asma' ibn Kharijah was left broken, bloodied, and wretched in his condition.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates that Ghayr ibn Wa'lah reported from Abu al Waddak that while Hani ibn Urwah and Asma' were beaten and imprisoned, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, who had accompanied Asma' to summon Hani, remained standing in the governor's court.

There, in a display of cowardice and submission, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath said,

“We are content with whatever the governor sees fit for us, whether in our favor or against us. The governor is only a disciplinarian.”

Imam al Baqir ^[a.s] continues that while these events were unfolding within the palace of Kufa, news had already reached the tribe of Madhhij that Hani ibn Urwah had been forcibly brought before the governor and beaten savagely. The clansmen of Madhhij surged toward the palace, joined by many others ready to fight for Hani's release.

Rumors swept through Kufa like fire through dry reeds. Some claimed that Hani had already been killed. This sick rumours would soon reached Amr ibn al Hajjaj, Hani's father-in-law, and now Amr ibn al Hajjaj also gathered his clan, and the warriors of Madhhij, and surrounded the palace. Their ranks filled the streets of Kufa, and voices were raised in anger. Among those assembled spread the belief that their leader, Hani ibn Urwah, had been slain by Ibn Ziyad, and they considered this an injustice so grave that it demanded blood.

Now gathered outside the palace, Amr ibn al Hajjaj called out loudly,

“I am Amr ibn al Hajjaj! These are the knights of Madhhij and their leading men!

We have not broken from obedience, nor have we departed from the community!”

When the clamor reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad inside the palace, he enquired,

“What is this uproar?”, for the voices and shouts had now engulfed the palace.

The people in the court replied, “It is the tribe of Madhhij. They are at the gates.”

By this time, Ibn Ziyad had already ordered that Hani be dragged away and imprisoned in a separate room. He knew well the severity of the beating he had inflicted, wounds so grievous that releasing Hani was no longer possible. The mere sight of Hani's condition would ignite open revolt. To provoke the full might of Madhhij was a danger Ibn Ziyad could not afford.

The mind of Ibn Ziyad turned swiftly to deceit. He ordered Mihran to summon Shurayh the judge. Mihran went out and returned with Shurayh, and the guards ushered Shurayh into the palace. Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Namir ibn Wa'lah, from Abu al Waddak, that Ibn Ziyad said to Shurayh,

“Go to your companion Hani. Look upon him, then come out and inform the Madhhij that Hani ibn Urwah is alive, and that you have seen him.”

Tarikh al Tabari records a similar wording:

“Go to them (Madhhij) and inform them that I have only detained Hani for questioning.”

Shurayh passed through the palace corridors until he reached the cell where Hani lay. When Hani saw Shurayh, he cried out, “O Allah ^[AZJ]! O Muslims! Has my clan perished?

Where are the people of faith? Where are the people of this town? Have they abandoned me to my enemy and the son of their enemy, while blood still flows upon my beard?”

In another narration preserved by Tarikh al Tabari, Hani pleaded, “O Shurayh! Do you see what is being done to me? Fear Allah ^[AZJ], O Shurayh! This man will kill me!”

Shurayh replied coldly, “I see that you are alive.”

Hani answered with bitterness, “Alive? In this state that you see? Go to my people and tell them that if they disperse, he will kill me!”

From outside the palace, the noise of the gathering swelled, the voices of Madhhij rang in protest. Straining to listen, Hani ibn Urwah said as Shurayh turned to leave,

“O Shurayh! I think these are the voices of Madhhij and my supporters among the Muslims. If ten men were to enter upon me, they would rescue me!”

Shurayh emerged shaken and returned to Ibn Ziyad, saying,

“I saw Hani alive, but I saw a terrible sight upon him.”

Ibn Ziyad snapped back, “Do you deny the governor's right to discipline his subjects?!

Go out and tell Madhhij that Hani ibn Urwah lives, so that they disperse.”

To ensure Shurayh's obedience, Ibn Ziyad sent with him a servant, Humayd ibn Bukayr al Ahmari ⁶⁷, to listen closely to every word. Such was the suspicion that consumed the governor's heart in that hour.

Shurayh went out to the palace gate and called out to the assembled men of Madhhij, “When the governor learned of your presence and what you said regarding your companion, he ordered me to enter upon Hani. I did, and I looked at him. Ibn Ziyad has then commanded me to inform you that Hani is alive, and that what you heard of his death is false.”

⁶⁷ Humayd ibn Bukayr al Ahmari was one of Ibn Ziyad's guards and among his trusted agents who pursued targets for the governors. He had earlier served Ziyad and was sent to track the companions of Hujr ibn Adi. He later struck Muslim ibn Aqil on the upper lip and killed him. He was a Syrian slave.

Tarikh al Tabari similarly records that Shurayh now resolved to usher them away,
 “Do not worry about Hani; the governor has only detained him to question him.”

In another account, it is said that Shurayh added to ease the concerns of the Madhhij,
 “What is this unwise haste? The man is alive, and his ruler has reprimanded him with a beating that did not take his soul. Go back and do not destroy yourselves or your companion.”

Several narrations preserve this moment, each exposing the duplicity of Shurayh.

With the narrations later recorded in history, Shurayh would himself later confess,

“So I went out to the Madhhij, and with me was Humayd ibn Bakr al Ahmari. Ubayd Allah had sent Humayd with me, as one of his guards who stood at his head.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, had it not been for the presence of Humayd, I would have conveyed to Hani’s companions what Hani had truly said. When I came out, I told them,

‘When the governor heard of your presence, he ordered me to see him, and I found him alive. He commanded me to tell you that Hani lives, and that what you heard of his death is false.’”

Thus did Shurayh attempt to absolve himself, cloaking his complicity in hollow words, though Shurayh had willingly served as an instrument of Ibn Ziyad’s deception.

Tarikh al Tabari records that this false testimony proved devastatingly effective.

Amr ibn al Hajjaj and the men of Madhhij said to one another,

“Shurayh speaks the truth. There is no cause for alarm. As long as Hani lives, then praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}.” Tahdhib al Kamal states that they then turned back and dispersed.

Tarikh al Tabari further transmits from Muhammad ibn Bashir al Hamdani that when Ubayd Allah struck and imprisoned Hani, he feared the people might rise against him.

Still unsettled by the smoldering resentment left in the wake of Hani’s arrest, Ibn Ziyad sought to crush it through spectacle and intimidation. Ibn Ziyad left his residence flanked by the notables of Kufa, guarded by armed men, and surrounded by attendants.

With calculated solemnity, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad then ascended the pulpit in the grand mosque of Kufa, where he praised Allah ^{AZJ}, and addressed the people:

“O people! Hold fast to the obedience of Allah ^{AZJ} and to the obedience of your rulers.

Do not fall into discord and division, lest you be destroyed, humiliated, killed, punished, and deprived. Your brother is the one who ratifies you, and the one forewarned is forearmed. And Peace!”

A heavy silence fell upon the mosque, a stillness thick with fear and coerced submission.

Then, as Ibn Ziyad turned to descend the pulpit, before he had reached its final step, lookouts burst in from the date-sellers’ gate, shouting,

“The son of Aqil is coming! Ibn Aqil has come!”

Others rushed in from the other gate of the market, echoing the same cry:

“Ibn Aqil has come! Ibn Aqil has come!”

Tarikh al Tabari states that at once Ubayd Allah fled back into the palace and ordered its doors shut tight, his guards and servants scrambling to clear a path as he retreated to safety. Kufa had now erupted into open uprising.

THE UPRISING OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

The city of Kufa was shaken by the arrest and violence inflicted upon Hani ibn Urwah. This marked a decisive rupture, a seismic provocation aimed at exposing the clandestine movement that had taken root in the city. The loyalty pledged to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} needed to be brought into the open.

By arresting Hani, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad sought to force Muslim ibn Aqil and his supporters into the open, either to rise in defiance or to be hunted down, imprisoned, and slain one by one under the tightening grip of the governor.

As Ibn Ziyad made his way toward the mosque to deliver his sermon, word of Hani’s assault and imprisonment spread rapidly through the streets of Kufa. Among those who witnessed this was Abdullah ibn Khazim al Kuthayri al Azdi, whom Muslim ibn Aqil had dispatched to the palace to learn what fate had befallen Hani ibn Urwah.

Shaykh al Mufid and other historians likewise record that Abdullah ibn Khazim had been appointed by Muslim ibn Aqil as a watcher within the governor’s palace. When Abdullah witnessed Hani being beaten and cast into imprisonment, he wasted no time. Abdullah leapt upon his horse and raced through the streets, hastening to deliver the grim news to Muslim.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Yusuf ibn Yazid, from Abdullah ibn Khazim himself, that he later recounted:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, I was the messenger of Muslim ibn Aqil to the palace to see what had become of Hani. When Hani was struck and imprisoned, I mounted my horse and was the first of the people of the house to enter upon Muslim ibn Aqil with the news.”

When Abdullah ibn Khazim arrived, he found Muslim ibn Aqil surrounded by the concerned women of Murad, all anxiously awaiting word of Hani ibn Urwah.

As the news was delivered, their voices rose in anguished lamentation:

“O tears of grief for Hani! O bereavement for him!”

Their cries reverberated through the courtyard and spilled into the surrounding alleys, swelling into a chorus of sorrow: “O sorrow! O great loss!”

Abdullah ibn Khazim then relayed to Muslim ibn Aqil the full sequence of events. It was a devastating blow. The covert mission had been shattered; the veil of secrecy had been torn away by Ibn Ziyad’s spies. What had once been concealed was now exposed, and the hunt for Muslim and his supporters had begun in earnest. Silence was no longer an option.

Upon hearing the report, Muslim ibn Aqil acted without hesitation.

Muslim ibn Aqil commanded Abdullah ibn Khazim to summon the supporters and raise among them the cry for battle.

Muruj al Dhahab records that the houses surrounding Muslim ibn Aqil were already filled with men loyal to Hani ibn Urwah, and of the Madhhij clan.

Among them were the eighteen thousand who had pledged allegiance to Muslim, and within those quarters stood four thousand armed men prepared for combat.

Muslim ibn Aqil now girded himself with armour and sword. Turning to Abdullah ibn Khazim, he said: "Call out: O victorious, bring death!" - 'Ya mansur, amit'

So Abdullah called out the battle cry: "O victorious, bring death!"

It was a cry known from the earliest days of Islam, a call used by the soldiers in the time of the Prophet Muhammad ^[saws], and most famously in the battles of Imam Ali ^[a.s] and his followers. It was a summons of resolve, a declaration that the hour of struggle had arrived and that victory lay ahead.

At that call, the people of Kufa began to summon one another.

Four thousand men gathered swiftly around Muslim ibn Aqil, repeating the cry as they converged from every quarter. The alleys trembled beneath their footfall, and the air itself seemed to throb with anticipation. The time for the uprising had truly come; the hour to prove fidelity had arrived.

This was the moment to uproot the Umayyad grip upon Kufa, to shatter the treacherous yoke imposed upon the muslim populace, and to prepare the city for the rightful arrival of the Prophet's ^[saws] noble grandson as its just and deserving leader.

The messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] now stood as commander. Skilled in the conduct of war, Muslim ibn Aqil appointed new chiefs over the tribal quarters (ru'asa' al arba'a). Leaders were set over Kindah, Madhhij, Asad, Tamim, and Hamadan, and the tribes stirred one another to action. Soon, the mosque and the marketplaces of Kufa overflowed with fervour that would not subside until nightfall.

Seeking to impose order upon the swelling ranks, Muslim ibn Aqil appointed Ubayd Allah ibn Amr ibn Aziz al Kindi as commander over the quarter of Kinda and Rabi'ah, instructing Ubayd Allah ibn Amr: "Ride ahead of me with the cavalry."

Muslim ibn Aqil then placed Muslim ibn Awsajah in charge of the quarter of Madhhij and Asad, saying: "Take position among the infantry, for you are over them."

Muslim appointed Abu Thumamah al Saidi over the quarter of Tamim and Hamadan.

Finally, Muslim ibn Aqil entrusted the command of the battalion of Medinah to Abbas ibn Jada al Judali, also named in the sources as Ayyash ibn Jada al Judali. ⁶⁸

With his commanders arrayed and the people of Murad at his side, the son of Aqil ibn Abi Talib now sought to advance toward the governor's palace.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Ammar al Duhni from Imam al Baqir ^[a.s], records that Muslim ibn Aqil ordered his vanguard to advance first, deploying forces to his right and left flanks while placing himself at the centre as Muslim ibn Aqil marched upon Ibn Ziyad.

Tahdhib al Kamal likewise states that Muslim ibn Aqil advanced in this formation.

⁶⁸ Ayyash ibn Jada al Judali later led the left flank of al Mukhtars army sent to Medinah against Ibn al Zubayr. After their defeat, he and three hundred companions refused amnesty and were killed, except for about two hundred who perished on the road. Sources mention no separate figures named Abbas al Judali or Ayyash al Judali. Given his loyalty to al Mukhtar, it is likely they refer to the same man, known by both names, who survived Ibn Aqil's uprising, later fought with al Mukhtar, and died in that campaign.

The clatter of arms grew ever nearer to the palace gates.

Al Irshad relates that with every cry of 'O victorious, bring death!' the ranks of Muslim ibn Aqil continued to swell, the memory of Hani ibn Urwah's imprisonment burning in every heart. The uprising was no longer a murmur, it had erupted into a storm.

The outlook for Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad grew increasingly dire. With no means to confront the advancing tide, he ordered the doors of the palace to be barricaded.

Bihar al Anwar states that no more than thirty guards remained at Ibn Ziyad's side, joined by twenty others drawn from local notables, members of his household, and his bondsmen. The gates of the palace slammed shut behind them as Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad withdrew within, awaiting his fate. The situation of Ibn Ziyad was now precarious.



THE PALACE UNDER SIEGE

As Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad withdrew into the governor's palace, Ibn Ziyad revealed once more the traits for which he was known: a calculating mind, a talent for deceit, and an instinctive grasp of ruthless politics. His method in confronting unrest was always the same: to crush resistance through terror or dissolve it through bribery. So long as men could be induced to sell their faith or submit to cruelty, Ibn Ziyad's stratagems would hold.

Al Kamil records that, at this critical juncture, Ibn Ziyad devised a plan to disperse the swelling masses gathered around Muslim ibn Aqil. His first step was to secure the allegiance of the elders of Kufa who remained loyal to him. These men were quietly brought into the palace so that they might be briefed on the measures to come. They were smuggled through the gate opposite the Roman building, while Ibn Ziyad remained concealed within.

Behind the palace stood a house belonging to the People of the Covenant (Ahl al Dhimmah), through whose quarters Ibn Ziyad had carved a hidden passage for his own movements, a corridor unknown to the followers of Muslim ibn Aqil.

Despite their efforts, they never succeeded in sealing that secret way.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates, through Yusuf ibn Abi Ishaq ⁶⁹, that Muslim ibn Aqil advanced with the men of Murad until Muslim had fully encircled the palace of Ibn Ziyad.

From every direction, the supporters of the uprising called upon one another to join, and the crowd continued to swell before the palace gates.

Yusuf ibn Abi Ishaq narrates:

"By Allah ^{AZJ}, not much time had passed before the mosque was filled with people, and so was the marketplace. They kept coming until evening, and Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad became distressed, for his situation had grown dire. Ibn Ziyad clung to the palace gate, and with him were only thirty men from the elite forces and twenty men from the nobles, his household, and his followers. The nobles began to enter upon Ibn Ziyad through the gate adjoining the house of the Romans (Rumayyin). Those who were inside the palace with Ibn Ziyad watched them anxiously, fearing they might be pelted with stones or cursed.

Outside, the people never ceased reviling Ubayd Allah and his father Ziyad."

The people of Kufa now surrounded the palace, their curses rising against Ibn Ziyad and his father Ziyad, the notorious sons of prostitutes, and debauchery. Yet even as the crowd grew and the danger closed in, the son of treachery sought escape through deception. The followers of Muslim ibn Aqil remained numerous until the shadows of night began to fall.

Back inside the palace, among the elders who had gathered was Kathir ibn Shihab ibn al Hussein al Harithi ⁷⁰. Like the others, he had entered through the house of the Romans.

⁶⁹ Yusuf ibn Ishaq ibn Abi Ishaq al Sabi'i was among the descendants of Abi Ishaq, and was apt in transmitting reports. He died in the year 157 AH. (Tahdhib al Tahdhib, vol. 11; Mizan al I'tidal, vol. 4; al Kashif, vol. 3; Khulasat Tadhib, Tahdhib al Kamal)

⁷⁰ This same Kathir ibn Shihab who, in earlier times, had testified against Hujr ibn Adi and personally escorted Hujr and his companions to Muawiyah.

There, Kathir ibn Shihab found men such as Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath and al Qa'qa ibn Shawr assembled around Ibn Ziyad, along with others who followed their lead.

Ibn Ziyad, ever cautious and calculating, summoned Kathir ibn Shihab and ordered him to gather men from among the Madhhij tribe who remained loyal to Kathir and to move through the city, instilling terror among the people and persuading them to abandon Muslim ibn Aqil. Kathir ibn Shihab was commanded to threaten the populace with war and to warn them of the governor's severe punishment for anyone who aided Muslim ibn Aqil.

Thereafter, Ibn Ziyad summoned Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath and instructed him to rally the men of Kindah and Hadramawt, to plant a standard, and to proclaim that whoever gathered beneath it would be granted safety from the governor's retribution.

Alongside him, Ibn Ziyad issued similar orders to Qa'qa ibn Shawr al Dhuhali ⁷¹, Shabath ibn Rib'i al Tamimi, Hajjar ibn Abjar al Ijli, and Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan al Dhahabi. ⁷²

In his distress, Ibn Ziyad seized upon every report brought to him by the elders of Kufa, seeking their counsel and favour, for his own circle of support was narrow and fragile.

Ibn Ziyad then turned to Shabath ibn Rib'i and entrusted Shabath with a banner,

"Go forth among the people. Promise reward to those who obey, increase them in wealth and honour; and threaten those who resist with deprivation and punishment.

Tell the people that reinforcements from Syria are on their way!"

Thus, Shabath ibn Rib'i departed, accompanied by the others, bearing banners that combined intimidation with temptation.

Their heralds echoed through every quarter of Kufa with a single command:

'Abandon Muslim ibn Aqil!'

Amid these fevered preparations, the corridors of the palace soon filled with whispers and reports. Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu al Jannab al Kalbi that word spread swiftly through the streets of Kufa, grim rumours claiming that Syrian reinforcements were already marching toward the city. It was yet another lie, but one expertly fashioned for the timid Kufans already trembling with fear, and it gnawed at the feeble faith they possessed.

In the span of a single afternoon, Ibn Ziyad had set the machinery of repression in motion, all while barricading himself within the palace.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had raised his banners, issued his threats, and dangled promises of safety and wealth before a wavering and fickle populace.

And as envoys of Ibn Ziyad scattered through the city, sowing doubt and terror, the narrow gate beside the house of the Romans remained his secret pathway to the restless streets beyond.

⁷¹ al Qa'qa ibn Shawr al Dhuhali had likewise borne witness against Hujr ibn Adi and later fought against Muslim ibn Aqil during the uprising in Kufa.

⁷² Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan had once ridden alongside Imam Ali ^{a.s} at Siffin, but later joined those who accused Hujr ibn Adi. Shimr would become the very man who further incited Ibn Ziyad to slay Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. At Karbala, Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan urged the sons of Lady Umm al Banin, the brothers of al Abbas, to seek the governor's protection and abandon their Imam ^{a.s}.

THE FALSE BANNERS OF AMNESTY

By the time the governor's palace stood encircled and the authority of Ibn Ziyad had been reduced to a besieged handful barricaded behind its walls, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad sought to avoid open confrontation. It became clear that force alone would not restore his grip on the people of Kufa. Thus, having failed by arms, he turned decisively to deception.

Abu Mikhnaf relates that Ibn Ziyad summoned the elders and tribal chiefs who remained aligned with him and charged them with a calculated task. They were to exploit their influence over the weak-willed and the obedient, those bound by tribal loyalty or fear of reprisal, by offering false assurances of safety, while simultaneously intimidating and threatening those who showed defiance.

Ansab al Ashraf records that Ibn Ziyad dispatched Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath ibn Qays, Kathir ibn Shihab al Harithi, and several other nobles among the elders, instructing them to persuade the people to abandon Muslim ibn Aqil and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

They were ordered to terrify the masses with warnings of Yazid ibn Muawiyah's vengeance and the imminent arrival of the Syrian armies. They were to threaten the suspension of stipends, to proclaim that punishment would fall upon the innocent for the guilty, and that those present would suffer for the actions of those absent. Thus, fear was made collective, indiscriminate, and inescapable.

al Akhbar al Tiwal relates that while the people remained gathered outside the besieged palace, Ibn Ziyad devised another stratagem to shatter what resolution still endured. He ordered the tribal chiefs to ascend to the roof of the palace and address their tribes directly. "Each of you," Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad commanded, "is to take a section of the roof and admonish the people." al Kamil fi al Tarikh adds that they were instructed to promise leniency and favour to those who withdrew from Muslim ibn Aqil, and to threaten violence and retribution against those who refused.

Tadhkirat al Khawass records that Ibn Ziyad enforced this command with ruthless severity. Any elder who hesitated was threatened with immediate execution.

"Rise and go," he warned them, "and dissuade your kinsfolk from siding with Muslim ibn Aqil, otherwise I will strike off your necks!"

Gripped by fear, they ascended the rooftops and began calling down to their people. From above, they urged withdrawal and sowed doubt. With each word uttered from the palace roof, the unity of those gathered around Muslim ibn Aqil began to fracture, and the seeds of betrayal took root.

The stratagem soon bore its bitter fruit.

Voices of alarm and hollow promises echoed through the streets of Kufa, spreading doubt with devastating efficiency. al Akhbar al Tiwal records that the followers of Muslim heard their elders repeating these warnings and falsehoods, their commitment began to waver.

The fervour that had once filled the streets cooled, and hesitation crept into hearts that had only moments earlier pledged loyalty. Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Abdullah ibn Hazim al Kubra, that the swelling ranks around Muslim ibn Aqil began to thin, this collapse unfolding before any sustained fighting had taken place. The tide of support was now stemmed by the calculated propaganda of Ibn Ziyad.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Abdullah ibn Hazim al Kubra, that foremost among the deceivers was Kathir ibn Shihab, who was the first to address the people. He spoke unceasingly until the sun dipped low and shadows stretched long across the city. Kathir ibn Shihab cried out:

"O people, return to your families. Do not hasten toward evil, and do not expose yourselves to death. The armies of the Commander of the Faithful, Yazid, have already arrived, and the governor has sworn before Allah ^[AZJ] that if you persist in fighting him and do not withdraw by this evening, Yazid will forbid your offspring from receiving their stipends, scatter your warriors across the battlefronts of the Syrians without reward, and punish the innocent for the guilty and the present for the absent, until no one remains among you who disobeys without tasting the consequence of his own deeds!"

Kathir ibn Shihab was counted among the most loyal of Ibn Ziyad's advisers. Observing that the tide of numbers had now shifted in the Umayyad favour, Kathir urged Ibn Ziyad: "May Allah ^[AZJ] set right the affairs of the Amir. With you in the palace are many of the nobles, your guards, your household, and your followers. Let us go out against them."

The other nobles followed, each echoing the same message, weaving their words into a single fabric of fear. The poison sank deeper into Kufan hearts. When one man saw his neighbour or kinsman withdraw, his own resolution faltered. Fear of consequence overcame loyalty of conscience. The siege around the palace loosened, and the roars of defiance dissolved into murmurs of confusion and retreat.

al Akhbar al Tiwal states that among those who addressed the people were Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, al Qa'qa ibn Shawr, Shabath ibn Rib'i, Hajjar ibn Abjar, and Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan. They cried out,

"O people of Kufa, be mindful of Allah ^[AZJ]. Do not rush into discord, do not tear apart the unity of the community, and do not bring down upon yourselves the Syrian army, for you have tasted their wrath and witnessed their might before!"



Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Mujalid ibn Sa'id that the women of Kufa emerged to their sons, brothers, and husbands, pleading,

“The others have already withdrawn, let that be enough for you!”

They clung to them, pulling them away from the gathering until they departed. Fathers and elders came to their sons and brothers, saying,

“Tomorrow the army of Sham will be upon you, what will you do against war and calamity? Withdraw!”

Others said, “Disperse, there are enough others who will support Muslim ibn Aqil!”

And so they were taken away: some by persuasion, some by force, and some by fear.

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath positioned himself near the houses of Banu Amarah, where he saw Amarah ibn Salhab al Azdi emerge clad in armour, intent on joining Muslim ibn Aqil. Ibn al Ash'ath seized Amarah and delivered him to Ibn Ziyad, who cast Amarah into prison.

This public arrest served as a warning, and the dismantling of the uprising proceeded systematically. Some were dragged from their posts, others were arrested, and others were cowed into retreat. The fickle nature of the Kufans and their betrayals was beginning to take shape.

Tarikh al Tabari quotes Ammar al Duhni from Imam al Baqir ^[a.s.]:

“Ubayd Allah summoned the elders of Kufa and gathered them before him in the mansion. When Muslim advanced and reached the gate of the palace, the elders climbed to the roof, looked upon their kin, and called out to them, urging them to withdraw.”

Tahdhib al Kamal states that by evening, only five hundred men remained with Muslim ibn Aqil, and as darkness fell, even they departed.

From the initial force of four thousand, only five hundred now stood with Muslim ibn Aqil as night approached.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu Hab al Kalbi that in a final attempt to reassert control, Muslim ibn Aqil sent Abdul Rahman ibn Shurayh al Shibami with many men from the mosque to confront Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath. When ibn al Ash'ath saw the advancing multitude, he withdrew.

Meanwhile, al Qa'qa ibn Shawr al Duhali manoeuvred around Muslim ibn Aqil and his men from a place called ‘al Arar’, spreading confusion and opening avenues of withdrawal.

Tarikh al Tabari states that later that night, when Muslim ibn Aqil had advanced upon the mansion of Ibn Ziyad, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, al Qa'qa ibn Shur, and Shabath ibn Rib'i engaged militarily with Muslim and his followers.

This was not a pitched battle, but a deliberate effort to delay and encircle.

As the confrontation dragged on, Shabath called out,

“Wait for nightfall, and they will disperse.”

al Qa'qa ibn Shur replied,

“You have blocked their path of escape, open the way, and they will slip away.”

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Yusuf ibn Abi Ishaq, from Abbas al Jadali, that when they first set out with Muslim ibn Aqil, they numbered four thousand, but by the time they reached the palace only three hundred remained.

From evening until the approach to the palace gates, only three hundred men now stood with Muslim ibn Aqil.

An alternative report in Tarikh al Tabari, from Isa ibn Yazid, states that al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd and Abdullah ibn al Harith ibn Nawfal had also risen with Muslim ibn Aqil.

It places al Mukhtar within Kufa and reports that he carried a green banner, while Abdullah carried a red one and was himself dressed in red. It narrates that having risen, al Mukhtar would eventually plant his banner at the door of Amr ibn Hurayth, declaring,

“I have only come out to thwart Amr ibn Hurayth.”

But the poisonous campaign of threats and deceit had already taken hold. The dismantling of Muslim ibn Aqil's uprising was now irreversible.

Fear and confusion swept through the streets of Kufa, and his supporters melted away.

Tarikh al Tabari relates from Hilal ibn Yasaf that he encountered Muslim and his men that night near the mosque of the Ansar.

In every street they passed, on the right and on the left, groups of thirty or forty men slipped away into the darkness. By the time they reached the marketplace and entered the mosque, scarcely anyone remained.

al Khawarizmi recounts that the people said to one another,

“Why should we rush into discord and bring the Syrian army upon ourselves?

Let us sit in our homes and wait until Allah ^[AZJ] settles the matter between them.”

Word of this retreat reached Ibn Ziyad within his barricaded palace. He was told,

“By Allah ^[AZJ], we no longer see many, nor hear the voices of many.”

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ordered the roof covering of the mosque to be stripped away and the straw upon its beams to be set alight to illuminate the scene below.

When the flames rose, only about fifty men could be seen.

Only fifty men now remained with Muslim ibn Aqil.

Alternative reports in Tarikh al Tabari and al Futuh state that Muslim ibn Aqil ascended the pulpit of the mosque and called out,

“Let every quarter sit with its tribesmen.”

Each group gathered around its chief, but before any order could restore their strength, a detachment of Ibn Ziyad's men fell upon them. Muslim ibn Aqil was wounded, several of his companions were killed, and the rest were scattered in fear.

Thus, the city that had sworn allegiance to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] and received Muslim ibn Aqil as his representative abandoned Muslim in the hour of trial, at its most critical time.

Alone, wounded, and bleeding, Muslim ibn Aqil moved through the streets of Kufa until he reached the houses of the tribe of Kindah, seeking refuge while the city that had once claimed loyalty to him, but now treacherously closed its doors.

THE ESTRANGEMENT OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

Through the admonitions, threats, and calculated falsehoods spread by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, the supporters of Muslim ibn Aqil began to melt away. Ansab al Ashraf states that one by one, quietly and without farewell, they deserted him as the day waned and evening approached. By the time Muslim rose to lead the prayer, only thirty men remained with him in the mosque, and it was these few who stood behind him in prayer.

al Akhbar al Tiwal likewise relates that when Muslim prayed the Maghrib prayer in the mosque, no more than thirty men were still at his side.

Thirty men now remained with Muslim ibn Aqil at the time of prayer.

Thus began the most perilous night of Muslim ibn Aqil. With every step taken by a departing companion, a wound of betrayal was carved into his heart. Yet the loyal emissary of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} composed himself once more, resolute and unwavering, hoping, at the very least, to preserve a small remnant of faithful men around him.

When Muslim ibn Aqil perceived how few they had become, he departed from the Mosque of Kufa and made his way toward the dwellings of the tribe of Kindah. But at every turn of the road, Muslim heard the sound of retreating footsteps, one man after another slipping away into the darkness. With every corner that Muslim turned, the noise behind him diminished, until only faint echoes of footsteps remained.

By the time Muslim reached the outskirts of Kindah, only ten men remained with him.

Ten men now remained with Muslim ibn Aqil upon reaching Kindah.

Ansab al Ashraf relates that as Muslim passed through the gate and entered the quarter of the Kindah tribe, his steps suddenly halted. Muslim paused and listened intently, straining for any sign of movement behind him, any footstep, any breath, any trace of companionship.

Muslim ibn Aqil lowered his head in silence, the crushing weight of betrayal pressing down upon his soul. Only the sounds of the chilly night wind remained.

When Muslim ibn Aqil raised his head once more, there was not a single soul beside him. The estrangement of Muslim ibn Aqil was now complete.

No man now remained with Muslim ibn Aqil.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Majalid ibn Sa'id, states that Muslim slowly lifted his gaze, his eyes adjusting to the darkness that enveloped him.

Muslim ibn Aqil looked about and found no one to guide him through the unfamiliar streets, no one to offer him shelter, and no one to stand beside him should an enemy emerge. He now wandered alone through the streets of Kufa, lost, abandoned, and utterly forsaken.

al Khawarizmi and al Futuh likewise report that as the day progressed, the crowd around Muslim ibn Aqil steadily thinned.

By sunset, only ten companions remained, and when night fell and Muslim ibn Aqil entered the Grand Mosque to perform the night prayer, even these last men deserted Muslim.

Dejected and abandoned, Muslim ibn Aqil walked without direction through the alleys of Kufa, not knowing where to turn, until Muslim reached the houses of Banu Jabalah, a branch of the Kindah tribe.

Mas'udi also narrates that when Muslim ibn Aqil found himself completely alone, he dismounted from his horse and wandered the streets, unaware of where his steps were taking him, until Muslim passed by the dwellings of Banu Jabalah of Kindah.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that Muslim ibn Aqil continued walking until exhaustion overcame him and his feet could carry him no further. Then, sensing a presence near one of the doors, Muslim stopped. It was the door of a woman named Taw'ah, or Tu'ah ⁷³.

Taw'ah was a freed slave of al Ash'ath ibn Qays ⁷⁴, who had emancipated her, and she later married Usayd al Hadrami ⁷⁵, and bore him a son named Bilal.

Bilal had gone out with the people that evening, and his mother Taw'ah now stood by her door, waiting anxiously for Bilal to return. The abandoned messenger of the Imam ^{a.s}, having passed by countless closed doors and unfamiliar streets, sensed her presence and greeted her. Taw'ah returned his greeting.

With a soft and lowered tone, Muslim ibn Aqil asked her,

“O servant of Allah ^{AZJ}, can you give me some water? I am extremely thirsty.”

Taw'ah went inside and brought Muslim water.

Muslim ibn Aqil sat down upon the ground in exhaustion, drank the water, and then handed the vessel back, his head still bowed. Taw'ah took the vessel inside, and when she came out again, she found Muslim still seated at her door, motionless and silent.

With gentle concern, she asked, “O servant of Allah ^{AZJ}, did you not drink?”, as though urging this stranger to rise and continue on his way, away from her doorstep.

Muslim ibn Aqil spoke softly again, “Yes.”

⁷³ Taw'ah was a freedwoman of al Ash'ath ibn Qays. After his death, Taw'ah married Usayd al Hadrami; it is also reported that Asad ibn Bastin married Taw'ah and she bore him a son, Bilal. Taw'ah is known for her deep love for the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, she is remembered for sheltering and hiding Muslim ibn Aqil, when he had been utterly abandoned, being one of the most renowned episodes in early Kufan history.

⁷⁴ Tarikh al Tabari records that al Ash'ath ibn Qays came with sixty horsemen from Kindah to the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} in 10 AH. He traced his lineage through royal ancestors and wished the Prophet to do the same, but the Prophet traced himself to al Nadr ibn Kinanah, which displeased him. The Prophet ^{saws} later married his sister Qutaylah but passed away before consummation. After this, both apostatized. Al Ash'ath fought the Muslims, was defeated, and sent to Abu Bakr, where he sought amnesty and married Umm Farwah. Abu Bakr released him, accepted his return to Islam, and restored his family. It was later said no evil occurred except that he had a hand in it. He later joined at al Qadisiyyah with seventeen hundred men, was sent as an envoy, urged tribal fighting, killed the Persian commander Turk, and received ten thousand from Khalid ibn al Walid. He also fought at Nahawand. In 30 AH, he purchased spoils in Tayirnabadh from Uthman, and in 34 AH was made governor of Azerbaijan, holding it at Uthman's death. Amir al Muminin Imam Ali ^{a.s} later summoned him, and he pledged allegiance. At Siffin, he pushed for arbitration, insisted on Abu Musa al Ashari, and was the first to sign and read the document. After Nahrawan, he opposed advancing against Muawiyah and urged return to Kufa. He was granted Azerbaijan's revenues, said to be one hundred thousand annually, and built a mosque in Kufa.

⁷⁵ It is said that Usayd al Hadrami was the one who killed Abdullah ibn Muslim in Karbala.

Taw'ah replied, "Then go to your family." Muslim ibn Aqil remained silent.

Taw'ah repeated again, more firmly, "Then go to your family."

Perhaps the word 'family' pierced the heart of the estranged Muslim ibn Aqil, awakening painful memories of his family and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Still, Muslim was sat did not speak.

Uneasy at the sight of a weary stranger lingering at her threshold, Taw'ah implored him,

"Fear Allah ^[AZJ] concerning me, 'fiyya Allah ^[AZJ]', glory be to Allah ^[AZJ]!"

O servant of Allah ^[AZJ], go to your family. May Allah ^[AZJ] grant you well-being, for it is not proper for you to sit at my doorstep, and I do not permit it for you."

al Futuh and al Khawarizmi relate that, perceiving faith and sincerity in her voice, Muslim ibn Aqil rose and said,

"O servant of Allah ^[AZJ], yes indeed I shall. But by Allah ^[AZJ], I have nowhere to stay in Kufa. I am a stranger, and I have been abandoned by those I trusted. Would you show me some kindness? I am of a noble household, and one such as I would always return a favour."

Taw'ah asked inquisitively, "O servant of Allah ^[AZJ], what do you mean?"

Muslim ibn Aqil replied, "Leave that aside. Allow me to enter and rest in your home, perhaps Allah ^[AZJ] will reward you tomorrow with his everlasting Paradise."

These words struck Taw'ah, she was now even more inquisitive,

"O servant of Allah ^[AZJ], tell me your name, and do not conceal your situation from me.

I am reluctant to admit anyone to my home before I know who he is."

Taw'ah added, "These are dangerous times since the arrival of Ibn Ziyad in Kufa."

Muslim ibn Aqil sensed Taw'ah to be a women not aligned with the Umayyads,

"If you truly knew me, you would surely admit me. I am Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib. These kufans have lied to me and deceived me, and they driven me from my place of safety."

The heart of Taw'ah trembled. Astonished, she asked, "Are you Muslim?!"

Muslim ibn Aqil replied in a lowered tone, "Yes."

At once, Taw'ah spoke, "Rise and come in, may Allah ^[AZJ] have mercy on you!"

Taw'ah ushered Muslim ibn Aqil into her home and placed Muslim in a separate room. Taw'ah spread a rug for Muslim, brought a lamp, and offered him food, but Muslim ibn Aqil refused to eat. The lonely messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] sat in silence, his heart weighed down by betrayal and by the memory of the letter he had written to his master, bearing the news of thousands of pledges that had now turned to dust.

As the night passed, eventually the son of Taw'ah, Bilal, returned home. Before long, Bilal noticed that his mother would repeatedly enter and leave this one room, weeping each time as she emerged. Bilal enquired,

"By Allah ^[AZJ], mother, your behaviour troubles me. Why do you keep going into that room and coming out in tears? What is the matter?"

Taw'ah replied hesitantly, "My dear son, do not concern yourself with this."

However, Bilal insisted, "By Allah ^[AZJ], you will tell me!"

Taw'ah still resisted to tell him, "Mind your own affairs and ask me nothing!"

Still, Bilal persisted until finally Taw'ah relented and disclosed,

"My dear son, I will tell you, but you must not reveal it to anyone."

Taw'ah made Bilal swear an oath, and when he swore to secrecy. Taw'ah said softly,

"Muslim ibn Aqil is in that room," and she told Bilal all that had occurred that night.

Bilal fell silent. He lay down and went to sleep, uttering no word.

Tarikh al Tabari and al Irshad relate differing accounts regarding Bilal's absence, with some stating that Bilal had been dismissed by his companions for the night, while other reports claim Bilal had been out drinking with his friends.

Al Tabari also summarizes this solemn episode of the door and the estrangement of Muslim ibn Aqil, narrating from Ammar al Duhni, from Imam al Baqir ^[a.s.]:

"When Muslim ibn Aqil saw that he had been left alone, wandering the streets, Muslim came to a door and stopped there. A woman came out to him.

Muslim said to her, 'Give me water.'

She gave him water. Then she went inside for a while, and when she came out, she found Muslim still sitting at her door.

She said, 'O servant of Allah ^[AZJ], your sitting here is suspicious, rise (and leave).'

Muslim said, 'I am Muslim ibn Aqil. Do you have a place of refuge for me?'

She said, 'Yes, enter.'"

Thus, Muslim ibn Aqil ^[a.s.], abandoned by those who had sworn allegiance, surrounded by treachery and fear, found, in a single faithful women, a brief refuge before the final storm.



THE PURSUIT OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

THE OPPRESSOR EMERGES

When the last echoes of the supporters of Muslim ibn Aqil finally dissolved into silence, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad remained seated, motionless, listening intently for any lingering murmur of allegiance within the Great Mosque of Kufah.

Only moments earlier, the air had been alive with low voices gathering around Muslim ibn Aqil; now nothing remained but the faint rustle of garments and the uneasy breathing of men.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal records that Ibn Ziyad turned sharply to those around him and asked, “Look carefully, do you see anyone in the mosque?”

The governor’s palace adjoined the mosque itself. His men peered out, straining their eyes into the darkness, yet could discern no one. They hurried off, their sandals tapping hollowly against the stone, and soon returned bearing the same unsettling report: the mosque appeared empty. Unsatisfied, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ordered again, his voice edged with suspicion:

“Look again. Perhaps they are hiding beneath the shadows (al zilal).”

The word used ‘al zilal’, is referring to a canopy or shaded structure, such as a covered or roofed sections that were prevalent in the mosques.

Understanding his intent, the party moved deeper into the vast open courtyard at the heart of the mosque, its wide expanse known as the ‘bah’buha’. They lowered their torches until the flames licked the paving stones, sweeping slowly across each aisle and beneath every arch.

At times the light flared brightly, revealing glazed tiles and cold marble; at others it faltered, trembling in the rising night wind.

Still unconvinced, they lit reed torches bound with rope and hurled them into the courtyard, flooding the mosque with harsh, wavering light. Yet even then, no figure emerged.

Bundles of reeds, tightly bound ‘al tinnan’, were next set ablaze and lowered into the mosque within half-tubs, suspended by ropes. Each fiery mass descended until it grazed the floor, casting long, quivering shadows across the near spaces and the middle reaches of the mosque, until even the pulpit’s darkened corner lay exposed.

Only then, satisfied with their scrutiny, did they return to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal records that the governor’s response was immediate and calculating. With a glint of satisfaction, Ibn Ziyad said:

“It seems the people have left Muslim ibn Aqil, abandoned him, and dispersed.”

Tarikh al Tabari, citing Majalid ibn Sa’id, relates that Ibn Ziyad then unlocked the door of the palace that opened directly into the mosque and stepped through, accompanied by his entourage. Ibn Ziyad seated himself within the mosque and soon ascended the pulpit.

His companions followed, taking their positions around Ibn Ziyad shortly before the night Isha prayer. Torches and candles were lit throughout the mosque, their flames wavering across faces marked by anxiety, submission, and fear.

Ibn Ziyad now summoned his scribe, Amr ibn Nafi ⁷⁶, and commanded him to raise the alarm throughout the streets of Kufah:

“Immunity will not be granted to any man from the guards, the tribal chiefs (al urafa), the supporters, or the fighters who performs the night prayer anywhere other than in the Grand Mosque of Kufa!”

At the governor’s left stood the notorious Hussein ibn Tamim al Tamimi ⁷⁷, the commander of the police. Leaning closer, Ibn Tamim spoke in a low voice edged with caution:

“If you wish, you may lead the prayer, or someone else may lead while you return to the palace. I am not certain you will be safe here from an assassination attempt by your enemies.”

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad replied coldly:

“Order my guards to stand behind me as they always do, in formation, and circulate more guards among the people. I will not enter the palace. I will lead the people in prayer.”

Ibn Ziyad understood that authority in Kufah was not secured by caution but by spectacle. The Kufans had to see, unmistakably, that Ibn Ziyad remained in command.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates that Ibn Ziyad’s command spread through the alleys of Kufah like an iron braid, tightening with every step. Before long, the courtyard that had stood empty began to swell once more with bodies drawn by fear and coercion.

Ibn Ziyad ordered his mu’adhdhin to call the adhan and establish the Isha prayer.

At once, the side door of the mosque swung open. Armoured guards slipped through, their ranks closing around the governor like a living wall. Ibn Ziyad stepped forward beneath the shaded structure and into the wide courtyard.

Where moments earlier Muslim ibn Aqil had stood to lead the prayers, now stood Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, framed beneath the trembling lantern light, leading the masses in prayer.

Beyond the mosque’s walls, the allies of Muslim ibn Aqil vanished into Kufah’s dark labyrinth. The city’s heartbeat had slowed, and its eerie quiet began to converge.

For now, Ibn Ziyad’s vengeance would be methodical, deliberate, and suffocating.

The city of Kufah had again fell silent once more beneath his iron grip. However, this time it would evoke the wrath of Ibn Ziyad.

With the peril that Ibn Ziyad had just endured still smouldering within him, the cruel-hearted son of a prostitute hardened himself with renewed malice.

This time, the guile and cruelty of Ibn Ziyad would be unleashed without restraint.

The tide of Kufa had swayed, and now so would the fortunes of a lonely estranged man.

The hunt for Muslim ibn Aqil, the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, would now begin.

⁷⁶ Amr ibn Nafi was the secretary of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and would later write the infamous letter to Yazid ibn Muawiyah announcing the execution of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah. Amr ibn Nafi was known for writing slowly, a habit that often drew the irritation of Ibn Ziyad towards him.

⁷⁷ Hussein ibn Tamim al Tamimi was sent by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to al Qadisiyyah to command cavalry across its frontier. Ibn Tamim later captured and executed Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to Muslim ibn Aqil, and also seized Abdullah ibn Yaqtar. Hussein ibn Tamim then led one thousand riders from Banu Tamim to intercept the Imam ^{a.s} on the road to Kufah.

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah narrates that after the completion of the Isha prayer, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ascended the pulpit. He stood before the people of Kufah, first praising almighty Allah ^{AZJ} and extolling Him, while an oppressive silence settled over the mosque.

Eyes were fixed upon Ibn Ziyad as his gaze swept across the gathered crowd, heavy with suspicion and menace. Then Ibn Ziyad spoke:

“As for what follows, indeed Ibn Aqil is an ignorant fool. He sought to cause discord and dissension, as you yourselves have witnessed. I am not responsible before Allah ^{AZJ} for what I shall do to any man in whose house he is found. Whoever brings Muslim forth shall be rewarded for his blood. O servants of Allah ^{AZJ}, be mindful of Him ^{AZJ}. Hold fast to your pledges of obedience and allegiance, and do not allow Ibn Aqil to lead you astray.”

Then, singling out his chief enforcer, Ibn Ziyad spoke loudly so all could hear:

“O Hussein ibn Tamim! May your mother weep for you if there is an outcry from even a single street of Kufah, or if this man escapes from the city and you do not bring him back to me! I authorize you to search the houses of the Kufans.

Station sentries at the entrance of every street. From tomorrow morning, evacuate every house and search it thoroughly, until you find and bring me this man!”

Tarikh al Tabari records that Ibn Ziyad then descended from the pulpit and returned to the palace. Before departing, he appointed Amr ibn Hurayth ⁷⁸ as standard-bearer, placing him in charge of the people and instructing him to sit among them in the mosque, overseeing the city in his absence.

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah further states that Ibn Ziyad summoned the guards and issued them the same orders, reinforcing his command with stern warnings of the punishment awaiting them should they fail to locate Muslim ibn Aqil.

A close reading of these words reveals the suffocating grip of fear with which Ibn Ziyad held Kufah. He instructed his chief of police to scrutinise the houses with relentless precision, to examine every dwelling thoroughly, to probe every depth, and to search without restraint.

With this decree, there remained no refuge for Muslim ibn Aqil, and every association with him would now be a death sentence.

The assembly dispersed beneath the crushing weight of dread, each listener keenly aware that the coming dawn would bring with it the pounding of fists upon doors and the invasive probing of every house, alley, and threshold throughout Kufah.

⁷⁸ Amr ibn Hurayth al Makhzumi purchased two chests of war spoils, filled with pearls, chrysolite, and rubies, for two million dirhams, later selling them in Persia for four million and becoming one of the richest men in Kufa by 21 AH. Amr served as deputy over Kufa under Sa'id ibn al Aas and later under Ziyad, where Amr faced opposition from the followers of Hujr ibn Adi and testified against them. In 64 AH, Amr was again appointed under Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and urged the Kufans to support him after Yazid's death, but they revolted, stoned Amr, and expelled him. Amr fled during al Mukhtar's uprising in 66 AH. Amr later gained favor with Abdul Malik ibn Marwan and was appointed deputy over Kufa in 73 AH. Amr failed to aid Muslim ibn Aqil when Amr asked for water and did not support Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} before Ibn Ziyad, except for a gesture of Qurashi pride. Amr ibn Hurayth died in 85 AH.

THE DELAY OF AL MUKHTAR

Among those who had pledged their support to Muslim ibn Aqil was al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd al Thaqafi. Al Mukhtar stood among the notable men of Kufah who had surrounded Muslim, aided his cause, and called others to obedience and loyalty. Yet fate, circumstance, and the swift brutality of events would conspire to delay his arrival at the decisive hour.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through al Mujalid ibn Sa'id, that al Mukhtar was neither prepared nor even aware that the movement of Muslim ibn Aqil had begun.

At that time, al Mukhtar was staying in one of the villages of 'Khatraniyya', a place known as 'Laqfa', and somewhat removed from the centre of unfolding events in Kufa.

It is reported that it was around midday when word finally reached al Mukhtar that Hani ibn Urwah al Muradi had been beaten and imprisoned by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. The news struck al Mukhtar with its gravity and implied repercussions.

The day of uprising had not been coordinated with al Mukhtar or his companions, and yet due to the urgent circumstance, the movement had now begun without his presence.

Nevertheless, within that narrow window of time, al Mukhtar exerted himself to gather whatever support he could muster. With a small group of loyal followers, al Mukhtar set out hastily toward Kufah, determined to reach the city.

They pressed on until they reached 'Bab al Fil', arriving just after sunset. But by then, the tide had already turned. Muslim ibn Aqil had been abandoned, his support scattered and uprooted. Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had emerged from his concealment within the governor's palace and, having regained control of the city, entrusted command to Amr ibn Hurayth.

Ibn Ziyad had earlier placed a banner in his hand and ordered Amr ibn Hurayth to sit openly in the mosque, asserting Umayyad authority before the eyes of the people.

As al Mukhtar halted at 'Bab al Fil', he was approached by an Umayyad sympathiser, Hani ibn Abi Hayyah al Wada'i. ⁷⁹ Hani ibn Abi Hayyah recognised al Mukhtar immediately.

The city was gripped by fear and turbulence, and al Mukhtar was a known and influential figure in Kufah, one whose disapproval of the Umayyads was well established. Hani's curiosity was tinged with suspicion, and his tone was cold.

“Why are you standing here,” he asked, “neither with the people nor in your own quarters?”

Al Mukhtar replied,

“My judgment has become clouded by the gravity of what you (kufans) have done.”

Hani retorted sharply, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, I think you will bring about your own destruction.”

With that, Hani ibn Abi Hayyah proceeded to the mosque of Kufah and entered upon Amr ibn Hurayth, informing Amr of the encounter and repeating to him al Mukhtar's words.

⁷⁹ Hani ibn Abi Hayyah al Wada'i was among those who testified against Hujr ibn Adi and his companions and carried the severed heads of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah to Yazid ibn Muawiyah. In 64 AH, during the rule of Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, he met al Mukhtar in Mecca, who revealed his plan to seize Kufa, and Hani warned him of the coming sedition.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates, through al Nadr ibn Salih, from Abdul Rahman al Thaqafi ⁸⁰, who was also present in the mosque as Hani ibn Urwah and Amr were speaking.

Hearing the report, Amr ibn Hurayth turned to Abdul Rahman and said:

“Go to your cousin al Mukhtar and tell him that his companion, Muslim Ibn Aqil, is missing, and no one knows where he is. Let him not bring ruin upon himself.”

Abdul Rahman rose at once, for any persistence in armed resistance would now place his cousin al Mukhtar directly at the mercy of Ibn Ziyad.

Yet before Abdul Rahman could depart, Za'idah ibn Qudamah ibn Mas'ud, who was seated nearby, sprang forward and addressed Amr ibn Hurayth.

“Al Mukhtar will come to you,” Za'idah said, “only under the assurance of safety.”

Amr replied, “As far as I am concerned, al Mukhtar is safe.

But if anything concerning al Mukhtar reaches the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, I will testify on his behalf and intercede for him with the strongest intercession.”

Za'idah acknowledged, “Then nothing but good will come of this, Allah ^{AZJ} willing.”

Abdul Rahman departed in haste, and Za'idah ibn Qudamah accompanied him to the place where al Mukhtar had halted.

They informed al Mukhtar of the situation that had overtaken Kufah; the routing of Muslim ibn Aqil, and the conversation that had taken place between Hani ibn Abi Hayyah and Amr ibn Hurayth. They implored him, by Allah ^{AZJ}, not to bring destruction to himself.

Al Mukhtar was no stranger to political calculation. Seasoned, perceptive, and wary, al Mukhtar recognised that the uprising had failed and that persistence would serve no cause but his own ruin. Choosing survival over futile defiance, al Mukhtar mounted his horse and rode toward Amr ibn Hurayth in the mosque of Kufah.

It is narrated that when al Mukhtar entered upon Amr ibn Hurayth, al Mukhtar greeted Amr and seated himself beneath his banner until the morning. By this deliberate act, he made it evident to the people that he had not taken part in the movement of Muslim ibn Aqil.

The matter quickly became the subject of public discussion, for al Mukhtar was widely regarded as a significant figure whose actions carried weight and implication.

Among those present was a man named Amarah ibn Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt. Amarah ibn Uqbah went to Ibn Ziyad and reported what had occurred in the mosque.

However, such surveillance would become the fate of many who hesitated, concealed their intentions, or failed to yield completely to the authority of Ibn Ziyad.

⁸⁰ Abd al Rahman ibn Abd Allah ibn Uthman al Thaqafi supported al Mukhtar in his uprising in 67 AH. He was nephew of Muawiyah through his sister Umm al Hakam, whom Muawiyah appointed governor of Kufa in 58 AH after al Dahhak ibn Qays, with Zaidah ibn Qudamah al Thaqafi serving as his chief of police. Before this, he had governed Mosul for Muawiyah in 51 AH. He was the one who killed Amr ibn al Hamq al Khuzai, claiming retribution for Uthman despite the man's illness. His harsh conduct toward the people of Kufa led to his expulsion, whereupon he fled to Muawiyah, who then appointed him governor of Egypt, though he was expelled from there as well before returning to Muawiyah. Were it not for his kinship with Yazid ibn Muawiyah, Amr ibn Hurayth would not have favoured him.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Abu Janab al Kalbi, that on the night of the uprising, Kathir ibn Shihab al Harithi encountered a man from Banu Fityan in Kufah named Abdul A'la ibn Yazid al Kalbi. The man had armed himself, intending to go out and support Muslim ibn Aqil. Kathir ibn Shihab seized him and brought him before Ibn Ziyad, informing the governor of his intention. Faced with imminent danger, Abdul A'la pleaded desperately, saying:

“It was you whom I intended to support!”

Ibn Ziyad smirked, fully aware of the man's true intention, and replied mockingly:

“Yes, you made me that promise in your mind.”

Ibn Ziyad then ordered that Abdul A'la be imprisoned. Thus unfolded the cautious manoeuvrings within Kufah on the eve of one of the most momentous events.

Every whisper of loyalty to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} was now shadowed by fear of the governor's cruelty. In this city of broken pledges, survival itself became an act of calculation.



THE BETRAYAL OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

With the noose of fear now drawn tight across the alleys and quarters of Kufah, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad moved swiftly to intensify the hunt for the emissary of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], Muslim ibn Aqil.

The people now measured every word and gesture beneath the watchful eye of the governor.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Majalid ibn Sa'id, records that on the following morning Ibn Ziyad convened his public assembly and granted permission for the people to come before him. The Kufans began to gather in his audience chamber, some driven by fear, others by calculation, hoping that an open display of submission might erase from the governor's memory the traces of their earlier stirrings of revolt.

For a man as vindictive as Ibn Ziyad, allegiance and obedience had to be seen.

When Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath approached, Ibn Ziyad greeted him with warmth,

"Welcome to one who is neither insincere nor distrusted," and ordered that Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath be seated beside him.

The gesture was deliberate, signalling favour to those who had remained loyal to him.

Ansab al Ashraf relates that earlier that same morning, the son of the elderly woman Taw'ah, the woman who had granted sanctuary to Muslim ibn Aqil, committed an act of profound treachery.

Bilal ibn Usayd broke the oath of secrecy to his own mother and revealed the secret to Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, disclosing that Ibn Aqil was concealed within his mother's house and recounting all that had transpired there during the previous night.

Tarikh al Tabari states that Abdul Rahman then approached his father, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, quietly and whispered the matter to him while he sat in the company of Ibn Ziyad. The governor, alert to every furtive exchange, noticed their hushed conversation and demanded sharply, "What did he tell you?"

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath looked upon Ibn Ziyad and replied without hesitation,

"Abdul Rahman has informed me that Muslim bn Aqil is in one of our houses!"

Both men exchanged glances, the fate of Muslim ibn Aqil now finally within their grasp.

At this, al Irshad records that Ibn Ziyad poked Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath sharply in the side with his cane and commanded, "Go and bring Muslim to me, at once!"

Further, being fully aware of the delicate weave of Kufah's tribal order, Ibn Ziyad now acted with calculated precision. Ibn Ziyad immediately sent word to Amr ibn Hurayth, his deputy over the people assembled in the mosque.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Qudamah ibn Sa'id ⁸¹ that the governor's message was brief yet deliberate:

"Send with Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath sixty or seventy men from the tribe of Qays."

⁸¹ Qudamah ibn Sa'id ibn Za'idah ibn Qudamah al Thaqafi was counted by Shaykh al Tusi among the companions of Imam al Baqir ^[a.s]. Jami' al Ruwat (vol. 2) and Tanqih al Maqal (vol. 2)

Other historians preserve different figures. Al Futuh states that Ibn Ziyad instructed his deputy, Amr ibn Hurayth al Makhzumi, to dispatch three hundred of his finest troops with Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath to seize Muslim ibn Aqil, a report also transmitted by al Khawarizmi. Similarly, al Amali of Ibn al Shajari quotes Sa'id ibn Khalid, who reports that Ibn Ziyad sent one hundred horsemen, led by a man from the tribe of Banu Sulaym, to the house of Taw'ah. Whatever the precise number, the intent is unmistakable: an overwhelming force was mobilised to apprehend a single man, the valiant lion of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Yet Ibn Ziyad, ruthless though he was, did not act without calculation. Ibn Ziyad deliberately refrained from sending men of his own household, acutely aware of the volatile sensitivities that governed Kufah's tribal conscience.

No tribe, however compliant, wished to shoulder the enduring disgrace of laying hands upon a man of Muslim ibn Aqil's sanctity and standing. To seize the emissary of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was a stain that no tribe could easily bear.

This reality Ibn Ziyad understood well. His grasp of tribal politics was deep and methodical. Ibn Ziyad read the loyalties, rivalries, and fears of the people of Iraq like an open script, turning their pride and rivalries into instruments of domination.

By assigning the task to others, he dispersed the moral burden and shielded his own household from direct culpability. In accordance with the governor's command, Amr ibn Hurayth dispatched Amr ibn Ubayd Allah ibn Abbas al Sulami. Accompanying Amr ibn Ubayd Allah were sixty or seventy armed men from the tribe of Qays.

Their mission was clear in both urgency and design: to surround the home of Taw'ah and seize Muslim ibn Aqil, whose hidden presence had still unsettled Kufah.

Abu Mikhnaf further reports that Ibn Ziyad also sent his chief of police, Hussein ibn Tamim, to assist along with Amr ibn Hurayth and Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad, in the capture of Muslim. The location was now known, and the men were ordered to advance swiftly and encircle the home with precision.

They moved through the winding lanes of Kufah, led by the betrayal of Bilal ibn Usayd. Their path led them to a modest dwelling, the home of Taw'ah, whose heart had remained firm in its devotion to the Ahlul Bayt ^[a.s] despite the terror that had engulfed the city.

Al Futuh relates that Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath rode out until he reached the house in which Muslim ibn Aqil had taken refuge.

Later chroniclers, including al Khawarizmi, suggest that Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath sought to distance himself from the deed, claiming that he had merely gone to retrieve Muslim ibn Aqil from the home of his former bondwoman.

But such pretences could not obscure the truth of his participation.

Thus they arrived at the house that sheltered Muslim ibn Aqil. Behind Amr ibn Ubayd Allah stood the armed men of Qays, their steel glinting faintly in the light of dawn.

Before them lay the threshold of a humble home, and within it stood the lone emissary of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

THE BATTLE OF FIREBRANDS AND STONES

The city that had summoned Muslim ibn Aqil now lay complicit in his isolation, and with the approaching footsteps of betrayal, the final reckoning neared.

As the hour of the morning prayer approached, Taw'ah brought water for Muslim to perform his ablution.

When she entered the room, she found him seated upon his prayer mat, exactly where she had last seen him in the depths of the night.

Concern and unease overtook Taw'ah, and she asked with sincerity,

“O my master, have you not slept through the night?”

Muslim replied in a voice marked by calm solemnity,

“I slept for a while, and I saw my uncle, the Commander of the Faithful, commanding me to hasten. From this I have concluded that today is the last day of my life.”

At his words, Taw'ah fell silent. The weight of the premonition pressed upon her heart, and she found no reply.

Maqtal of al Khawarizmi relates that not long had passed when Muslim ibn Aqil sensed the rumble of hooves and the swelling chorus of voices tightening around the modest house of Taw'ah. The sound was unmistakable. The circle of pursuit had finally closed, and Muslim knew with certainty that they had come for him.

With composure unmarred by fear, Muslim rose from his prayer mat. He unsheathed his sword and stepped into the courtyard. Moving swiftly, he reached his horse, saddled it, and secured its bridle. He then donned his armour, wrapped his turban firmly around his head, and fastened his sword at his waist, preparing himself fully for what he knew was to come.

In Kamil al Baha'i it is stated that when Muslim heard the neighing of horses outside, he hastened to complete his supplications.

Turning to Taw'ah, Muslim ibn Aqil said,

“Verily, you have done goodness and have favoured me, and you have earned your share of the intercession of the Holy Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, who is the Master of men and jinn. Last night I saw my uncle, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ^{a.s}, in a dream, who told me that tomorrow I would be alongside him.”

The frail Taw'ah stood watching as the wretches gathered around her home. Terror seized her, but greater than fear for herself was her anguish for the envoy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The shocked Taw'ah had now fully grasped the meaning of the earlier words of Muslim ibn Aqil and the certainty of his fate that Muslim had revealed to Taw'ah.

Moments later, violent blows crashed against the door of her home.

Soldiers hurled stones and flaming bundles of straw at it, striking the wooden planks with such force that the structure shuddered beneath the assault.

The walls trembled as the attackers sought to break in and seize Muslim ibn Aqil by force.

Muslim ibn Aqil looked upon the darkened sky and whispered to himself,

“O my soul, prepare to advance towards death, which cannot be escaped or deferred.”

Al Khawarizmi narrates that Muslim turned once more to the distraught Taw'ah and said, “May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you and reward you with goodness, O Taw'ah.

You should know that I am being attacked because of your son, Bilal. Now, open the door.”

Taw'ah could do no more for her master, and as instructed, she opened the door for Muslim ibn Aqil to confront the pursuers of tyranny.

The men of Banu Qays, numbering sixty or seventy and led by Amr ibn Ubayd Allah, surged through the narrow alleyway toward the house. But Muslim ibn Aqil advanced to meet them, drawing their attack away from the home of Taw'ah.

The combat commenced beneath the pale light of dawn. With fierce precision, Muslim ibn Aqil struck among them, forcing the men backward and scattering their ranks.

They regrouped and charged again, yet once more the lone warrior repelled them, standing firm against overwhelming numbers.

The battle of Muslim ibn Aqil against an overwhelming force was masterful, and his bravery was a testament to unwavering tenacity.

Several maqtal works, including al Khawarizmi, record that Muslim ibn Aqil emerged before them like an enraged lion, striking with such power that many fell wounded or slain. The sound of his blows echoed through the alleyways, rebounding from the walls of Kufah.

When the attackers saw that Muslim had been struck by wounds yet still stood firm, they clambered onto the rooftops above the narrow alley. From there, firebrands hissed through the air as they looked down upon Muslim ibn Aqil, the estranged emissary of the Imam ^{a.s}.

They rained stones upon Muslim ibn Aqil, casting bundles of ignited reeds from above, which burst into showers of sparks as they struck the ground. Flames licked the walls of the alley and scattered embers across the baked mud beneath his feet, yet Muslim did not flinch.

In the Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub, it is recorded that many stones crashed upon Muslim ibn Aqil, and he spoke aloud amidst the assault,

“What is the matter that you pelt me with stones as one pelts an infidel, while I belong to the Household of the noble Prophet ^{saws}?

Have you no regard for the rights of the Prophet's Household, the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}?!”

As more fire and stones descended upon him, Muslim ibn Aqil murmured to himself words of acceptance and certainty,

“Verily, this struggle is for the sake of the murder of the son of Aqil!

O my soul, advance toward the inevitable death!”

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah records that, with his sword drawn, Muslim ibn Aqil stepped out from beneath the blazing eaves into the open alley and met them head-on.

Once more, the son of Aqil ibn Abi Talib drove his assailants back. But the numbers were too many, and again and again the soldiers surged toward Muslim ibn Aqil, and again and again he held them at bay with relentless swordplay, driving them off the house three times.

Open combat against Muslim ibn Aqil proved futile, for he was too skilled and resolute. They resorted again to stones and flaming torches, their agitation growing as they failed to contain him. In response, Muslim pressed forward with renewed ferocity, carrying the battle into their ranks. Sayyid Ibn Tawus and Shaykh Jafar ibn Nima relate that Muslim ibn Aqil, clad in armour and mounted upon his horse, charged repeatedly to prevent the enemy from setting Taw'ah's house ablaze.

Muslim ibn Aqil slew forty-two men, fighting like an 'enraged lion', his strength so formidable that Muslim would lift men and hurl them onto the rooftops.

Al Khawarizmi, citing Muhammad ibn Abi Talib, records that when word reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad that many of his men had fallen, Ibn Ziyad sent a message to Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, saying,

"Glory be to Allah ^{AZJ}! O Aba Abdul Rahman! We sent you to seize only one man and bring him back, and yet he has killed several of your men!"

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath conveyed his own terse response to the messenger,

"O Commander! Did you imagine you had sent me to a grocer from Kufah's stalls or a cobbler of al Hira?!

Do you not see, O Amir, that you sent me to a dangerous lion, a master warrior?

Ibn Aqil wields a sword that deals instant death!"

Al Futuh relates that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad then sent back a sharp counsel,

"Offer Muslim ibn Aqil an immunity. It appears so that you will not capture him except by promising him a form of safety."

Amid the clash, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath now raised his voice from behind his ranks and called out, "O Muslim, you have safety! Do not destroy yourself!"

Muslim ibn Aqil replied without hesitation,

"What kind of immunity can be expected from the treacherous and the corrupt?!"

Al Malhuf and Bihar al Anwar state that Muslim ibn Aqil pressed on regardless, spurning the lure of false security. With a measured breath, Muslim recited aloud the prosody of Hamran ibn Malik al Khath'ami: ⁸²

"I swear I shall not be killed except as a free man, even though I see death as repellent. I hate to be deceived or cheated, or mix a cold drink with warm and bitter water. Every man will face death one day, so I shall strike you with no fear of harm."

Surrounded on all sides, scorched by firebrands and battered by stones, Muslim ibn Aqil fought relentlessly until his strength began to wane.

Al Iqd al Farid, quoting Abu Ubayd al Qasim ibn Salam, recounts that more soldiers pressed upon him, but Muslim ibn Aqil stepped forward with his sword, fighting on until grievous wounds and exhaustion at last began to overtake him.

⁸² Hamran ibn Malik al Khath'ami had recited this prosody on the day of battle between Banu Amir and Banu Khath'am, known in Islamic history as the 'yawm al qarn'.

THE CAPTURE OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

The battle between Muslim ibn Aqil and the soldiers of the Tribe of Qays raged on for some time, the narrow streets of Kufa bearing witness to a struggle unequal in number, yet unmatched in faith. al Malhuf relates that when Muslim had struck down several more of them, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath again raised his voice, calling out in feigned concern,

"Woe be upon you, O Ibn Aqil! Do not destroy yourself! You are granted immunity."

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath pressed his assurance further, seeking to weaken Muslim ibn Aqil's determination with words. He shouted out again in desperation,

"Woe be upon you, O Ibn Aqil! You are not one to lie, nor to be deceived, nor to be deluded. These people are your cousins; they will neither kill you nor strike you."

Muslim ibn Aqil paid no heed to Ibn al Ash'ath's words. Muslim surged forward once more, striking with such ferocity that they scattered before him yet again.

Then, from the depths of exhaustion, Muslim cried out, "O Allah ^{AZJ}! Thirst is killing me."

By this point, as recorded in Bihar al Anwar, Muslim ibn Aqil was grievously wounded and visibly weakened. al Futuh states that the soldiers closed in upon Muslim, pelting him with arrows and stones, until yet another battalion advanced and encircled Muslim.

Al Malhuf relates that one of them struck Muslim ibn Aqil from behind, driving a weapon into his back as Muslim sat upon his steed. Thus, Muslim ibn Aqil fell heavily to the ground.

In the Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub, it is said that Muslim ibn Aqil was overwhelmed by a relentless hail of stones, scorched by burning reeds, slashed and pierced by an array of weapons. His body was laden with wounds, yet even then Muslim retained the strength to repel their ranks and scatter the enemy.

Shaykh al Mufid, al Jazari, and Abu al Faraj narrate that Muslim ibn Aqil, now cruelly wounded and struggling for breath, had reached the limits of his strength. In exhaustion, Muslim leaned his back against the door of a house, seeking support to remain upright.

The soldiers edged closer, wary even now of approaching Muslim ibn Aqil.

At that moment, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath shouted,

"Leave him! I wish to speak with Muslim."

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath advanced until he stood before Muslim and said once more,

"Woe be upon you, O ibn Aqil!

Do not kill yourself. You have immunity, and I guarantee your safety!"

Al Futuh records that Muslim ibn Aqil replied with unbroken defiance,

"Do you think, O Ibn al Ash'ath, that I will raise my hands in surrender while I still possess the strength to fight? No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, that will never happen!"

With that, Muslim surged forward yet again, driving Ibn al Ash'ath back toward his men. But Muslim's strength was ebbing away, drained by wounds and thirst alike.

The valiant emissary of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned to his place and uttered again,

"My Lord ^{AZJ}, thirst has overcome me!"

None among them dared to approach Muslim ibn Aqil or to bring him water. Seeing their hesitation, Ibn al Ash'ath turned upon his soldiers in anger and cried,

“Woe be upon you all! Is it not shameful and cowardly that you fear this single man?

Advance together and attack Muslim!”

They charged once more. Muslim ibn Aqil tried to fight back again, but his blows had grown faint, his strength nearly spent.

Amid the clash, a man named Bukayr ibn Humran al Ahmari al Shami forced his way within striking distance. His blade slashed across Muslim's face, splitting the upper and lower lip. It shattered the two front teeth of Muslim, and blood poured forth from his mouth.

Summoning what little strength remained, Muslim ibn Aqil struck back. The first blow crashed upon Bukayr's head with crushing force.

The second descended with such ferocity that it cleaved through the tendon of his neck into the shoulder, cutting so deeply that it nearly split his abdomen. One report states that Bukayr died on the spot; another states that Bukayr survived, only to return later seeking vengeance upon Muslim ibn Aqil.

In another version, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath called out again,

“These people do not wish to fight you, O Muslim! Do not destroy yourself.”

Muslim ibn Aqil was at the edge of life, and he asked, “Am I truly safe?”

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath replied, “Yes.”

Muslim ibn Aqil then turned toward the people and asked whether they all agreed to this promise of safety.

They replied, “Yes, you are safe”, except for Amr ibn Abdullah ibn al Abbas al Sulami, who said, “I have neither camel in this matter nor stake.”

By this quote, Amr ibn Abdullah meant that he had no involvement or interest in this supposed ‘safety’, for Amr ibn Abdullah knew the lure of safety to be false.

Muslim ibn Aqil spoke again,

“By Allah ^[AZJ]! If you do not grant me true safety, I will never place my hand in yours.”

It is more widely reported that Muslim ibn Aqil rejected their ruse of deceit, as he could not trust the treacherous Kufans, and he would rather die free. Muslim continued to fight valiantly until, covered in wounds and bleeding profusely, he was overpowered and seized.

It is therefore important to grasp that Muslim ibn Aqil never accepted the offer of immunity. Muslim was captured only when he was physically incapacitated and unable to defend himself further. Some reports do however claim that Muslim surrendered under a promise of safety; yet a careful comparison of the accounts renders this implausible.

It is inconceivable that a man of Muslim's conviction would submit himself to the deceit of Ibn Ziyad. Such versions likely arose from a misreading of events, mistaking his forced capture, while exhausted and wounded, for a willing acceptance of protection.

The most authoritative reports affirm what accords with his unwavering character: that Muslim ibn Aqil never accepted false amnesty, and that safety was never truly given to him.

Al Futuh similarly states that Muslim ibn Aqil lay exhausted and gravely injured. His horse and weapons were taken, and Muslim was made a prisoner. A man from Banu Sulayman, named Abdullah ibn al Abbas, stepped forward and tore away the turban from his head, seeking to humiliate Muslim ibn Aqil.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Qudamah ibn Sa'id ibn Za'idah ibn Qudamah al Thaqafi, relates that a mule was brought forth, and Muslim ibn Aqil was bound and mounted upon it.

At that moment, despair passed across the face of Muslim, and his eyes filled with tears.

Muslim ibn Aqil said softly, “This is the beginning of betrayal.”

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath replied, “I hope that no harm will come to you.”

Muslim retorted, “It is only hope? What, then, has become of your immunity?

Indeed, we are from Allah ^[AZJ], and to Him we shall return!” And Muslim ibn Aqil wept.

Then Amr ibn Abdullah ibn al Abbas, the very man who had led the detachment, mocked Muslim ibn Aqil and said,

“Surely the one who sought what you sought does not weep when he encounters what has befallen you!”

Tarikh al Tabari and al Irshad relate that Muslim ibn Aqil replied,

“By Allah ^[AZJ], I do not weep for myself, nor do I grieve at death, even though I have never desired it (death), not even for the blink of an eye. Rather, I weep for my family who are coming toward me. I weep for al Hussein, and for the family of al Hussein.”

The tears of Muslim ibn Aqil were not shed for his own fate, but for his master, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], who was drawing nearer with each passing day to Kufa. For now, the fate that would befall his messenger in this city of treachery would become eternal.



THE DESPERATION OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

As the coarse ropes bit into his wrists, Muslim ibn Aqil was led through the streets of Kufa toward the palace of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Muslim was hemmed in by hostile guards, their faces hardened with triumph and suspicion.

Muslim ibn Aqil harboured no illusion that any promise of safety would be honoured.

The valiant emissary of Imam ^[a.s] fully understood the nature of the man to whom he was being delivered, and he was not deceived by the assurances offered to him in those final hours.

By now, Muslim ibn Aqil knew with certainty that he would not leave Kufa alive.

Yet his thoughts were not upon himself. In those final moments, his heart was fixed upon Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], still on the road toward Kufa, and upon the women and children who accompanied him, approaching a city whose people had already betrayed their covenant.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Abu Mikhnaf from Qudamah ibn Sa'id ibn Za'idah, preserves what Muslim ibn Aqil entrusted to Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath at that hour. Shaykh al Mufid likewise records that Muslim ibn Aqil turned to Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath and said:

“O servant of Allah ^[AZJ]!

By Allah ^[AZJ], I consider that soon you will be unable to ensure my immunity, but can I expect some goodness from you instead?

Will you send one of your men to al Hussein with a message from me?

For I have no doubt that he has either already set out from Mecca toward you, or will set out tomorrow with his family. That is the reason you saw me sorrowful.

Let your messenger relay:

‘Muslim ibn Aqil has sent me to you.

He has been apprehended by the people and is a prisoner.

He does not want you to come here only to be killed.

Rather, he says: Return with your family and do not be lured by the promises of the Kufans, for they are the companions of your father, who wished to be rid of their company, whether through death or assassination.

Indeed, the people of Kufa have deceived you and deceived me; and the one who has been deceived has few choices.”

These were the final counsels of a loyal servant who could see the abyss opening before the Household of the Prophet ^[saws].

Even in captivity, even as death closed in upon him, Muslim ibn Aqil's concern was to shield Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and his family from treachery of Kufa.

Abu Mikhnaf further narrates from Qudamah that Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, caught between the promise of protection he had given and his fear of Ibn Ziyad's vengeance, said:

“By Allah ^[AZJ], I will do it.

And I shall inform Ibn Ziyad that I have given you my personal guarantee of immunity.”

Abu Mikhnaf continues, narrating from Jafar ibn Hudhayfah al Ta'i ⁸³, that Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath summoned Iyas ibn al Athil al Ta'i, of the tribe of Banu Malik ibn Amr ibn Thumamah. He was a poet and a frequent visitor to the house of Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath.

Muhammad said to Iyas ibn al Athil, “Go and meet al Hussein and deliver this letter,” and Muhammad wrote in it exactly what Muslim ibn Aqil had dictated.

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath then added,

“Here are your provisions, your equipment, and gifts for your family.”

Iyas replied, “But where can I get a horse? My own mount is worn out.”

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath answered, “Here is a horse, take it, and whatever is on it.”

So Iyas set out from Kufa, riding in haste with the critical message of Muslim ibn Aqil.

Tarikh al Tabari records that four nights later, Iyas would reach Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] at the point of Zubalah, a well-known waystation between Mecca and Kufa. There, Iyas would inform the Imam ^[a.s] of the fate of Muslim ibn Aqil and delivered the letter.

When Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] heard the words of his cousin, the warnings of betrayal and the certainty of death, the Imam ^[a.s] did not doubt it was from Muslim. The Imam ^[a.s] lamented,

“Whatever has been decreed by Allah ^[AZJ] will happen.

We consign ourselves, and the corruption of our nation, to Allah ^[AZJ].”



⁸³ Jafar ibn Hudhayfah narrated from Imam Ali ^[a.s], and from Jafar narrated Abu Mikhnaf. In the book of ibn Abi Hatim it is recorded that Jafar ibn Hudhayfah, from the family of Amir ibn Juwayn ibn Amir ibn Qabas al Jarmi, stood beside Imam Ali ^[a.s] on the day of Siffin. Abu Mikhnaf took narrations of Jafar ibn Hudhayfah, preserving the memory of those moments of trial.

THE GATES OF THE PALACE

The envoy pressed onward through the narrow, twisting alleys of Kufa until it came to a halt before the palace of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

There, at the threshold of power, the fate of Muslim ibn Aqil was poised to be sealed.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Abu Mikhnaf through Qudamah ibn Sa'd, records that when Muslim ibn Aqil was brought to the palace gate, his gaze fell upon a jug of cold water placed nearby. Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath stepped forward, approached the gate, and requested permission to enter.

A messenger was dispatched to the governor to seek leave for the entry of this prized captive.

By this time, Muslim ibn Aqil was overcome by thirst. At the gate of the palace sat several other men who themselves awaited permission to enter: Amarah ibn Uqbah, Amr ibn Hurayth, Muslim ibn Amr, and Kathir ibn Shihab.

Muslim's eyes remained fixed upon the water. His voice, hoarse and weakened, rose with dignity as he requested, "Allow me to have some of this water."

These men regarded the condition of Muslim ibn Aqil with contempt. It was Muslim ibn Amr who replied harshly, "Do you see how cool it is? No, by Allah ^{AZJ}! You will never taste even a drop of it until you drink from the boiling water (al hamim) in the fire of Hell!"

Muslim ibn Aqil turned toward them, affronted by their cruelty.

"Shame on you," Muslim ibn Aqil said. "Who are you?"

Muslim ibn Amr replied, "I am the one who recognized the truth when you denied it, who advised his Imam when you betrayed him, who heard and obeyed when you disobeyed and opposed. I am Muslim ibn Amr al Bahili."

Muslim ibn Aqil rebuked him,

"May your mother mourn you! How harsh and rude you are, how hard and severe your heart is! You, O son of Bahila, are more deserving of boiling water and the eternal abode in the Fire of Hell than I!"

Those who stood alongside Muslim ibn Amr felt ashamed. Exhausted by his wounds and by the struggle he had endured, Muslim ibn Aqil sank down, leaning his back against the wall of the palace gate for support.

In al Irshad and al Kamil of Ibn al Athir, it is narrated that Amr ibn Hurayth ⁸⁴ then dispatched his bondsman, Sulayman, to fetch water.

The bondsman returned carrying a jar of water, a napkin, and a cup, and offered it to Muslim ibn Aqil. When Muslim raised the cup to drink, it filled with blood that flowed from his torn lips and wounded mouth, and Muslim ibn Aqil was unable to drink water.

⁸⁴ Amr ibn Hurayth once also showed leniency toward al Mukhtar and bore witness on his behalf before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, thereby sparing al Mukhtar from execution after the uprising of Muslim ibn Aqil. Later, Amr ibn Hurayth interceded for Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} when Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had intended to strike her. Yet even these gestures, remembered in history, sprang not from compassion or faith but from Qurayshi pride and tribal zeal towards the hashemites.

The cup was emptied and refilled, yet again it was filled with blood.

When it was filled for the third time, Muslim ibn Aqil strained to drink from it, but the wounds in his mouth were too deep; along with his blood, his front teeth loosened and fell into the cup.

Muslim ibn Aqil cast the water aside, his composure unbroken. Muslim proclaimed aloud, "Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}! If this water had been destined for me, I would have drunk it." ⁸⁵

Similarly, Abu Mikhnaf reports from Sa'id ibn Mudrik ibn Amarah that the offering of water came instead from another of the enemies who stood nearby, called Amarah ibn Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt al Umawi. He states that Amarah sent his son, Qays, to Muslim ibn Aqil with a jar covered by a cloth and a drinking cup.

Qays filled the cup with water and offered it to Muslim ibn Aqil. Yet whenever Muslim attempted to drink, the cup filled with blood from his torn lips and mouth wounds.

When it was refilled for the third time, two of his front teeth fell into the vessel.

Tarikh al Tabari states that Muslim ibn Aqil exhaled sharply,

"All praise is for Allah ^{AZJ}! If this had been a provision written for me, then I would have been able to drink it."

At that moment, a messenger emerged from the palace bearing permission for the envoy to escort Muslim ibn Aqil swiftly into the presence of the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Qudamah ibn Sa'id that Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath entered the palace first, self-assured and triumphant, and informed Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad that he had succeeded in capturing Muslim ibn Aqil.

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath then made a feeble attempt to mention the promise of protection by which he had sought to deceive Muslim ibn Aqil.

The governor's eyes hardened as they fell upon the battered and wounded state of the envoy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

After a brief pause, Ubayd Allah replied coldly to Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath,

"You have no right to do so. I sent you to bring him to me."

Ansab al Ashraf states that from the outset, Ibn Ziyad had never truly intended to honour any promise of safety, it had been nothing but a trap.

Having affirmed his supposed pledge, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath now fell silent and rejoined the gathered courtiers, and Muslim ibn Aqil was thrust forward into the presence of the accursed Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

The fate of Muslim ibn Aqil now stood before its final decree.

⁸⁵ Shaykh al Mufid, in al Irshad, preferred the version that attributes the water-giving to Amr ibn Hurayth, as did al Khawarizmi. al Samawi, writing later, attempted to reconcile both accounts, proposing that each man, Amr ibn Hurayth and Amarah ibn Uqbah, had sent for water. This conjunction, however, is a mistake born of confusion among the narrators.

THE COURT OF IBN ZIYAD

The air within the governor’s palace of Kufa seemed to quiver as Muslim ibn Aqil, wearied by betrayal yet luminous with faith, was brought before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Guards lined the hall, their grips tightening and loosening upon spear shafts. This would become a momentous point in history, for Muslim ibn Aqil was the recognised authority sent on behalf of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and conduct toward his messenger would be deemed as passing a decree upon the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws} himself.

Al Malhuf records that Muslim ibn Aqil now stood before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, yet he did not greet the governor. The guards bristled at this omission and cried out in protest,

“Will you not greet the commander? Greet the amir!”

Muslim ibn Aqil answered the gaurds sharply,

“Be silent, woe be on you! By Allah ^{AZJ}, he is not my amir.”

Ibn Ziyad sneered and replied coldly,

“It does not matter. Whether you greet me or not, you are a dead man.”

At those words, Muslim ibn Aqil fell silent. He already knew that the man before him was too steeped in cruelty, too entangled in his own ambition, to spare the envoy of Imam ^{a.s}.

Ibn Ziyad leaned forward and spat, “O Muslim! It is you who are disobedient and divisive! You rebelled against your imam, divided the Muslims, and sowed discord among them!”

Calm and unyielding, Muslim ibn Aqil replied,

“You lie, O Ibn Ziyad. The ones who divided the Muslims were Muawiyah and his son Yazid. As for discord, that was sown by you and your father, Ziyad ibn Ubayd, a lowly slave of the Banu 'Ilaj clan from the tribe of Thaqif.

I pray that Allah ^{AZJ} grants me martyrdom at the hands of the worst of His creation.” ⁸⁶

Colour surged into Ibn Ziyad’s face.

“O wicked debauchee!” he shouted.

“You sought what Allah ^{AZJ} prevented you from reaching because He did not find you deserving! So He granted it to those who were its true custodians!”

Muslim ibn Aqil asked steadily, “And who are ‘His’ people, O son of Marjanah?”

“The custodian of authority,” Ibn Ziyad replied, “is Yazid ibn Muawiyah, the Commander of the Faithful!”

Muslim ibn Aqil’s expression did not waver. There was the faintest trace of disbelief, even irony, in his voice as he answered,

“Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ} in every circumstance.

We are content with Allah ^{AZJ} as judge between us and you.”

⁸⁶ This attribution by Muslim ibn Aqil is a pointed reference to the lineage of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. His father, Ziyad ibn Sumayyah, known as Ziyad ibn Abihi, was born to Sumayyah, who could not identify his father. Muawiyah later claimed him as the son of Abu Sufyan. Muslim ibn Aqil rejected this, instead calling him the son of Ubayd, a slave of Banu Ilaj, thereby stripping him of that claimed lineage.

Ibn Ziyad scoffed. “Do you imagine you deserve authority?”

“By Allah ^{AZJ},” Muslim declared, “it is not imagination. I know it with certainty.”

The governor pressed Muslim ibn Aqil further.

“Tell me why you came to this city when its people lived in harmony.

Why did you cause them to become disunited in their affairs and divided in their opinions?”

“I did not come for that,” Muslim ibn Aqil replied, his voice composed yet resolute.

“You promoted what is evil, buried the good, ruled over the people without their consent, drove them in a direction other than that which Allah ^{AZJ} had ordained, and governed them like Caesar and Khosrow.

We came to enjoin good and forbid evil, to call them to the rule of the Book and the Sunnah. And we were qualified for that, by the directive of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.”

Another narration records that this retort made Ibn Ziyad curl his lips in contempt.

“And what concern is that of yours, O wicked debauchee?

Were we not already doing that among them while you were in Medinah drinking wine?”

A hush fell across the hall. This was a vile slander.

Muslim ibn Aqil’s reply cut through the silence, clear and unwavering.

“I drink wine? By Allah ^{AZJ}! Allah ^{AZJ} knows you are not truthful and that you speak without knowledge!

I am not as you have claimed. The one more deserving of drinking wine, more entitled to it, is the one who wallows in the blood of Muslims, who kills the soul whom Allah ^{AZJ} has forbidden to be killed, who slays without cause and sheds sacred blood while he plays and amuses himself as if nothing has happened.”

The words of Muslim ibn Aqil stung not only Ibn Ziyad but also the shadowed legacy of his father, Ziyad.

Enraged, the governor roared, “May Allah ^{AZJ} kill me if I do not kill you with a killing such as no one in Islam has ever been killed with!”

Al Malhuf states that Muslim ibn Aqil met his fury with composure.

“If you kill me, then know that worse men than you have killed better men than I.

Moreover, you will never abandon reckless bloodshed, cruel punishment, shameless conduct, and greedy domination; there is no one more suited to this tyranny than you!”

At these words, the hall darkened with curses.

The son of Sumayyah ⁸⁷ began to hurl insults at Muslim ibn Aqil, reviling his cousins, Imam al Hasan ^{a.s} and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his uncle Imam Ali ^{a.s}, and his father Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

⁸⁷ Sumayyah, the mother of Ziyad, had been infamous for immorality in the pre-Islamic era. She had committed adultery with Abu Sufyan and others; and when she bore Ziyad, they cast lots for him with the arrows. The lot fell to Abu Sufyan, who claimed the child as his own. Yet Ziyad remained known as ibn Sumayyah, named for his mother rather than his father. Only later did Muawiyah, overturning both custom and conscience, attach him to Abu Sufyan, thereby giving him lineage in name. And so Ziyad stood forever among those whose corruption was denied alike by religion and by the codes of the Arabs.

Al Malhuf states that Muslim ibn Aqil replied defiantly, “You and your father are more deserving to be cursed, so do whatever you like, O enemy of Allah ^[AZJ]!”

Some reports add that, in a final gesture of humiliation, Ibn Ziyad ordered water to be brought before Muslim ibn Aqil in a broken shard of pottery. Ibn Ziyad is said to have remarked that they refrained from giving him a proper vessel so that Muslim might not be honoured by drinking from it before they killed him. Yet, as recorded earlier, the blood flowing from Muslim’s mouth once again prevented him from drinking the water.

Again, the hall fell into a tense stillness, every gaze fixed upon Muslim ibn Aqil. Those gathered around the governor of Kufa felt the ominous nearness of death descend upon the assembly. Among those present stood Umar ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, linked to Muslim ibn Aqil by Qurayshi blood, and through his mother to the clan of Banu Zuhrah, the very branch from which Ibn Sa'd himself descended.

Kinship, however, was now swayed by circumstance and ambition within this charged space.

Al Amali of Ibn al Shajari, quoting Sa'id ibn Khalid, records that Muslim ibn Aqil addressed Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, “Allow me to make my will.”

It was a measured request, uttered with the certainty that these were his final moments.

Ibn Ziyad answered without emotion, his voice cold and controlled: “Make your will.”

Ansab al Ashraf states that Muslim lifted his weary eyes and searched the faces before him, faces hardened by power and calculation. At last, his gaze settled upon Umar ibn Sa'd.

With composed calm, Muslim addressed Umar ibn Sa'd directly: “Between you and me there is kinship that you are aware of, stand near me so that I may tell you my will.”

Umar ibn Sa'd recoiled from the request and refused to approach Muslim.

But Ibn Ziyad, quick to assert his authority and perhaps eager to witness what might pass between them, intervened sharply:

“Do not refrain from considering the plea of your cousin.”

Compelled by command, Umar ibn Sa'd rose. The two men moved only a short distance and stood beside one another, close enough that Ibn Ziyad could observe them both.

There, in lowered voices, Muslim ibn Aqil poured out the burden weighing upon his heart:

“I have a debt in Kufa which I incurred since I arrived, seven hundred dirhams. Settle it on my behalf by selling the property of mine which is in Medinah. And look after my body; seek it as a gift from Ibn Ziyad and bury it. And send someone to al Hussein to turn him back from Kufa, for I wrote to him informing him that the people were with him, and I do not see it now except that he is coming, under false assurance and looming betrayal.”

His words fell heavily, spoken softly yet charged with urgency, each sentence an act of responsibility discharged in the shadow of approaching death. This testament mirrored what Muslim had already entrusted to Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, so that in every way the warning might reach Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], who was drawing ever closer to Kufa.

It is reported that after hearing this will, Umar ibn Sa'd separated himself from Muslim ibn Aqil and returned to the gathering.

Umar ibn Sa'd hastened forward toward Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, eager to secure favour. Umar ibn Sa'd exposed the will that Muslim ibn Aqil had entrusted to Ibn Ziyad, betraying the trust placed in him at the hour of despair.

Umar ibn Sa'd said, “Do you know what he said to me? He mentioned such-and-such.”

Ibn Ziyad retorted, mocking Umar ibn Sa'd,

“The trustworthy does not betray, but the treacherous may be trusted.”

In this cutting remark lay a grim truth. A faithful man does not betray, but sometimes the one deemed trustworthy proves to be the traitor. Muslim ibn Aqil, isolated amid treachery, had entrusted his final will to the only man he knew, only for that trust to be violated.

Thus is revealed the moral decay that surrounded Muslim, that the envoy of the noble Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was forced to entrust his last words to one such as Umar ibn Sa'd.

Ansab al Ashraf states that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad addressed Umar ibn Sa'd regarding the will of Muslim ibn Aqil:

“As for the finances, they are yours to do with as you please.

As for al Hussein, if he does not seek to harm us, we shall not seek him. As for his body, we shall not accept your request for it, for Muslim fought against us and sought our destruction.”

Then Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad added chillingly,

“In any case, we do not care what we will do with his body once we have killed him.”

Abu Mikhnaf likewise records:

“And they claimed that Ibn Ziyad said: ‘As for his corpse, we shall not allow you to intercede regarding it. Muslim ibn Aqil is not deserving of that from us.

Muslim fought us, opposed us, and strove for our destruction.’”



THE MARTYRDOM OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

A suffocating stillness fell upon the palace court. Muslim ibn Aqil, his spirit unbroken, stood before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, awaiting the decree of death. The guards remained rigid in their places, motionless, while those gathered within the hall seemed to hold their breath, sensing that the final judgment was moments away.

Abu Mikhnaḥf narrates from Sa'id ibn Mudrik that when Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad fixed his gaze upon Muslim ibn Aqil, wounded and exhausted, a cruel pleasure overtook him.

The sight delighted Ibn Ziyad. In Muslim's pain, the tyrant found satisfaction. Coldly, the governor pronounced the sentence of death upon the envoy of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad barked with merciless authority, "Take him up to the top of the palace and strike his neck, then cast his body down, and follow it with his head."

According to al Irshad, Muslim ibn Aqil responded with calm dignity, his voice steady despite the weight of death looming over him:

"If there were truly any kinship between you and me, you would not kill me."

Ibn Ziyad dismissed the words without a glance and instead shouted,

"Where is the man whom ibn Aqil struck on the head with his sword?!"

Bukayr ibn Humran al Ahmari was summoned. Ibn Ziyad pointed toward Muslim and commanded, "Go up with him, for you shall be the one to strike his neck."

And so Bukayr led Muslim ibn Aqil upward, step by step, toward the roof of the palace and to the edge of a steep descent. With every ascent, Muslim's voice rose in the remembrance of Allah ^[AZJ]. Muslim proclaimed the takbir, Allahu ^[AZJ] Akbar, glorifying Allah ^[AZJ], seeking His forgiveness, sending salutations upon His Prophet ^[saws], and calling out:

"O Allah ^[AZJ], judge between us and the people who lured us, belied us, and betrayed us."

Bukayr brought Muslim to the edge overlooking the marketplace below. Crowds gathered beneath to behold a pillar of the House of the Prophet ^[saws] about to be struck down.

The reports differ concerning the precise place. Al Irshad names it the shoemakers' quarter; al Khawarizmi calls it the butchers' market; another source states it was where sheep were sold. Abu Mikhnaḥf records that it was 'where the jars are today, overlooking the shoemakers.'

Once more, Muslim raised his voice to the heavens: "O Allah ^[AZJ], judge between us and a people who denied us, deceived us, forsook us, and killed us."

Bukayr shoved Muslim ibn Aqil forward, urging Muslim closer to the edge, expecting the lion of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] to lower his neck in submission. Bukayr boasted,

"Praise be to Allah ^[AZJ] who has given me the upper hand over you; thus I have taken revenge upon you."

Muslim ibn Aqil steadied himself. Bukayr lifted his sword and struck, but the blade faltered, failing to sever the neck. Muslim ibn Aqil turned to him and rebuked Bukayr, saying,

"O slave, do you not see that even a scratch you inflict upon me suffices for your revenge? Have you not already taken your vengeance by this wound?"

Shaken yet driven by cruelty, Bukayr struck again.

This time the blade tore through the blessed neck of Muslim ibn Aqil. A torrent of blood erupted, and his noble head fell heavily upon the ground.

May the Mercy and Blessings of Allah ^[AZJ] be upon Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

Mas'udi relates that once the head was severed, Bukayr ibn Humran seized it by the hair and hurled it from the palace roof into the marketplace below.

The blessed head struck the ground of the Kufan marketplace, followed soon by the headless body of Muslim ibn Aqil, which was also cast down from the palace roof. The body struck the hard ground with a sickening impact as the bones shattered upon contact.

Abu Mikhnaḥf further narrates from Sa'id ibn Mudrik ⁸⁸ that when Bukayr descended from the palace after beheading Muslim ibn Aqil, Bukayr appeared pale and shaken.

Yet the ever-opportunistic Ibn Ziyad asked Bukayr, "Did you kill him?"

Bukayr answered, "Yes," still pale, with tremors in his accursed arms.

Ibn Ziyad observed his condition and asked, "What was he saying as you took him up?"

Bukayr described the final moments of Muslim ibn Aqil, his composure, his remembrance of Allah ^[AZJ], and his dignity even as death closed in upon him.

Astonished and unsettled, Ibn Ziyad muttered, "And (he was) still boasting at death?!"

Or, as another report states, "Such dignity even at the verge of death?"

Bukayr replied, "Then I struck Muslim a second time and killed him."

Similarly, al Malhuf records that when Bukayr ibn Humran descended from the roof after beheading Muslim ibn Aqil, Bukayr was visibly trembling.

Ibn Ziyad asked him Bukayr, "What is the matter with you?"

Bukayr answered, "O Amir, at the moment I killed Muslim, I saw a man of dark complexion and fearsome features standing beside me, biting his fingers.

I was seized by a terror unlike any I have ever felt before."

Ibn Ziyad dismissed it with contempt, saying, "Perhaps you imagined it."

Tarikh al Tabari likewise records that Muslim ibn Aqil was taken to the roof of the palace, his neck severed, and his body cast down before the people in the market. Abu Mikhnaḥf narrates from al Saqqab ibn Zuhayr, from Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah ⁸⁹, that the head of Muslim ibn Aqil was then lifted and carried callously to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. And so, after scarcely more than two months in the city that Muslim came to awaken, he sealed his mission with his blood and martyrdom. Muslim ibn Aqil became the first envoy of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], the first martyr of Bani Hashim, and the first head sent from Kufa towards Yazid as a prize.

⁸⁸ Abu Mikhnaḥf narrates from Sa'id ibn Mudrik ibn Amarah, who narrates from his grandfather Amarah ibn Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'it.

⁸⁹ It appears that he is Awf ibn Abi Jamilah, not Abi Hujayfah, for the son of Abi Hujayfah is named Awn. Assuming he is Abi Jamilah, then he is Awf ibn Abi Jamilah al Abdi al Hijri, Abu Sahl al Basri, known as al A'rabi. Awf ibn Abi Jamilah father's name was Jamilah Bandawayh, though some report that Bandawayh was his mother's name, and that his father's name was Razinah.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HANI IBN URWAH

The blood of Muslim ibn Aqil had scarcely dried upon the stones of the marketplace of Kufa when Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, intoxicated by cruelty and unchecked power, turned with renewed ferocity upon the remaining pillars of the uprising.

Emboldened by the brutal execution of the envoy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his wrath now fixed upon one of the most venerable and formidable supporters of the Imam ^{a.s} in Kufa, Hani ibn Urwah. ⁹⁰

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah, relates that before Hani ibn Urwah could be dragged toward his execution, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath once more stood before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, attempting to intercede on Hani's behalf. ⁹¹ Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath was keenly aware that what was unfolding was no longer the fate of a single man, but a spark threatening to ignite the volatile balance of tribal power within Kufa itself.

With urgency weighed down by fear, Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath spoke, choosing his words with restraint:

“You know the prestige of Hani ibn Urwah in this city, and the standing of his family among his tribe. His people are aware that my companions and I brought him to you.

I beseech you in the Name of Allah ^{AZJ} to hand him over to me, for I do not wish to incur the enmity of his tribe. They are the most powerful people in the city, and the fiercest among the people of Yemen.”

This was no exaggeration. Kindah was among the great Yemeni tribes settled in Kufa, and Murad and Madhhij were themselves branches of Kindah. To provoke them was to summon a tide of bloodshed that even the iron grip of Ibn Ziyad could not easily restrain.

Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath's anxiety was sharpened by fear, for it was he who had been entangled in the deception that lured Hani ibn Urwah into the grasp of Ibn Ziyad.

Tarikh al Tabari recounts that Ibn Ziyad had earlier dispatched Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, Asma' ibn Kharijah, and Amr ibn al Hajjaj, the brother-in-law of Hani, to summon him under the veil of false reassurance.

At first, clemency had been promised. But after Hani ibn Urwah's harsh arrest and the merciless execution of Muslim ibn Aqil, the mask was torn away. The fate awaiting Hani had shifted from imprisonment to certain execution.

⁹⁰ Hani ibn Urwah al Muradi al Madhhiji lived in both the pre Islamic and Islamic eras and was known as al Mukhadram. At the death of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, he was over forty. He was a loyal companion of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, present at Jamal and Siffin. A leading noble of Yemen, he later settled in Kufa as chief of Murad, commanding thousands. Al Masudi reports that four thousand armoured men and eight thousand footmen rode with him, rising to thirty thousand with allies. In Kufa, he became one of the strongest supporters of Muslim ibn Aqil, offering his home as a base where allegiance to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was pledged. Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad later summoned him under false pretence, arrested him, and on 9 Dhu al Hijjah 60 AH, he was martyred at over ninety years of age.

⁹¹ Abu Mikhnaf states that al Saq'ab ibn Zuhayr narrated to me, from Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah; also cited by Shaykh al Mufid in al Irshad, and al Khawarizmi.

The atmosphere within the court now laid bare the true design of Ibn Ziyad: the eradication of every remaining opponent through swift execution under any pretext. Though the uprising had been crushed, vengeance was not yet complete.

As Tarikh al Ya'qubi records, Hani ibn Urwah had sheltered Muslim ibn Aqil in his home and aided him. The support for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} still breathed within Kufa, and with the Imam ^{a.s} himself still on the road to the city, men such as Hani ibn Urwah, if released, possessed the authority and influence to uproot Umayyad rule from the city.

Similarly, Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah narrates that Ibn Ziyad had indeed assured Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath that Hani would be spared. Yet when events unfolded as they did, when rebellion was extinguished and its leader slain, his heart hardened completely. Ibn Ziyad cast aside his promise without hesitation, revealing that betrayal had always been his intent.

This would be the moment that sealed the execution of Hani ibn Urwah.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting al Hussein ibn Nasr, states that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad now sent for Hani. The guards steeled themselves and moved toward the place where Hani ibn Urwah lay imprisoned, wounded from his violent arrest.

They seized Hani ibn Urwah, bound him with ropes, and dragged him to appear before the governor. When the aged chieftain Hani was brought before Ibn Ziyad, the governor fixed his gaze upon his wounded state and said coldly,

“Have I not respected you? Have I not honoured you?

Have I not treated you with distinction?”

“Yes,” Hani ibn Urwah replied.

Ibn Ziyad leaned forward and asked, “Then what is the reward for that?”

Hani ibn Urwah answered with firmness, “The reward for it is that I grant you protection.”

The words struck Ibn Ziyad like an insult.

“What?! You will give me protection?!” Ibn Ziyad roared in rage.

Ansab al Ashraf states that, seized by fury, Ibn Ziyad snatched the cane beside him and struck Hani across the face again. The aged Hani staggered, blood marking his cheek.

Turning to the soldiers gathered around Hani ibn Urwah, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad issued a command as brief as it was merciless:

“Take Hani out to the market and strike his neck.”

They seized Hani ibn Urwah, bound his hands with ropes, and dragged him from the palace into the marketplace where sheep were sold.

Once more, the people of Kufa gathered to witness the spectacle in paralysed silence, observing the destruction of one of their most revered elders.

As Hani ibn Urwah was hauled across the dust of the market, the aged warrior lifted his voice, breaking the suffocating hush with a cry that echoed with anguish:

“O Madhhij! Why is there no one from Madhhij for me today?

O Madhhij! How can I summon Madhhij to help me?”

Again and again Hani called, upon Murad, upon Madhhij, but not a single man stirred. Terror had strangled courage in the hearts of the Kufans.

When Hani ibn Urwah realised that no aid would come, he wrenched one hand free from his bonds and cried out in defiant desperation:

“Is there not a stick, or a knife, or a rock, or a bone with which a man may defend himself?”

Hani ibn Urwah would not be reduced to helpless submission.

Even in his nineties, wounded and betrayed, Hani ibn Urwah struggled fiercely, determined to resist with whatever strength remained within him.

Al Futuh relates that the guards rushed upon Hani ibn Urwah once more, overpowering him and binding his hands even tighter.

They shouted at Hani, demanding compliance with his own execution:

“Stretch forth your neck!”

But even at the edge of death, Hani refused humiliation. His voice did not falter as he answered them:

“I am not one who will willingly comply with that, and I will not help you against myself.”

Al Khawarizmi records that at this moment, a slave of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, a Turk named Rashid ⁹², stepped forward.

Rashid raised his sword and struck Hani, but the blow failed to sever the head.

Blood welled from the wound, and Hani ibn Urwah uttered his final supplication.

Al Futuh states that the wounded Hani gasped,

“To Allah ^{AZJ} is the return. O Allah ^{AZJ}, I turn to Your mercy and to Your pleasure!

O my Lord ^{AZJ}, make this day suffice as a penalty for my sins.

I was sincerely loyal to the son of the daughter of Your Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}.”

Rashid struck again. This time the blow was decisive.

The head of Hani ibn Urwah fell heavily upon the earth, and his body collapsed lifeless in the marketplace of Kufa.

Blood gushed from his severed neck, yet the Kufans remained frozen, mute observers to their own disgrace.

May Allah’s Mercy and Blessings be upon Hani ibn Urwah al Muradi.

The guards who had dragged Hani ibn Urwah to his death now stepped over his body.

One of them seized the severed head by the whitened hair of Hani’s beard and carried it back to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

⁹² Tarikh al Tabari states that later in history, Abdul Rahman ibn al Hussein al Muradi, a tribesman of Hani ibn Urwah, saw Rashid at the Battle of Khazir, while Rashid was travelling with Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. The people said to al Hussein al Muradi, “This is the killer of Hani ibn Urwah.” So ibn al Hussein vowed, “May Allah ^{AZJ} kill me if I do not kill him or be killed for him.” He charged at Rashid with a spear, struck him, and killed him. Tarikh al Tabari, vol. 5; al Irshad, vol. 2.

BACKGROUND - THE KUFAN MISSION OF MUSLIM IBN AQIL

On the basis of historical reports, Muslim ibn Aqil departed Mecca in the middle of the month of Ramadan and entered Kufa on the 5th of Shawwal. According to Masudi, his uprising in Kufa began on Tuesday, the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah in the year 60 AH, the very day on which Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} set out from Mecca toward Iraq. His struggle reached its end the following day, Wednesday the 9th of Dhu al Hijjah, on the Day of Arafah.

On that day, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ordered that the body of Muslim be hung publicly and that his severed head be sent to Damascus. In this, Muslim ibn Aqil became the first from Bani Hashim whose body was displayed upon the gate of a city, and the first whose head was dispatched to the court of the tyrant in Damascus.

Muslim ibn Aqil stood among the foremost pillars of the stance of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Muslim had been entrusted as the Imam’s ^{a.s} envoy to Kufa, sent to ascertain the sincerity of its people and to verify whether their pledges were grounded in truth or mere words.

Known also as Abu Dawud, Muslim was recognised as a transmitter of traditions and a man whose appearance bore a resemblance to the Prophet. He was acclaimed as the bravest of the sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib, combining courage with discernment and loyalty with restraint.

His mother, a noble bondswoman named Hulayyah, had been brought from among the captives of Syria and later came into the household of Aqil ibn Abi Talib. According to reports preserved in Tabari, Muslim ibn Aqil was born in Kufa itself.

This detail, alongside accounts that place Muslim ibn Aqil among the companions of Imam Ali ^{a.s} and as a commander within his ranks at the Battle of Siffin, suggests that Muslim had long been familiar with the fabric of Kufan society. It was perhaps this very familiarity, shaped by years of residence and observation, that led Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to select Muslim for so delicate and consequential a mission.

Muslim ibn Aqil was also bound to the household of Imam Ali ^{a.s} through marriage. Some sources name his wife as Sayyidah Ruqayyah, while others refer to her as Umm Kulthum, likely a kunyah by which she was known. From this union Muslim had sons, among them Abdullah and Ali. Abdullah would go on to attain martyrdom in Karbala.

Other children are mentioned in the historical record, yet it is widely reported that his lineage did not continue beyond the upheavals that followed. Several of his brothers also stood upon the field of Karbala, and each met the same fate of martyrdom.

As for the duration of his mission, the reports converge upon a brief but intense span. From his departure in the middle of Ramadan to his entry into Kufa on the 5th of Shawwal, and from there to his martyrdom on the 9th of Dhu al Hijjah, the stay of Muslim ibn Aqil lasted approximately two months and four days. Some variations exist, with certain historians placing his martyrdom on the 3rd or the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah, thereby shortening this period slightly. Yet regardless of these minor discrepancies, the essential picture remains one of a mission carried out under rapidly shifting and increasingly hostile conditions.

The assessment of Muslim ibn Aqil's activity in Kufa has often been approached through a critical lens. It is sometimes argued that Muslim lacked the political foresight or organisational precision required for such a sensitive undertaking, and that Muslim failed to prepare adequately for the arrival of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. From this perspective, Muslim is portrayed as having been unable to capitalise on a rare and volatile moment in Kufan politics, one that appeared, at least outwardly, to be ripe for a decisive break from Umayyad authority.

This line of criticism draws strength from the numerical support that Muslim ibn Aqil is reported to have gathered. Before the arrival of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, no fewer than twelve thousand people are said to have pledged allegiance to Muslim. The instability of Kufa at that time was such that Ibn Ziyad was compelled to enter the city covertly, a fact that underscores the fragility of Umayyad control. It is therefore argued that, had Muslim mobilised these pledged forces into an organised uprising prior to Ibn Ziyad's arrival, the latter would have been denied the opportunity to assert control, intimidate tribal leaders, and dismantle the movement from within. In such a scenario, it is suggested, the course of events might have unfolded differently, perhaps even averting the tragedy of Karbala.

This interpretation is further reinforced by the report preserved in *Tarikh al Tabari*, in which Muslim ibn Aqil wrote to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] urging Muslim to hasten to Kufa, declaring that the people were united in their support and held no inclination toward the family of Muawiyah. Acting upon this assessment, the Imam ^[a.s.] advanced toward Iraq, a journey that would culminate in one of the most defining tragedies in Islamic history.

Yet such an evaluation, though outwardly persuasive, does not withstand closer scrutiny. It judges the mission by its outcome, rather than by the nature of the responsibility entrusted to Muslim ibn Aqil. In doing so, it overlooks both the constraints under which Muslim operated and the precise scope of his mandate. A more careful reading of the sources reveals not a failure, but a fulfilment of duty under conditions that rapidly deteriorated beyond control.

A understanding of his role must begin with the instructions given to Muslim ibn Aqil by Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. In his letter to the people of Kufa, the Imam ^[a.s.] stated that he was sending to them his cousin and brother, a trusted member of his family, Muslim ibn Aqil, and that he had instructed Muslim to report on their condition, their views, and the disposition of those among them who possessed insight and integrity.

The Imam ^[a.s.] further instructed the Kufans that if they remained resolute upon what they had conveyed in their letters, they were to give their allegiance to Muslim and support him, and not to betray Muslim. This directive leaves little room for ambiguity. Muslim ibn Aqil was not dispatched as an independent revolutionary commander authorised to initiate armed conflict at his own discretion. His mission was fundamentally investigative and preparatory.

Muslim ibn Aqil was to assess, to verify, and to report. At the same time, Muslim was entrusted with delegated authority to organise and consolidate support in anticipation of the Imam's ^[a.s.] arrival. His task lay in navigating a delicate balance between observation and mobilisation, between caution and action.

The language employed by Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] in describing Muslim ibn Aqil as both a brother and a trusted member of his family carries deep significance. It reflects a confidence not merely in his loyalty, but in his judgement and capacity to manage a complex political environment. The measure of his success, therefore, cannot be reduced to whether events unfolded ideally, but must be assessed in light of whether he discharged this trust with integrity and precision. The broader context of Kufa further illuminates the situation.

The choice of Kufa as the centre of opposition to Yazid ibn Muawiyah was not born of naive optimism. Its history of inconsistency was well known. Yet it possessed undeniable strategic advantages: a large and diverse population, a legacy of opposition to Umayyad authority, a critical geographic position, and a climate of widespread dissatisfaction under Yazid's rule.

At the time of Muslim's arrival, this dissatisfaction was amplified by the weakness of the governor al Numan ibn Bashir. The environment allowed for open expression of support for Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], drawing in not only sincere adherents but also opportunistic tribal leaders such as Shabath ibn al Ribī, Hajjar ibn Abjar al Ijli, and Amr ibn al Hajjaj.

These men, driven less by conviction than by political calculation, aligned themselves with what appeared to be a rising tide.

The enthusiasm of the Kufan population, however, was largely superficial. Beneath the outward declarations lay a fragility that would soon be exposed. Muslim ibn Aqil was not unaware of this reality. Yet his responsibility was not to purify intentions, but to formalise support and to establish a framework upon which the Imam's ^[a.s.] arrival could build. In this, Muslim ibn Aqil acted with decisiveness. Within a short period, thousands pledged allegiance to him in the name of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Muslim ibn Aqil also understood that such momentum could not be sustained indefinitely in the absence of the Imam ^[a.s.] himself. The presence of the rightful leader was essential to transform sentiment into steadfast action. Delay would only provide the Umayyad authorities with the opportunity to fracture the movement through fear and coercion.

It was for this reason that Muslim ibn Aqil urged the Imam ^[a.s.] to hasten to Kufa. At the same time, Yazid and his officials recognised the same urgency and moved swiftly to prevent such a convergence from taking place.

When viewed within this framework, the mission of Muslim ibn Aqil cannot be characterised as a failure. Muslim fulfilled the mandate entrusted to him with clarity, loyalty, and competence. Muslim assessed the conditions of Kufa, secured pledges of allegiance, and prepared the ground for the Imam's ^[a.s.] arrival as far as circumstances permitted.

The collapse of his efforts was not the result of misjudgement, but of a rapid and ruthless reversal imposed through intimidation, political manipulation, and force.

His mission must therefore be understood not through the lens of its tragic conclusion, but through the fidelity with which Muslim ibn Aqil carried out his charge.

In that fidelity lies the true measure of his success, and in that success lies the foundation upon which the subsequent events of the journey toward Karbala must be understood.

THE VICE GRIP TIGHTENS IN KUFA

After the executions of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah, the grip of terror in Kufa tightened still further beneath the iron command of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Not content with silencing the uprising's foremost figures, any man whose loyalty wavered, any heart that inclined toward the cause of Muslim ibn Aqil, now stood exposed to punishment.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates through Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah that among those arrested after the suppression of the uprising was Abdul A'la ibn Yazid. Abdul A'la had been seized by Kathir ibn Shihab ibn al Hussein as he stood armed among the men of Banu Fityan, preparing to join Muslim ibn Aqil when the call to rise was announced.

Kathir apprehended Abdul A'la and brought him before Ibn Ziyad, recounting the matter, and the governor ordered that Abdul A'la be thrown into prison.

When Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah had been slain, Ibn Ziyad summoned Abdul A'la ibn Yazid from his cell.

The prisoner was brought before Ibn Ziyad, dishevelled, weakened, and bound.

The governor eyed Abdul A'la coldly and demanded, "Tell me about your matter."

Abdul A'la ibn Yazid, hoping for mercy, replied cautiously,

"May Allah ^[AZJ] make you prosper. I came out only to see what the people were doing, and Kathir ibn Shihab arrested me."

But Ibn Ziyad was unconvinced. His voice hardened as he said,

"Swear a solemn oath that you went out for no other reason than what you claim."

It was a cruel demand, an oath that would mean salvation through falsehood or death through truth.

Yet Abdul A'la ibn Yazid, though staring death in the face, refused to swear falsely.

Without hesitation, Ibn Ziyad gave the order:

"Take him to the al Sabi' cemetery and strike off his neck there."

They dragged Abdul A'la ibn Yazid, bound and shackled, to that lonely burial ground on the outskirts of Kufa.

There, without trial, they struck the neck of Abdul A'la, and his soul departed as a martyr.

May Allah's mercy and blessings be upon Abdul A'la ibn Yazid.

Ansab al Ashraf recounts that another man, Umarah ibn Salhab al Azdi, had also set out with the intention of joining Muslim ibn Aqil, to offer his support during the uprising in Kufa. But before Umarah ibn Salhab could reach Muslim, Umarah was seized by the men of Ibn Ziyad and dragged before the governor.

Ibn Ziyad surveyed Umarah and asked, "From which people are you?"

Umarah ibn Salhab answered, "From al Azd."

The governor sneered and replied,

"Then take him to his people. Strike his neck among his own clan of al Azd, and send his head with the heads of Muslim and Hani to Yazid ibn Muawiyah."

Abu Mikhnaf reports through al Saqa'b ibn Zuhayr, who narrates from Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah, that his execution was carried out before his own tribe, so that the terror of Ibn Ziyad might be imprinted upon every heart in Kufa.

Before the eyes of his people, the neck of Umarah ibn Salhab al Azdi was severed as a warning to all who might still harbour loyalty to the household of the Prophet ^[saws].

May Allah's mercy and blessings be upon Umarah ibn Salhab al Azdi.

Ansab al Ashraf states that the messenger entrusted with these heads was Hani ibn Abi Hayyah al Wadi'i of the tribe of Hamdan, to be taken to Yazid ibn Muawiyah in Damascus.



THE DESECRATION OF BODIES

The cruelty unleashed upon Kufa did not end with the executions of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah. Death itself was not sufficient for Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. He was determined that even their lifeless bodies should be made into a spectacle of humiliation.

With deliberate malice, Ibn Ziyad ordered their public exposure. It violated the sanctity of the dead, but its intent was to break the spirit of a city already trembling in fear.

Although the earliest narration of Tarikh al Tabari passes in silence over what befell the bodies of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah after their execution, later testimonies transmitted through Abu Mikhnaf, preserved by numerous sources ⁹³, lift that silence and reveal the gruesome fate that awaited them.

The bodies of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah were abandoned in the marketplaces of Kufa, and once again the depth of Kufan betrayal was laid bare.

There was no remorse at the treachery that had delivered these men to their deaths.

Instead, eager to appease the governor and display their loyalty to Ibn Ziyad, the Kufans bound ropes around the legs of the slain. Through markets and narrow alleys, the headless bodies were dragged, their arms flailing lifelessly against stone and dust, as every remnant of Islamic etiquette and human dignity was forsaken.

Abu Mikhnaf relates from Abu Janab al Kalbi that,

“I did not leave Kufa until Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah were killed, and I saw them, their bodies, being dragged by their legs in the market.”

The lifeless forms of the two noble martyrs were hauled through the streets like spoils of conquest, their honour desecrated upon the rough pathways of the city.

Similar accounts are recorded in Tarikh al Ya'qubi, which states that after Muslim ibn Aqil rose against the forces of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, Muslim fought them with resolute courage until he was overwhelmed, captured, and brought in chains. Ibn Ziyad then commanded his execution, after which the soldiers dragged his body through the marketplace of Kufa, exposing it to the gaze of a terrorised populace.

The same source states that Ibn Ziyad ordered the killing of Hani ibn Urwah, for he had given shelter to Muslim in his home and aided him in his mission.

As the Kufans dragged the headless bodies through the alleys, an escort of palace guards arrived and intercepted the grim procession.

Al Khawarizmi and Ibn Shahr Ashub both narrate that a fresh order had been issued by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad: the bodies of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah were to be dragged to the dumping grounds of Kufa, known as al Kunasah.

The crowd, emboldened and complicit, pulled at the bodies as they were driven onward under the command of Ibn Ziyad's soldiers.

⁹³ Abu Mikhnaf transmits through Abu Janab al Kalbi, Adi ibn Harmalah al Asadi, Abdullah ibn Sulaym and al Mudhri ibn al Mushamil al Asadiyyin, and Bukayr ibn al Muthabbah al Asadi.

At al Kunasah, the procession came to a halt. There, the battered and mutilated forms of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah lay covered in dirt and dust, pieces of flesh torn away by the jagged stones of the alleys through which they had been dragged.

Al Futuh records that the guards stepped forward and, using the ropes bound to the martyrs' legs, fastened additional ropes. The bodies were then hoisted and left suspended, hanging upside down before the eyes of the people of Kufa.

Similarly, al Tabari, quoting Ammar al Duhni from Imam al Baqir ^[a.s], states that Ibn Ziyad also ordered the body of Hani ibn Urwah to be dragged to al Kunasah and hung there.

An alternative account is preserved in the Maqatal of Shaykh Fakhruddin.

It relates that when the men of Madhhij learned of this violation, they mounted their horses and fought the soldiers of Ibn Ziyad until they reclaimed the two martyrs.

They washed their bodies, shrouded them, and buried them according to Islamic rites.

Now satisfied with the desecration of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad stood unchallenged as the authority in Kufa. Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu Janab Yahya ⁹⁴ that Ibn Ziyad decided to announce his triumph without delay.

Ibn Ziyad dispatched the severed heads of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah with two loyal envoys: Hani ibn Abi Hayyah al Wada'i ⁹⁵ and al Zubayr ibn al Arwah al Tamimi.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad also summoned his scribe and secretary, Amr ibn Nafi, to compose a detailed report for Yazid ibn Muawiyah.

Al Futuh states that Amr ibn Nafi drafted a lengthy letter, but when Ibn Ziyad reviewed it, he said, “What is this length and excess?”

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad then dictated his own words:

“In the Name of Allah ^[AZJ], the Beneficent, the Merciful.

To the servant of Allah ^[AZJ], Yazid ibn Muawiyah, the Commander of the Faithful, from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

All praise is for Allah ^[AZJ] Who exacted for the Commander of the Faithful his right and sufficed him against the plot of his enemy.

I inform the Commander of the Faithful, may Allah ^[AZJ] support him, that Muslim ibn Aqil came to Kufa intending to cause mischief. He stayed at the house of Hani ibn Urwah al Madhhiji. I put them both under surveillance until I exposed them.

After dialogue and fighting, Allah ^[AZJ] gave me control over them, so I brought them forth and killed them.

⁹⁴ Yahya ibn Abi Hayyah Abu Janab al Kalbi al Kufi, whose father's name was Hayy, narrated from his father and others. He was widely regarded as truthful: this was affirmed by many while ibn Hibban listed him in ‘al Thiqaṭ’. His death is variously reported as 147 AH or 150 AH. Tahdhib al Tahdhib, vol. 11

⁹⁵ Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu Janab Yahya ibn Abi Hayyah al Kalbi, brother of Hani ibn Abi Hayyah, the one who carried the severed heads of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah to Yazid. Yahya recounts this with pride, citing praise his brother received from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and Yazid for his supposed loyalty and virtue. Such pride reflects taking honour in the approval of tyrants. It is also recorded in al Manaqib and Ansab al Ashraf that Hani ibn Abi Hayyah al Wada'i of Hamadan carried the heads, which Yazid ordered to be hung at a gate of Damascus.

I have dispatched their heads to you with Hani ibn Abi Hayyah al Wada'i and al Zubayr ibn al Arwah al Tamimi. They are both men who are obedient and loyal believers.

The Commander of the Faithful may ask them whatever he wishes, for they are men of intelligence, perception, and honesty. And peace.”

Al Futuh further records that when the letter arrived in Damascus, accompanied by the severed heads, Yazid ibn Muawiyah read it and was greatly pleased. Yazid ordered that the heads of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah be displayed upon one of the gates.

Yazid replied with a letter of appreciation to Ibn Ziyad, his tone measured and approving. Whilst securing Kufa was an accomplishment, it was but a prelude to a far graver confrontation, the approaching grandson of the Prophet ^[saws], still on his way toward Iraq.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Abu Janab Yahya ibn Abi Hayyah al Kalbi, records that Yazid ibn Muawiyah wrote urgently to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad:

“You are exactly as I wanted you to be.

You have acted decisively and conducted the campaign of a courageous man who has self-control. You have freed me from worry and proven capable.

You have justified my opinion of you. I summoned your two messengers and questioned them, and spoke to them in private. I found their views and qualities just as you described. So I recommend that you reward them well.

I have received news that al Hussein ibn Ali has set out for Iraq, so organise sentries and patrols on the routes to Kufa, and remain alert for any suspicious activity.

If you have doubts about anyone, detain them, but do not kill anyone unless they fight against you first.

Write to me about everything that happens.

May the peace and mercy of Allah ^{AZJ} be upon you.”

The command was unmistakable.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah’s directive demanded constant vigilance across every approach to Kufa. Soldiers were stationed at al Manazir, the elevated lookout points, and al Masalih, the guarded posts meant to prevent movement and surprise.

Al Malhuf also states that, having commended Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad for his success in securing Kufa, Yazid issued clear instructions concerning the news of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and how to confront this impending threat.

Yazid ordered Ibn Ziyad to hold those who had invited the Imam ^{a.s} accountable, to exact revenge, and to arrest anyone whose loyalty to the Imam ^{a.s} was in doubt.

Thus now, it would mark the beginning of the stalking of Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}.

The words of Yazid ibn Muawiyah were now sharpened, and the Umayyad machinery of oppression turned its gaze toward the blood of the grandson of the honourable Prophet ^[saws] himself.

THE IMPRISONMENT OF AL MUKHTAR AL THAQAFI

Amid this reign of blood and intimidation, when the streets of Kufa echoed with fear and betrayal, another figure stepped forward from the shadows of the unfolding tragedy, al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd al Thaqafi.

On the day of Muslim ibn Aqil’s uprising, al Mukhtar bore a standard among those who rose in support of the envoy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Yet before the movement could fully ignite, before its ranks could consolidate, news reached al Mukhtar that Hani ibn Urwah had been seized and imprisoned.

Acting swiftly, but without coordination with the other factions of the uprising, al Mukhtar emerged with his banner and his followers, only to halt when the grim reality of the situation became clear.

The uprising had begun to collapse. The people had abandoned Muslim ibn Aqil. Kufa had once again shifted its loyalties and fallen silent. In that moment, al Mukhtar, wily and calculating, recognized the shifting balance of power and chose survival over futile martyrdom.

Rather than allow himself and his followers to be cut down in a vain stand, al Mukhtar surrendered under the assurance of safety granted by Amr ibn Hurayth al Makhzumi on behalf of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

It was prudence in the face of inevitable defeat.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi relates that later that day, when the governor’s gate was opened, al Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd al Thaqafi was among those admitted into Ibn Ziyad’s court.

The governor was taken aback at the sight of al Mukhtar. Fixing him with a sharp and suspicious gaze, Ibn Ziyad summoned al Mukhtar forward and demanded:

“Are you the one who came with the crowds to support ibn Aqil?!”

Al Mukhtar answered shrewdly,

“I did not do that. Rather, I came and camped under the banner of Amr ibn Hurayth, spent the night there, and awoke under his protection.”

At once, Amr ibn Hurayth stepped forward and confirmed his words, declaring,

“He speaks the truth, may Allah ^{AZJ} set you right.”

Being deprived of a legal pretext to execute him, Ibn Ziyad was incensed. His face darkened with rage, and he struck al Mukhtar across the face with his cane.

The blow landed upon his eye with such force that the eyelid flipped from its upper side to the lower, leaving al Mukhtar disfigured and bleeding before the court.

The governor Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad barked,

“It serves you right! By Allah ^{AZJ}, were it not for the testimony of Amr, I would have struck off your neck! Take him to prison!”

The guards seized al Mukhtar and dragged him away, casting him into the dark dungeon beneath the palace, where iron doors closed upon him and the light of day was shut out.

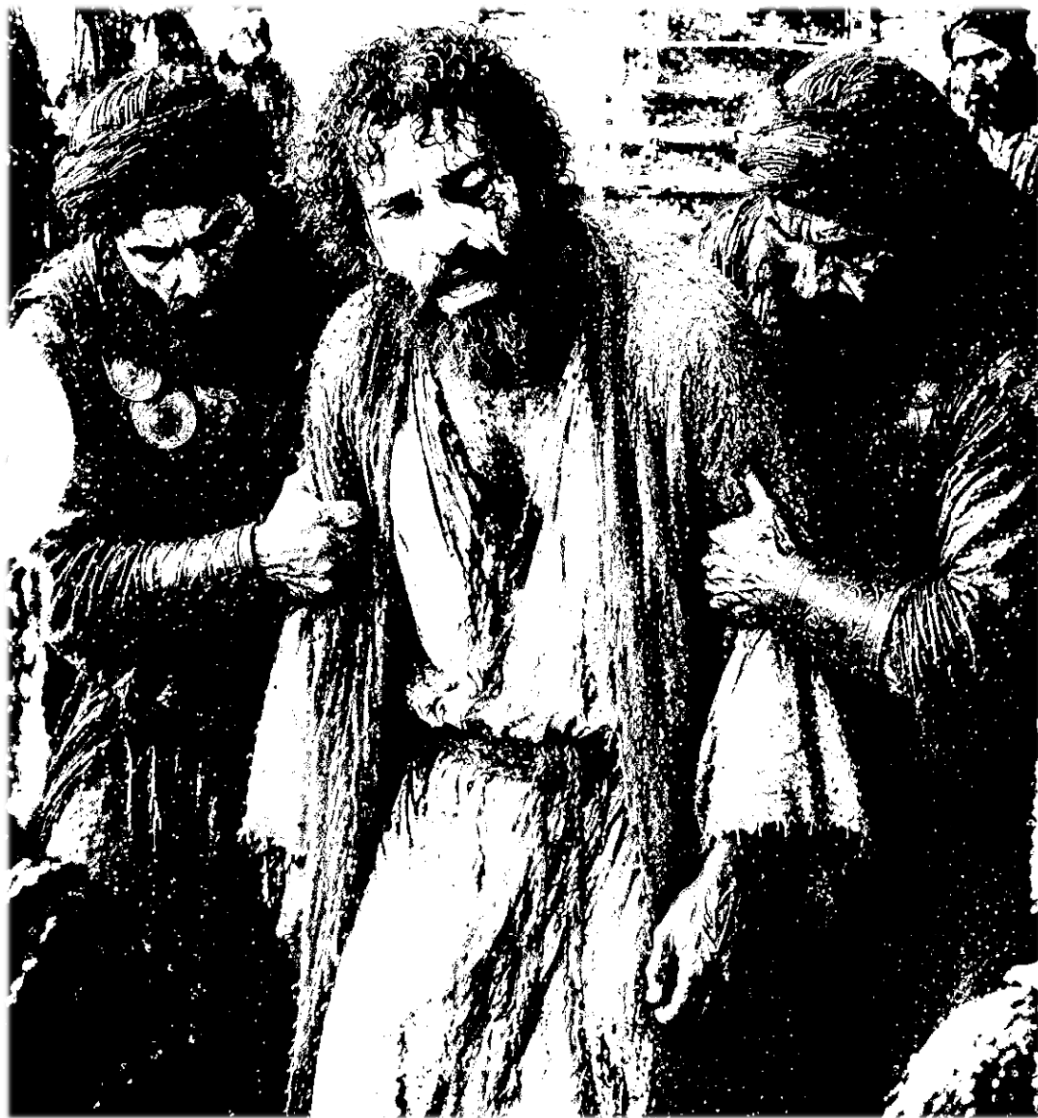
There al Mukhtar remained imprisoned until after the tragedy of Karbala had unfolded.

Abu Mikhnaf relates another version of his imprisonment through al Nadr ibn Saleh, who said that Harun ibn Muslim narrated from Ali ibn Saleh, from Isa ibn Yazid, that al Mukhtar and Abdullah ibn al Harith ibn Nawfal had gone out together alongside Muslim ibn Aqil. Al Mukhtar bore a green banner, while Abdullah carried a red banner and wore red garments. Al Mukhtar would then plant his standard at the door of Amr ibn Hurayth and proclaim, "I have only come out to thwart Amr ibn Hurayth."

But Ibn Ziyad knew well that al Mukhtar's heart lay with the cause of Muslim ibn Aqil. Recognizing the danger he posed, the governor ordered that both al Mukhtar and Abdullah ibn al Harith be pursued, placing a bounty upon their capture.

They were soon seized, brought in chains, and imprisoned.

Thus the grip of tyranny closed fully upon Kufa, and its people suffocated beneath the rule of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. The city waited for the greater calamity that was yet to come.



THE STORM FROM DAMASCUS

In the earliest phase of Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s] stand against Umayyad rule, the tremors of resistance had barely reached the valleys of Mecca when the palace of Damascus was already stirred. From his seat of power, Yazid ibn Muawiyah watched events unfold with growing unease. Though the Imam ^[a.s] had not yet raised a banner nor unsheathed a sword, Yazid sensed the danger that lay Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s] very presence, a danger that could not be extinguished by force alone; for the Imam ^[a.s] was beyond cowardice or bribe.

Thus Yazid set about obstructing the Imam's ^[a.s] path through subtler means: political pressure masked as counsel, persuasion laced with threat, and warnings draped in the language of peace. The earliest of these manoeuvres is preserved in al Tabaqat al Kubra.

When news reached Yazid ibn Muawiyah that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had departed from Medinah and was making his way toward the sanctuary of Mecca, Yazid acted swiftly.

Yazid sought to exploit every remaining bond that might restrain the Imam ^[a.s].

Knowing the stature of Abdullah ibn Abbas, elder of Banu Hashim and a man respected among Quraysh, Yazid ibn Muawiyah addressed to Ibn Abbas a letter carefully crafted in courtesy yet heavy with veiled hostility. The letter wrote,

"We have been informed that non-Arab peoples of the East, the 'ahl al mashriq', have come to al Hussein and encouraged him to aspire to the caliphate.

You possess knowledge and experience of such men. If al Hussein proceeds in this course, then he has severed the ties of kinship.

You are the elder of your household and the one to whom they look. Therefore, prevent al Hussein from stirring discord."

The words were measured, yet their weight was unmistakable.

Beneath the veneer of respect lay an attempt to shackle conscience with blood ties, to transform familial concern into an instrument of political restraint.

Yazid hoped that the counsel of an uncle might succeed where intimidation could not, that the Imam's ^[a.s] determination might be softened by the voice of Abdullah ibn Abbas.

Yet the Hashemite conscience could not be subdued so easily.

Al Tabaqat al Kubra records that Ibn Abbas penned a reply to Yazid, with restraint:

"I hope that the departure of al Hussein is not for a reason that will displease you. I will not cease advising him in that which brings about nearness to Allah ^[AZJ] and removes hatred."

Outwardly conciliatory, the letter was inwardly resolute.

Abdullah ibn Abbas did not pledge obedience to Yazid, nor did he accept the premise that peace lay in 'submission to tyranny', but resorted to rather quell the fears of Yazid.

When this attempt failed to silence the Hashemite voice, Yazid widened his reach.

Al Futuh records that Yazid dispatched another message, this time addressed broadly to Quraysh and especially the clans of Banu Hashim residing in Medinah.

Its warning was clothed in poetry, invoking the memory of ancient wars and cloaking menace in the form of verse:

“O our people, let not the flames of war be rekindled now that they have been extinguished;
Hold fast to the rope of peace, binding yourselves together as one.
War seduced the peoples before you; Through it, generations were destroyed.
So be just with your kin, and let not pride lead you to ruin;
For often the arrogant slip and fall.”

Al Futuh states that the poem was read aloud in the assemblies of Medinah and brought to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] for his response.

The Imam ^[a.s] recognised the rhetoric of Yazid behind its measured rhyme, the pretence of peace masking the fear of truth. The haughty Yazid had inferred the Imam ^[a.s] as ‘arrogant’.

The Imam’s ^[a.s] reply was neither lengthy nor political. It was decisive and anchored in revelation. The Imam ^[a.s] answered with the verses of Allah ^[AZJ]:

In the Name of Allah ^[AZJ], the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

“*And If they deny you, then say, ‘My deeds are mine and your deeds are yours.*

You are free of what I do and I am free of what you do!’” (Q10:41)

With this single verse, the illusion of Umayyad ‘peace’ was dissolved.

The Imam ^[a.s] exposed compromise as submission and silence as complicity. True peace, according to the Imam ^[a.s], lies only in obedience to Allah ^[AZJ], not in the quiet endurance of injustice, nor in the preservation of false unity at the expense of truth.

Thus the storm from Damascus began to gather strength, as the noble caravan of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] moved onwards toward the sanctuary of Mecca.

What now unfolds is the Meccan stage of the journey of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], a passage through the political currents of the Umayyad court into the sacred yet tense stillness of the House of Allah ^[AZJ]. There, in a city accustomed to pilgrimage and ritual, the presence of the Imam ^[a.s] would awaken consciences and draw seekers from every horizon.

The arrival of Imam ^[a.s] would transform Mecca, drawing it to the threshold of destiny.



THE SANCTUARY OF MECCA

Earlier, when the summons of Yazid ibn Muawiyah’s oppression reached Medinah and pledges were demanded at sword-point, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] decided to withdraw from the city of his grandfather. The path before the Imam ^[a.s] was one of preservation: the safeguarding of faith, of honour, and of the sanctity of the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

Had the Imam ^[a.s] remained in Medinah, blood would be shed within the Prophet’s city; in leaving, the truth would remain clear. Thus, the Imam ^[a.s] chose exile over compromise.

Tarikh al Tabari relates, from Awn ibn Abi Juhayfah, that on the Sunday, with two nights remaining in Rajab of the year 60 AH, the Imam ^[a.s] departed from Medinah toward the Sacred Precinct of Mecca.

The Imam ^[a.s] did not depart in concealment, nor with any ambiguity as to his purpose. The resolve of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was made known to those who loved him and to those who feared him alike. The Imam ^[a.s] proclaimed openly that he would not give allegiance to Yazid, having declared with unassailable clarity:

“One like me does not pledge allegiance to one like him.”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] entered Mecca on the night of Friday, three days into the month of Sha’ban. News of his arrival spread swiftly through the sanctuary and beyond, carried through the valleys of Tihamah like fragrance upon the wind.

The people of the Sacred Precinct had learned that the noble grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] had arrived, and from that night onward, the Sacred House was enlivened by his presence.

Pilgrims from every horizon hastened to see the Imam ^[a.s], the grandson of the Prophet ^[saws], the noble son of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s] and Sayyidah Fatimah ^[a.s].

Hearts were drawn toward Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] as naturally as faces are drawn toward the Ka’bah. The Imam ^[a.s] would then reside in Mecca through the following months of Sha’ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al Qa’dah, passing his days beneath the shelter of the Ka’bah’s shade while souls gathered in reverence around him, revelling in his knowledge.

The reports state that when Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] entered the city of Mecca, the doors of every house opened toward the Imam ^[a.s]. Men and women came forth to greet him, to seek his supplication, and to listen to his words and his supreme command of the Qur’an.

Pilgrims from distant lands began arriving and encircled the Imam ^[a.s], and the sanctuary itself became a living school of remembrance and guidance to actual teachings of Islam.

It was in this serene atmosphere that Abdullah ibn Abbas would later recall:

“I saw al Hussein standing near the door of the Ka’bah, holding the hand of Jibra’il before he left for Iraq, and Jibra’il was calling out,

‘Hasten to offer allegiance to the Proof of Allah ^[AZJ], the Mighty and the Glorified.’”

Yet beneath the outward tranquillity of the Sacred City, a gathering storm was already forming. In the early months of his stay, letters from Kufa began to arrive, one after another, carried by men devoted to the cause of his noble father, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

Each bore the same oath and the same promise: that the people had rejected the rule of Yazid and now awaited the son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

The Imam ^{a.s} received these messages with composed gravity, weighing their words against his knowledge of Kufa and the frailty of their loyalties.

Also, upon Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} arrival in Mecca, Kamil al Ziyarat records, through the transmission of Zurarah from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, that the Imam ^{a.s} wrote a brief yet momentous letter addressed to his brother Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah, currently staying back in Medinah, and to the remaining members of the Banu Hashim.

The short letter read: "In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

From al Hussein ibn Ali to Muhammad ibn Ali, and the members of the Banu Hashim.

Whoever joins me shall be martyred, and whoever does not join me shall not taste victory. And Peace."

In the days that followed, visitors would come to the Imam ^{a.s} in succession, some to advise, others to warn, and others to plead. Each offered counsel shaped by fear, hope, or calculation. Yet all who stood before the Imam ^{a.s} sensed that his decision rested upon a purpose deeper than calculation. Thus, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} remained in Mecca, preparing his household and responding to the voices rising from Kufa. What followed in those sacred months were the accounts of those who encountered the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}.



THE AMBITIONS OF IBN AL ZUBAYR

With the arrival of the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in Mecca, the lens of history widens.

The narrative no longer rests upon a single figure, but begins to reveal the movements of men whose ambitions, fears, and calculations now orbit the presence of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Around the Imam ^{a.s} gathered those who sought guidance, those who offered counsel, and those who quietly measured opportunity. In these early days, the contours of future betrayals and rivalries were already taking shape in the city of Mecca.

Among those who most frequently visited Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} during his stay in Mecca was Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, a wily man who had earlier absconded from Medinah.

Abu Mikhnaf records that Ibn al Zubayr would come to the Imam ^{a.s} repeatedly, at first daily, then every few days, cloaking a restless ambition beneath a posture of reverence.

Outwardly, Ibn al Zubayr appeared devoted, attentive, and eager for counsel.

Inwardly, however, his heart burned with a longing for authority that the people of the Hijaz would never grant Ibn al Zubayr, so long as the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} remained among them.

To the people, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was not merely a claimant or a leader. The Imam ^{a.s} was the living continuation of the Prophet's ^{saws} household, the inheritor of moral authority and knowledge, and around this axis hearts naturally turned.

The mere presence of the Imam ^{a.s} commanded obedience without need for coercion.

Beside such stature stood Ibn al Zubayr, whose lineage and claim could not rival the moral inheritance embodied by the Imam ^{a.s}; Ibn al Zubayr remained diminished, unable to escape the shadow cast by the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Uqbah ibn Sim'an, the freed servant of Lady al Rabab, daughter of Imru' al Qays and wife of the Imam ^{a.s}, that Abdullah ibn al Zubayr would sit for long stretches in the Imam's ^{a.s} company, carefully probing his thoughts and intentions.

One day, no longer able to restrain his yearning for leadership, Ibn al Zubayr spoke openly:

"O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, why do we remain silent before this household, the Umayyads, who have seized authority over the people, though we are the sons of the Muhajirun and the rightful leaders of this matter?"

There was no response, but Ibn al Zubayr could not contain himself,

"Tell me, O Hussein, what do you intend?"

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied calmly,

"By Allah ^{AZJ}, I have considered going to Kufa.

My Shi'ah there, and the nobles among them, have written to me.

But I am seeking guidance from Allah ^{AZJ}."

At this, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr exclaimed with visible intensity,

"If I had supporters in Kufa like yours, I would choose no other course!"

Yet beneath the words Ibn al Zubayr lay a quiet satisfaction.

Abdullah ibn al Zubayr understood at once what such a departure would mean. If the Imam ^{a.s} were to leave Mecca for Iraq, the region of Hijaz would be emptied of its greatest moral authority, and the path to power would be cleared for his own ambitions. Still, wary that the Imam ^{a.s} might perceive his intent, Ibn al Zubayr pressed on with feigned sincerity:

“But then, if you do remain here in Mecca, and invite me and the people of the Hijaz to pledge allegiance at your hands, we shall agree to it and hasten toward you, for you are more worthy of the Caliphate than Yazid and his father.

None would oppose you, Allah ^{AZJ} willing.”

The Imam ^{a.s} listened without assent. Sensing that he had somewhat revealed his inner desires, Ibn al Zubayr rose and excused himself, but his satisfaction could not be concealed.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Harith ibn Ka'b al Walbi, from Uqbah ibn Sim'an, that once Abdullah ibn al Zubayr had left, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to those with him and said:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, there is nothing in this world that Ibn al Zubayr desires more than for me to leave the Hijaz for Iraq, knowing that he has no share in this matter with me, and that the people do not consider him equal to me.

Abdullah ibn al Zubayr wishes that I depart from here so that it may be left for him alone.”

The Imam's ^{a.s} words revealed his complete awareness of the hearts around him.

Whilst the Imam ^{a.s} did not expose every motive openly, he saw through every veil of counsel. Ibn al Zubayr's outward friendliness was a covering for self-interest; he hoped that the fire from the confrontation between Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and the Umayyads would consume them both, leaving the field clear for his own rule and ambitions.

Abdullah ibn al Zubayr was fully aware of the formidable strength of Banu Umayyah, yet he had no intention of confronting them himself, he rather that someone else shed their blood.

Thus, within the quiet courtyards of Mecca, beneath the shade of the Ka'bah, two visions of leadership stood in contrast.

One was rooted in worldly calculation, intrigue, and self-preservation; the other was grounded in obedience to Allah ^{AZJ}, even at the cost of life itself.

Abdullah ibn al Zubayr sought authority through opportunity, while Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} sought only the pleasure of almighty Allah ^{AZJ}, even through sacrifice.

Furthermore, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr desired the Imam's ^{a.s} removal not solely for strategic advantage, but because the Imam's ^{a.s} moral and spiritual authority utterly eclipsed his own.

Moreover, Ibn al Zubayr may well have foreseen that any confrontation between the noble Imam ^{a.s} and Banu Umayyah would end in the Imam's ^{a.s} martyrdom, along with his family, and this was a price Ibn al Zubayr was willing to see paid. In truth, he was indifferent to it.

As the days passed, more such advisers arrived from distant tribes and from among the Quraysh, some were driven by sincere concern, whilst others by fear or calculation.

Among the first of these was Umar ibn Abdul Rahman al Makhzumi, a kinsman moved by apprehension, whose counsel marks the next episode in this unfolding narrative.

THE COUNSEL OF UMAR IBN ABDUL RAHMAN

When more letters from the people of Kufa reached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in Mecca, and it became known that the Imam ^{a.s} was preparing to respond to them, a quiet unease spread among his kin. Whispers would pass from gathering to gathering that the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} was contemplating leaving the sanctuary itself.

In those charged days, Mecca stood swollen with pilgrims and emissaries alike, while rumours from Iraq multiplied with every arriving caravan, each report heavier than the last.

Among those who came forward to counsel Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was Umar ibn Abdul Rahman ibn al Harith ibn Hisham al Makhzumi ⁹⁶, a man of Quraysh whose lineage traced back to Banu Makhzum, the same tribe as Abu Jahl.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Hisham from al Suq'ab ibn Zuhayr, that Umar al Makhzumi sought audience with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} during those tense days in Mecca.

Umar al Makhzumi found the Imam ^{a.s} amid the hum of anxious expectation that filled the Sacred Precinct, as whispers of Kufa grew more frequent. After praising Allah ^{AZJ} and sending blessings upon His Messenger ^{saws}, Umar spoke carefully, weighing each word:

“I have come to you, O son of my uncle, regarding a matter I wish to present as advice.

If you see me as one whose counsel you would accept, then I will speak; otherwise, I will withhold what I wish to say.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied gently, “Speak, for by Allah ^{AZJ}, I do not consider your opinion unsound, nor your suggestion or action blameworthy.” ⁹⁷

Umar al Makhzumi replied, “It has reached me that you intend to travel to Iraq, and I fear for you in this journey. You are going to a land where its governors and commanders already hold power and possess the treasures of the state.

The people are but slaves to the dirham and dinar.

I do not feel secure that those who have promised you victory will not turn against you, even though you are more beloved to them than those for whom they will draw their swords.

I fear they will betray you, for their loyalty is to wealth, not to truth.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} listened with serenity, then replied,

“May Allah ^{AZJ} reward you with good, O son of my uncle. By Allah ^{AZJ}, I know that you have spoken sincerely and wisely. Whatever decree comes to pass shall come to pass.

Whether I follow your counsel or not, you remain in my sight the most praiseworthy adviser and the most sincere well-wisher.”

⁹⁶ Umar ibn Abdul Rahman ibn al Harith al Makhzumi al Madani narrated from Abu Hurayrah, Abu Basrah al Ghifari, A'ishah, and others, as well as his brother Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman. Al Baladhuri records that Ibn al Zubayr later appointed Umar al Makhzumi governor of Kufa. Umar al Makhzumi was governor during al Mukhtar's uprising in 66 AH, when al Mukhtar sent Za'idah ibn Qudamah al Thaqafi with five hundred men and seventy thousand dirhams, ordering him to return with the funds or face battle; Umar al Makhzumi accepted the money and withdrew to Basra.

⁹⁷ The phrase ‘you are not one inclined to hawa’ means freedom from base desires or inclination toward what is reprehensible.

Al Makhzumi states that Umar al Makhzumi departed, heavy with the awareness that his words could not sway the Imam ^[a.s].

He then went to al Harith ibn Khalid ibn al A'as ibn Hisham, who asked him,

“Did you meet al Hussein?”

Umar al Makhzumi then related to him all that had passed between himself and the noble Imam ^[a.s]. Al Harith responded with solemn affirmation,

“You have advised him well, by the Lord ^[AZJ] of noble honour. Whether al Hussein accepts it or not, your counsel is sound.”

Then al Harith recited these couplet lines:

“Many a seeker of advice deceives and destroys,

While one suspected in secret proves a sincere adviser.”

The couplet was soon carried through Mecca, remembered for its irony: that true advice is not always trusted, and that those who cloak their motives in piety may mislead, while those suspected may in truth be pure of heart.

Though brief, this encounter stood as a measure of the Imam’s ^[a.s] grace toward sincere counsel. Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] did not repel sincere advice, nor did the Imam ^[a.s] allow it to shake his resolution. Every visitor who entered his presence left knowing that the matter before the Imam ^[a.s] was no ordinary affair of politics or power.

As Umar al Makhzumi withdrew from the Sacred Precinct, others from Quraysh stepped forward, some were the close relatives of the Imam ^[a.s], as they repeated the same warnings, each echoing the fear of betrayal and the memory of past wounds of Iraq.

Among them was Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman, whose counsel, shaped by what had befallen Imam Ali ^[a.s] and Imam al Hasan ^[a.s], carried the sorrow of history itself.



THE COUNSEL OF ABU BAKR IBN ABDUL RAHMAN

Not long after Umar al Makhzumi had withdrawn, another figure of Quraysh sought the presence of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] within the sacred precinct of Mecca.

He was Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman ibn al Harith ibn Hisham ⁹⁸, a man of known lineage and measured speech, descended from the same clan as Umar al Makhzumi, and counted among the composed elders of Mecca. His approach was neither political nor ambitious, but born of genuine concern and the burden of remembrance.

As al Tabaqat al Kubra relates, Abu Bakr entered upon the Imam ^[a.s] and, struck by reverence, hesitated before speaking. Then he said softly,

“O my cousin, our kinship compels me to speak, though I do not know by what right I should do so, nor whether my words will carry any weight with you.

I fear I am not worthy to counsel you, yet my heart cannot remain silent.”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] replied with kindness, “O Abu Bakr, you are neither a deceiver nor a man who slanders. Speak, therefore, for I will hear you.”

Encouraged, Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman spoke:

“Your father Ali was greater than you in strength and in the people’s obedience.

When he went forth against Muawiyah, all the lands, except Syria, were with him.

Yet even so, his own followers betrayed him.

Their greed for the world wearied him; they defied him and broke his heart until the decree of Allah ^[AZJ] came to pass, and he returned to the pleasure of his Lord ^[AZJ].

After Ali, they did the same to your brother al Hasan. They pledged allegiance and then turned away; they professed loyalty and then deserted him. You yourself witnessed all of this.

And now you intend to go toward those who rebelled against your father and your brother and wronged them? You would go to stand with them against the Syrians, against one whose power they fear and whose wealth they crave?

If Yazid learns that you are on your way to Iraq, he will bribe them with gold, and those who now write to you will turn against you. Their tongues speak allegiance, but their hearts are for their own gain. So remember Allah ^[AZJ], O son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], concerning your own life and your fate.”

Throughout this counsel, the Imam ^[a.s] listened in silence. His gaze remained steady, his expression compassionate. When Abu Bakr finished, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] said,

“May Allah ^[AZJ] reward you with goodness, O cousin.

You have spoken sincerely and advised well, and may Allah ^[AZJ] bless your thought.

But whatever Allah ^[AZJ] has decreed shall come to pass.”

⁹⁸ Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman ibn al Harith al Makhzumi was born during the caliphate of the second Caliph, Umar ibn al Khattab. A member of the second generation (tabi’un) and a prolific transmitter of hadith, Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman was among the seven jurists (fuqaha) of Medinah. Renowned for his piety, devotion, and asceticism, he was known as “the monk of Quraysh” (rahib al Quraysh). Towards the end of his life, Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman lost his sight and died in Medinah in 94 AH.

A stillness settled between them. In the Imam's ^[a.s] composure, Abu Bakr perceived that the matter was no longer being weighed in the same way.

The decision had passed beyond deliberation. He lowered his head and uttered softly,

"We belong to Allah ^[AZJ], and to Him we shall return.

We shall leave the reckoning of Aba Abdillah's blood to Allah ^[AZJ]."

Then Abu Bakr ibn Abdul Rahman withdrew.

Yet the approaches did not cease. Others continued to come, some from among the companions of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], their opinions scattered between devotion and fear. Among them were Abu Muhammad al Waqidi, Zurarah ibn al Jalah, Abu Sa'id al Khudri, Abu Waqid al Laythi, and al Ahnaf ibn Qays. Their counsel, heavy with prophetic memory and warning, deepened the somberness of those days in Mecca, as the shadow of fate lengthened around the son of Sayyidah Fatimah ^[s.a].



THE COLLECTIVE OF COUNSELS

As the days of Dhu al Qa'dah waned and the sacred month of pilgrimage drew near, Mecca became restless with whispered foreboding. News of Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s] decision to travel toward Iraq had spread through the city like a slow-burning fire.

The letters from Kufa were no longer confined to his private circle; their existence was now known among the elders, the companions, and the people of insight.

With that knowledge came fear, the fear that the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] would once again be met with the treachery that had claimed his father and his brother before him. In those weeks, a succession of visitors again came to the house of the Imam ^[a.s], each bearing ominous warnings.

One such meeting took place three nights before his departure from Mecca.

Dala'il al Imamah states that among them were Abu Muhammad al Waqidi and Zurarah ibn al Jalah ⁹⁹, who entered upon the Imam ^[a.s] after nightfall, their steps hurried.

The gravity of what they feared lent urgency to their words. They informed the Imam ^[a.s] of the lack of determination among the people of Kufa and advised,

"O son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], the hearts of the people are with you, but their swords will be drawn against you."

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] did not answer them at once. The narrators relate that the Imam ^[a.s] raised his blessed hand toward the heavens, and in that moment the veils were lifted. The doors of the skies were opened, and beyond them appeared multitudes of angels, beyond measure. Al Malhuf records that the Imam ^[a.s] then said,

"Were it not that the decrees of Allah ^[AZJ] unfold according to their appointed course, and lest the reward of patience be diminished, I would fight against them with these angels.

But I know that what awaits me lies in that direction, toward Iraq.

There my companions will fall, and none shall survive except my son Ali ibn al Hussein."

At these words of the Imam ^[a.s], the two men wept as they grasped his intentions.

Another meeting followed, bearing a different weight.

Abu Sa'id al Khudri ¹⁰⁰, the respected companion of the Prophet ^[saws], sought Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] out with the authority of lived memory.

Abu Sa'id al Khudri would later recount, as preserved in al Tabaqat al Kubra:

"Al Hussein went against my advice when I told him not to leave Medinah.

I said to him, 'Be mindful of Allah ^[AZJ] and preserve yourself; do not leave your house.'"

⁹⁹ Abu Muhammad al Waqidi and Zurarah ibn al Jalah (or Khalaj, Halaj, or Saleh) are names that do not appear in any other hadith collections. Neither are they mentioned in Sunni or Shi'i biographical works.

¹⁰⁰ Abu Sa'id al Khudri al Ansari, whose name was Sa'd ibn Malik ibn Sinan, was a Companion of the Prophet ^[saws] and a notable member of the Ansar of Medinah. Abu Sa'id al Khudri participated in many battles under the Prophet ^[saws] and later remained steadfastly devoted to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ^[a.s]. A respected transmitter of traditions, Abu Sa'id al Khudri was praised by the noble Imam al Sadiq ^[a.s] for his devotion upon the truth. Abu Sa'id al Khudri died in 74 AH.

A third notable meeting soon took place not within the stillness of Mecca, but on its outskirts, where the preparations of departure had already started to begin.

Al Tabaqat al Kubra relates that Abu Waqid al Laythi ¹⁰¹ said:

“When I learned that al Hussein was departing, I met him at Malal.

I adjured him (al Hussein) by Allah ^{AZJ} not to go forth, and told him that he was heading to a place where he should not go, a place where he would surely be killed.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied to him with tranquil finality:

“I am not going back.”

Others, unable to reach Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in person, sent their counsel in writing.

Among them was the elder of Basra, al Ahnaf ibn Qays ¹⁰², known for his measured wisdom and restraint.

Ansab al Ashraf narrates through Abu Bakr ibn al Ayyash that when al Ahnaf ibn Qays learned of the Imam’s ^{a.s} intention, he wrote to him, citing the verse of the Qur'an:

“So be steadfast. *Indeed, the promise of Allah ^{AZJ} is certainly the truth.*

And do not let those who have no conviction disparage you.” ^(Q30:60)

Many similar counsels reached the Imam ^{a.s}, and thus the days in Mecca grew dense with unease. The Ka'bah stood serene beneath the desert sun, while the air around it grew restless.

The voices of the companions had all been raised, each according to his measure of insight and experience. Some spoke with sincerity, offering wisdom as they understood it.

Yet the knowledge and wisdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} eclipsed all counsel.

As their voices fell silent, certainty filled the void. It became ever more clear that the noble Imam ^{a.s} would not remain in Mecca.

By the first week of Dhu al Hijjah, the circle of advisers had thinned. Now, only the closest of kin continued to come and go to the house of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Among them was Abdullah ibn Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet ^{saws}, who arrived with urgency as reports of the Imam’s ^{a.s} imminent departure reached him.

The forthcoming conversations of Abdullah ibn Abbas with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would mark the threshold of the final, irrevocable days in Mecca.

¹⁰¹ Abu Waqid al Laythi, the kunya of al Harith ibn Awf ibn Usayd, was a Companion of the Prophet ^{saws}, said to have been born in 2 AH. He fought alongside Imam Ali ^{a.s} at Siffin. Muawiyah threatened to pour molten lead into his ears, but he fled and lived a year in Mecca, where he died and was buried in the Muhajirun cemetery at Fakh, outside Mecca. Reports place his death in Medinah in 65 or 68 AH.

¹⁰² Abu Mihrab Sakhir ibn Qays ibn Muawiyah al Tamimi al Sa'di, known as al Ahnaf ibn Qays, accepted Islam during the Prophet's ^{saws} lifetime though he did not meet him. Famous for his tolerance and generosity, he served as an army commander under the second Caliph, Umar ibn al Khattab, in the conquest of Khurasan and under the third Caliph, Uthman in the conquest of Marv. With 4,000 of his tribe Banu Tamim, Abu Mihrab abstained from the Battle of Jamal, refusing to fight against the Commander of the Faithful ^{a.s} but also declining to join Aisha's ranks. At Siffin, he fought under Imam Ali ^{a.s}. Though favoured by Muawiyah, he frequently praised Imam Ali ^{a.s} and spoke of his virtues. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wrote to Abu Mihrab before his stand but received no reply. Abu Mihrab was a friend of Mus'ab ibn al Zubayr, and for this reason, Abu Waqid al Laythi accompanied Mus'ab to Kufa and died in 67 AH.

THE COUNSEL OF ABDULLAH IBN ABBAS

It was the sixth day of Dhu al Hijjah. Mecca stirred with anticipation as pilgrims gathered their provisions, filled their water skins, and prepared their hearts for the rites of Hajj.

The valleys echoed with voices rehearsing the talbiyah, and the city seemed to breathe in unison with the approaching pilgrimage. Yet within the Sacred Precinct, a quieter and more momentous movement was unfolding, one heavy with consequence.

While the people of Mecca prepared to leave for Mina, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was now preparing for a departure of a different kind.

For months, the Imam ^{a.s} had resided in Mecca after leaving Medinah, dwelling within the sanctuary of the House of Allah ^{AZJ}, a refuge for those who sought him, and a silent challenge to those who feared him. But since the 4th of Dhu al Hijjah, murmurs had spread through the city like a restless wind: the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} would soon leave. His companions sensed it, the Umayyad agents watched anxiously, and the members of Banu Hashim felt a tightening in their chests, unable to still the foreboding that crept upon them.

Tarikh al Tabari states that in the morning, among those who sought an audience with the Imam ^{a.s} was Abdullah ibn Abbas ¹⁰³, the cousin of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, renowned for his learning, insight, and measured judgment.

Abu Mikhnaf relates through al Harith ibn Ka'b al Walbi from Uqbah ibn Sim'an that Ibn Abbas entered upon the Imam ^{a.s} whilst he sat in quiet contemplation.

The desert light filtered gently into the courtyard, casting long shadows.

“O cousin,” Ibn Abbas began, his voice low and burdened,

“the people are saying that you are going to Iraq. Tell me, what do you intend?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} answered calmly,

“Indeed, I have decided to depart in one or two days, if Allah ^{AZJ} wills.”

At these words, Ibn Abbas's heart tightened.

“I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ} not to do this.

Tell me, may Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you, do you go to a community who have killed their governor, regained control of their lands, and expelled their enemy?

If they have done so, then go to them. But if they call you while their governor still rules over them and controls them, and his officials are still collecting taxes in the land, then they are calling you to war and fighting. I fear that they will invite you only to belie you, oppose you, and betray you later. They may even turn on you and become your bitterest enemies.”

¹⁰³ Abu al Abbas Abdullah ibn Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib was born in Mecca three years before the Hijrah and migrated to Medinah in 8 AH. A cousin of the Prophet ^{saws}, Abdullah ibn Abbas served as an adviser to Umar ibn al Khattab and led the hajj under Uthman. He was a close companion of the Commander of the Faithful ^{a.s}, who entrusted him to debate the Khawarij, and he later served as governor of Basra under Imam Ali ^{a.s} and Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}, remaining loyal to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. Abdullah ibn Abbas did not participate in Karbala. When Abdullah ibn al Zubayr seized the Hijaz and Iraq, Abdullah ibn Abbas refused allegiance and was threatened with death. Known for his knowledge and Qur'anic exegesis, Abdullah ibn Abbas died in Ta'if in 68 AH at aged 71.

Throughout the counsel, the Imam ^{a.s} listened without interruption, his eyes lowered in reflection. When Ibn Abbas had finished, the Imam ^{a.s} replied with firmness:

“I seek the best outcome from Allah ^{AZJ}, and I will see what comes to pass.” ¹⁰⁴

Dala'il al A'immah further narrates a poignant exchange between Abdullah ibn Abbas and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Filled with foreboding, the Imam ^{a.s} said:

“O Ibn Abbas, do you not know that my death is written there, and the slaughter of my companions shall happen there?”

Struck by grief and disbelief, Ibn Abbas asked, “How do you know this?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied quietly,

“By a secret that has been disclosed to me, and by knowledge that I have been granted.”

Al Malhuf states that Ibn Abbas left in anguish, lamenting, “Woe for al Hussein!”

Ibn Abbas departed with a heart weighed down by sorrow, yet unable to resign himself to finality, for he could not bear to witness the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws} walking toward what appeared to be certain peril.

Thus ended their first conversation. The city itself seemed to share his unease, the sound of pilgrims reciting the talbiyah intermingled with rumours of soldiers on the road, and all eyes soon turned toward the house of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.



¹⁰⁴ The Imam's ^{a.s} use of the word istikharah here reflects its original meaning, seeking goodness and success from Allah ^{AZJ}, not the later practice of divinatory selection. His reply expressed not hesitation but acceptance of destiny.

THE SECOND COUNSEL OF IBN ABBAS

Before the sun had set that day, or perhaps on the morning that followed, Abdullah ibn Abbas returned once more to seek the presence of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. This time, his counsel bore a deeper urgency, steeped in grief rather than mere caution. Ibn Abbas persisted in urging that the Imam ^{a.s} to remain within the sanctuary of Mecca, or, failing that, seek refuge in Yemen. Tarikh al Tabari states that Abdullah ibn Abbas entered with a visible weight upon him. His eyes bore the pain of one who feared betrayal and foresaw its cost.

“O cousin,” Ibn Abbas began, his voice heavy with restraint, “I ask you to be patient, while I myself am not patient. I fear for you on this path of death and annihilation. The people of Iraq are treacherous, do not go anywhere near them. Remain here safely in Mecca, for you are the doyen (sayyid) of the people of al Hijaz. Then, if the people of Iraq truly want you as they claim, write to them to expel their enemy first, and only then go to them.”

Abdullah ibn Abbas continued, speaking in haste:

“However, if you are committed to leave, then go to Yemen. It has fortresses and remote valleys, and is a vast land. Your father has followers there, and you would be far from the reach of the people. From there, you could write to the people and send messengers to all corners.

I only hope that in this way you achieve your objectives in safety.”

His words, preserved also by al Mas'udi in Muruj al Dhahab, flowed from his experiences and foresight. Ibn Abbas urged neither surrender nor submission, but delay, and for the Imam's ^{a.s} cause to ripen beyond the reach of Kufa's duplicity.

The Imam ^{a.s} listened with patient attention. ¹⁰⁵ When Abdullah ibn Abbas had finished, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with a gentleness that concealed his firm stance:

“O son of my uncle, by Allah ^{AZJ}, I am aware that you are a sincere adviser, but I have made my decision and am set to leave. Muslim ibn Aqil has written to me that the people of Kufa have pledged allegiance and united in their support. Thus, I have settled to go to them.”

Still, Abdullah ibn Abbas pleaded: “If you must go, then do not take your women and children with you. By Allah ^{AZJ}, I fear you will be killed.”

In another narration, Abdullah ibn Abbas added:

“I fear you will be slain as Uthman was slain, while his women and children looked on.”

The Imam ^{a.s} remained silent, his gaze steady. Ibn Abbas's grief broke forth again:

“These are the very people who betrayed your father and brother, and tomorrow they will stand among your murderers under their governor's command.

If you go to them and Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad hears of it, he will incite them against you. Those who wrote to you will become your fiercest enemies.”

¹⁰⁵ In the Imam's words, 'nasihah' signifies sincerity, not admonition, for none could admonish an Imam of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. Abdullah ibn Abbas had doubted whether the people of Kufa were truly prepared for justice, whereas the Imam ^{a.s}, guided by divine insight, discerned the necessity of his withdrawal. Whatever the Imam ^{a.s} deems essential is, by its very nature, for the preservation of the religion of almighty Allah ^{AZJ} and the sanctity of Shari'ah.

Siyar A'lam al Nubala states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, to be killed in another place is dearer to me than to have the sanctity of the House of Allah ^{AZJ} and the sanctuary of His Prophet ^{saws} violated because of me.”

When Abdullah ibn Abbas heard these words, and witnessed the immovable determination of the Imam ^{a.s}, some of his anxiety was eased, though his sorrow was not.

Abdullah ibn Abbas then spoke with bitter clarity about the politics of Mecca:

“You have gladdened the heart of Ibn al Zubayr by leaving him the Hijaz.”

When Ibn Abbas took leave of the Imam ^{a.s}, his voice trembled:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} protect you. I fear they will strike your noble face with their swords, and that this nation will treat you in a manner you will abhor.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} answered with words heavy with foreknowledge:

“O son of my uncle, by Allah ^{AZJ}, they will not leave me until they have taken my life.

Do you not know how contemptible it was before Allah ^{AZJ} when the head of Yahya ibn Zakariyya was brought to a sinful woman among Banu Isra'il?

They will do the same to me.

But I will not remain here to let the sanctity of this House be violated because of me.

To be slain even a handspan outside it is dearer to me than to be slain within it.”

These were words of farewell. Abdullah ibn Abbas left with tears in his eyes, while the Imam's ^{a.s} purpose stood unshaken.

In Tarikh al Tabari, Abdullah ibn Abbas would later lament:

“Al Hussein consulted me about leaving Mecca. I said, ‘If it were not unbefitting for me or for you, I would seize you by the head (or hair) and prevent you from leaving.’”

Later, Ibn Abbas encountered Ibn al Zubayr along the way and said with sorrowful irony:

“May your eyes be cooled, O Zubayr. Al Hussein leaves for Iraq, and the Hijaz is yours.”

In the anguish of that moment, Abdullah ibn Abbas recited:

“O what a warbling dove you are, O Ma'mar's bird, the skies are clear for you,
Lay your eggs and sing, strike your beak upon the earth where you please,
For al Hussein goes to Iraq and leaves the Hijaz to you.”

By the 7th of Dhu al Hijjah, Mecca stirred with movement. The pilgrims prepared for their march to Mina, while Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prepared for his passage to Kufa.

Yet before his departure, the final voices of counsel in Mecca would seek the Imam ^{a.s} once more. From Mecca, while the signs from Kufa still appeared outwardly hopeful, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} agreed to maintain contact with his cousin and emissary, Muslim ibn Aqil.

The Imam ^{a.s} therefore dispatched his first messenger and trusted companion, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar al Himyari, bearing a letter addressed to Muslim ibn Aqil, affirming his trust and seeking clarity regarding the people's pledges.

The Imam ^{a.s} was not yet informed of the situation in Kufa had turned violently against his cause, nor that Muslim ibn Aqil himself stood surrounded by treachery and fear.

Thus, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar departed Mecca toward Iraq, carrying words of reassurance.

THE CALL OF DESTINY; ABDULLAH IBN UMAR

In the final days of Dhu al Hijjah, as pilgrims from every horizon streamed toward Mecca and the Sacred House reverberated with the talbiyah, two of Quraysh's most eminent figures decided to seek an audience with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Abdullah ibn Abbas and Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al Khattab ¹⁰⁶ were preparing to leave for Medinah, yet neither could depart the Sanctuary without first visiting the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. For it had become known throughout Mecca that the Imam ^{a.s} was now himself was preparing to advance towards Iraq.

Abdullah ibn Umar was the son of the second Caliph, Umar al Khattab. He was neither an open enemy of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} nor a true supporter of their cause.

Abdullah ibn Umar was a man of convenience, one who had long chosen the safety of neutrality, content to stand at a distance whenever truth and tyranny confronted one another.

Al Futuh relates that the two men entered upon the Imam ^{a.s} while he stood near the Ka'bah. The air was tense, yet the words exchanged there would be among the final counsels offered to the Imam ^{a.s}.

Abdullah ibn Umar spoke first, his voice measured and cautious.

“O Aba Abdillah, may Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you.

Be mindful of Allah ^{AZJ}, to Whom is your return. You are aware of the hostility of this household of the Umayyads towards you and their injustices against you.

Now the people have accepted the authority of this man, Yazid ibn Muawiyah, and I fear that they will incline toward him for worldly gain, and that they will kill you, and many people will perish thereby.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} listened, silent and composed.

Seeking to strengthen his plea, Abdullah ibn Umar continued,

“Verily, I have heard the Prophet ^{saws} say:

‘Al Hussein will be killed, and those who take part in his killing, or betray him, or fail to assist him, Allah ^{AZJ} will debase them until the Day of Judgement.’”

Still, the Imam ^{a.s} did not reply. After a pause, Abdullah ibn Umar offered the counsel that had long defined his posture toward power.

“My advice is that you come to terms with Yazid ibn Muawiyah as others have done, and remain patient as you were with Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan before.

Perhaps Allah ^{AZJ} will judge between you and those who are unjust.”

¹⁰⁶ Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al Khattab, known as Abu Abdul Rahman, was born in Mecca before the Hijrah and accepted Islam with his father. Abdullah ibn Umar did not fight at Badr or Uhud due to his youth but joined later expeditions. Abdullah ibn Umar became known for strict literalism in ritual matters and avoidance of political conflict, preferring neutrality. In Sunni tradition he is a transmitter of reports, while in the Shi'i view he withheld support from the rightful Imams ^{a.s}, neither aiding Imam Ali ^{a.s} nor opposing his enemies. Abdullah ibn Umar later pledged allegiance to Muawiyah and then Yazid. When news of Karbala reached Medinah, Abdullah ibn Umar is reported to have wept. Abdullah ibn Umar died in 74 AH at the age of eighty four.

At this, the Imam ^{a.s} turned to Ibn Umar, visibly angered by the audacity of such a suggestion.

“O Aba Abdul Rahman! You suggest that I pledge allegiance to Yazid and come to terms with him, when the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} spoke as he did concerning him and his father?!”

Abdullah ibn Umar fell silent. He cowered before the question of the Imam ^{a.s}.

It was then that Abdullah ibn Abbas, stirred by the Imam’s ^{a.s} words, broke the stillness.

“You have spoken the truth, O Aba Abdillah! The Prophet ^{saws} said in his lifetime:

‘What have I to do with Yazid? May Allah ^{AZJ} never bless Yazid! He shall kill al Hussein, my son and the son of my daughter. By the One who holds my life, those who kill my son while he is among them, or fail to protect him, Allah ^{AZJ} will cause their hearts and tongues to be at variance with one another.’”

At these words, Abdullah ibn Abbas wept, and the Imam ^{a.s} wept with him.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then asked,

“O Ibn Abbas, do you know that I am the son of the daughter of the Prophet ^{saws}?”

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, yes,” Ibn Abbas replied without hesitation.

“We know, and we acknowledge that there is no one in the world who is the son of the daughter of the Prophet ^{saws} other than you.

Supporting you is an obligation upon this nation, just as prayer and the giving of zakat are obligations; one is not accepted without the other.”

At this, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} laid bare the burden that weighed upon his heart, his voice carrying immense sorrow.

“O Ibn Abbas, what would you say about a people who forced the son of the daughter of the Prophet ^{saws} to leave his home in Medina?

To make him leave his birthplace and the sanctuary of his Prophet ^{saws}, to leave the vicinity of his grave, his home, his mosque, and the place of his migration?

To leaving him fearful and anxious, unable to reside anywhere in peace or find a place of safety?

And all this so that they may kill him and spill his blood, while he has not associated any partner with Allah ^{AZJ}, nor accepted any authority besides Him, and has followed no path other than that of the Prophet ^{saws} and his rightful successors after him?”

Abdullah ibn Abbas replied with a verse, his voice trembling,

“I find no better description for them than:

‘They have lost faith in Allah ^{AZJ} and His Messenger ^{saws}, they never come to prayer except half-heartedly.’” (Q9:54)

Abdullah ibn Abbas then added another verse,

“‘Surely the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah ^{AZJ}, but He outwits them. When they stand up for prayer, they do it half-heartedly only to be seen by people, hardly remembering Allah ^{AZJ} at all. Torn between belief and disbelief, belonging neither to these believers, nor those disbelievers. And whoever Allah ^{AZJ} leaves to stray, you will never find for them a way.’” (Q4:142-143)

And for such people, a great punishment awaits.”

Then Abdullah ibn Abbas turned fully toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

“But as for you, O son of the daughter of the Prophet ^{saws}, you are the embodiment of the honour of the Prophet ^{saws}, and the son of his noble daughter.

Do not think that Allah ^{AZJ} is heedless of what the unjust do.

I bear witness that whoever despises your company and seeks to fight you and the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws} is vile and despicable.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his gaze toward the heavens. “O Allah ^{AZJ}, bear witness.”

Overcome, Abdullah ibn Abbas cried,

“May I be sacrificed for you, O son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}!

It seems you are calling me to support you.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, besides Whom there is no deity, even if I were to strike with this sword alongside you until it shattered in my hand, I would not have fulfilled even a fraction of your right. I stand before you, command me.”

At this moment, Abdullah ibn Umar intervened, anxious to quell the rising fervour.

“O Ibn Abbas, do not be hasty! Do not bind us to what we cannot bear!”

Abdullah ibn Umar then turned again to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

“O Aba Abdillah, do not be hasty in your decision.

Return to Medinah and seek a truce with them. Do not remove yourself from your home and the sanctuary of your grandfather, the Prophet ^{saws}.

Do not give these people an excuse against you. If you do not wish to pledge allegiance to Yazid, then refrain, but remain in your home. Yazid ibn Muawiyah may not live long, and Allah ^{AZJ} will suffice you against his schemes.” ¹⁰⁷

The very notion repulsed Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and his reply was sharp.

“Away with such words! This will never happen, so long as the heavens and the earth endure! O Abdullah ibn Umar, I ask you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ}: am I in the wrong in this matter? If you believe that I am, then show me how.

If you are able to do so, I will yield, listen, and follow.”

Abdullah ibn Umar lowered his head. “No, by Allah ^{AZJ},” he said defensively.

“Allah ^{AZJ} would never allow the son of the daughter of His Messenger ^{saws} to be in the wrong. In the matter of leadership, there is no comparison between one such as you, with your purity and distinction inherited from the Prophet ^{saws}, and Yazid ibn Muawiyah.

However, I fear that your noble face will be struck by swords, and that this nation will treat you in a manner you will not accept. So return with us to Medinah.

If you do not wish to give your allegiance, then do not do so, and remain in your home.”

¹⁰⁷ Tarikh Dimashq records that when Ibn Umar was told Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was leaving for Iraq, he went to dissuade him, warning that the people of Iraq were treacherous, having betrayed his father and brother, and would do the same to him. His counsel reflected caution and resignation. When Imam ^{a.s} refused, Ibn Umar embraced him, kissed his forehead, and said, “I leave your death in the care of Almighty Allah ^{AZJ}. I heard the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} say, ‘Allah ^{AZJ} did not will this world for you.’”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} voice grew firm.

“No, far from it, O Ibn Umar! These people will never leave me alone. Whether they seize me or not, they will not cease until they either force my allegiance or take my life.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued:

“Do you not know, O Abdullah ibn Umar, that among the most despicable events in the sight of Allah ^{AZJ} is the day when the severed head of Yahya ibn Zakariyya was presented to an adulteress from the Children of Israel, while it still spoke words of truth against them?”

The Imam ^{a.s} then said:

“Do you not know, O Aba Abdul Rahman, that the Children of Israel would kill seventy prophets between dawn and sunrise, and then sit in their markets, buying and selling as though nothing had occurred?

Allah ^{AZJ} granted them respite, but then seized them with a punishment befitting His might. So be mindful of Allah ^{AZJ}, O Aba Abdul Rahman, and do not refrain from assisting me.”

Abdullah ibn Umar fell silent once more.

Al Futuh records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then turned to Ibn Abbas, and his tone softened.

“O Ibn Abbas, you are my father’s cousin, and since I have known you, you have always counselled goodness. You stood beside my father, offering him sincere advice, and he would consult you often. Now return to Medinah under the protection of Allah ^{AZJ}, and keep me informed of your condition.

As for me, I shall remain in this sacred sanctuary of Mecca so long as I am confident in the people’s affection and support.

But if they betray me, I will seek the company of others. I will seek refuge as Prophet Ibrahim did when he was cast into the fire, saying: ‘Allah ^{AZJ} is sufficient for me, and the best of guardians.’ And thus, the fire became cool and safe for him.”

Similarly, Ibn al Athir records in al Kamil that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would say:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, the sons of Umayyah will not leave me until they tear me apart piece by piece. And when they do, Allah ^{AZJ} will appoint over them one who will humiliate them until they are more degraded than the cloth a woman uses during her menstruation.”

The Imam’s ^{a.s} deliberate use of the term ‘faram’ signified the depth of humiliation that would befall the Umayyads.

Bihar al Anwar relates that Ibn Umar saw the firm resolution of the Imam ^{a.s}, and said,

“O Aba Abdillah, show me the place upon your body that the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} used to kiss.”

The Imam ^{a.s} uncovered the area of his navel.

Abdullah ibn Umar kissed it three times, wept, and said,

“I entrust you to Allah ^{AZJ}, O Aba Abdillah, for you will be killed in this journey of yours.”

Al Futuh states that upon hearing these words, both Abdullah ibn Abbas and Abdullah ibn Umar wept bitterly, and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wept with them for a time.

Then they took their leave and returned to Medinah, while the Imam ^{a.s} remained in Mecca.

THE WILE OF IBN AL ZUBAYR

The counsels had now reached their end. No voices remained except those whose concern was neither faith nor fear for the Imam’s ^{a.s} safety.

Among them stood Abdullah ibn al Zubayr, whose rivalry cloaked itself in piety and whose ambition was fixed upon power.

The morning of the Day of Tarwiyah, the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah, dawned over Mecca in a deceptive calm. Pilgrims surged through its streets, their voices rising in the talbiyah, the air thick with dust, incense, and devotion.

The House of Allah ^{AZJ} stood at the heart of it all, radiant and immovable, yet this would be Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} final morning in Mecca.

Kamil al Ziyarat narrates from Abi al Jarud, from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, that on the day before Tarwiyah, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr came to bid farewell to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

With the pilgrims preparing for Hajj, Ibn al Zubayr spoke in a tone of feigned astonishment:

“O Aba Abdillah, the season of Hajj has arrived, yet you are bidding it farewell and leaving for Iraq?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with serenity:

“O Ibn al Zubayr, to be buried upon the banks of the Euphrates (Shat al Furat) is more beloved to me than to be buried in the courtyard of the Ka'bah, and having thereby violate its sanctity.”

Abi Mikhnaf relates that two men from the tribe of Asad, Abdullah ibn Salim al Asadi and al Mudhir ibn al Musham'al, entered Mecca that very morning as pilgrims. ¹⁰⁸

At the time of Dhuhr, these Asadi pilgrims found Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} standing between the Ka'bah and the Hajar al Aswad, his hands raised in supplication.

Beside the Imam ^{a.s} stood Ibn al Zubayr, leaning close, speaking words too hushed to be fully discerned. The two Asadi pilgrims paused at a distance.

The voices were low, nearly lost amid the movement of the sanctuary, yet it was evident that a private and urgent exchange was underway between the Imam ^{a.s} and Ibn al Zubayr.

Abdullah ibn Salim and his companion drew nearer and now heard Ibn al Zubayr say:

“If you wish to stay, then remain. I will entrust this matter to you.

We are your supporters, your helpers, your well-wishers, and your obedient servants.”

The words were wrapped in deference, yet heavy with calculation.

Ibn al Zubayr knew that so long as the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} remained in Mecca, no allegiance would be pledged to the Imam ^{a.s}, nor would the people rally beneath his banner.

Thus, the interest of Ibn al Zubayr lay in the departure of the Imam’s ^{a.s}, for as long as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} remained in Mecca, all ambitions of Ibn al Zubayr other than his own were eclipsed.

¹⁰⁸ Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu Janab Yahya ibn Abi Hayyah, who narrates from Adi ibn Harmalah al Asadi, from Abdullah ibn Sulaym and al Mudari ibn al Musham'il al Asadi.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to Abdullah ibn al Zubayr and replied with measured finality:

“Indeed, my father informed me that within this sanctuary of Mecca there is a ‘kabsh’, a ram, through whom its sanctity will be violated. And I do not wish to be that ram.”

The term ‘kabsh’ bore deliberate symbolism: it is the ram that leads the flock and is chosen for sacrifice. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ^{a.s} had foretold that blood would one day be shed in Mecca, violating its sanctity.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would not allow his own blood to be that cause.

Abdullah ibn al Zubayr persisted:

“Then remain, if you wish. Stay here and leave the matter to me, for I shall obey you and will not deceive.”

“I do not wish that either,” the Imam ^{a.s} replied.

The two Asadi pilgrims had stood nearby, and later narrated:

“They continued their conversation in hushed tones until the call to proceed to Mina was raised at the time of Dhuhur. Then al Hussein performed tawaf around the Ka’bah, performed the sa’y between al Safa and al Marwah, cut some of his hair, and thus completed his Umrah. Then he departed toward Iraq, while we went on toward Mina with the people.”

Abu Mikhnaf further narrates, through Abu Sa’id Aqisah ¹⁰⁹, from one of his companions who witnessed the scene, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was standing when Abdullah ibn al Zubayr again drew close and said to the Imam ^{a.s}:

“Come near to me, O son of Fatimah.”

The Imam ^{a.s} inclined his head, and Ibn al Zubayr whispered something privately into his ear. When the whisper ended, the Imam ^{a.s} turned toward those nearby and said aloud:

“Do you hear what Ibn al Zubayr says?”

They replied, “No, may Allah ^{AZJ} make us your ransom.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said:

“He (Ibn al Zubayr) says: ‘Remain in this mosque, and I will gather the people for you.’”

By this, Ibn al Zubayr sought to draw the Imam ^{a.s} into remaining in Mecca, proposing a confrontation against Banu Umayyah under the guise of support and loyalty.

In reality, it was a calculated attempt to place the Imam ^{a.s} at the head of a Meccan uprising, while Ibn al Zubayr stood to benefit from the ensuing turmoil.

Ansab al Ashraf records this as Abdullah ibn al Zubayr’s final attempt, not to safeguard the Imam ^{a.s}, but to use his presence to ignite a counter-Umayyad movement within the sanctuary itself, even at the cost of bloodshed. Ibn al Zubayr made this proposal to avert suspicion from himself and to secure an excuse for what would follow.

The Imam ^{a.s}, perceiving the scheme, exposed it openly before the people of Mecca and the pilgrims. Abdullah ibn al Zubayr was left humiliated, his intentions laid bare.

¹⁰⁹ Abu Sa’id al Taymi, whose name was Dinar, narrated from Imam Ali ^{a.s} and was counted among the mawali of Banu Taym.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then raised his voice and declared:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, to be killed outside it by a handspan is more beloved to me than to be killed within it by a handspan!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, even if I were in the hole of a lizard, they would drag me out until they carried out upon me what they desire!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, the Umayyads will violate me as the Children of Israel violated the Sabbath!”

The Imam ^{a.s} thus unveiled the reality of his situation: he was a marked man. Wherever he went, the Imam ^{a.s} would be pursued, and even the sanctuary itself would not restrain them.

Thus, the departure of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} from Mecca was not flight, but sacrifice. He would carry the trial away from the House of Allah ^{AZJ} so that its sanctity might remain intact, even if his own body were to be torn upon distant soil. By responding to those who had summoned him, the Imam ^{a.s} would leave no one able to claim ignorance.

That morning, as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prepared to leave the Sacred Mosque, his family, companions, and a small band of followers gathered around him. The pilgrims continued their rites, unaware that the true custodian of the religion was departing from Mecca.

The city would retain its sanctity, but its living light would now be on the road to Iraq.

As Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prepared his caravan, the command of Yazid ibn Muawiyah reached its full expression. Unbeknownst to the people, Amr ibn Sa’id al Ashdaq, the Umayyad governor of Mecca, had dispatched assassins in pursuit of the Imam ^{a.s}.



THE THREAT ON THE DAY OF TARWIYAH

The failure of Yazid ibn Muawiyah’s written appeals from Damascus now gave way to the threat of the sword. What persuasion could not achieve, force would attempt to impose.

As al Malhuf narrates from Mu'ammār ibn Muthannah, Yazid ibn Muawiyah’s hostility soon assumed a militarised form.

On the Day of Tarwiyah, the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah, when the pilgrims gather water in preparation for the rites of Hajj, Yazid ibn Muawiyah issued a direct command to Amr ibn Sa'id ibn al A'as¹¹⁰, the Umayyad governor of Mecca. Amr ibn Sa'id was ordered to enter the Sacred City at the head of a substantial detachment of soldiers.

The instructions from Damascus were explicit and ruthless. They stated that if Imam al Hussein^{a.s} initiated hostilities, he was to be fought openly; if he did not, then Amr ibn Sa'id was to fabricate a pretext for confrontation and kill the Imam^{a.s} regardless.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah sought to strike before the Imam al Hussein’s^{a.s} moral authority in the Hijaz and Iraq could fully consolidate.

Therefore, it is evident that Imam al Hussein^{a.s} perceived the plot before it could unfold and decided that the sanctity of the Haram must not be violated because of him.

Al Irshad states that when the Imam^{a.s} opted to leave Mecca, he performed the circumambulation of the Ka'bah, walked the circuit between al Safa and al Marwah, trimmed his hair, and completed an Umrah. The Imam^{a.s} did not remain to perform the Hajj.

Shaykh al Mufid states that Imam al Hussein^{a.s} understood with certainty that if he stayed, one of two outcomes awaited him: either the Imam^{a.s} would either be seized and taken to Yazid in chains, or the Imam^{a.s} would be killed within the sacred precinct itself.

Shaykh al Tustari, in al Khasa'is, adds that Amr ibn Sa'id’s agents had already dispersed to assassinate the Imam^{a.s} even if he were ‘clinging to the curtains of the Ka'bah’. It was for this reason that the Imam^{a.s} deliberately altered his course and prepared to leave urgently.

In juridical terms, Imam al Hussein^{a.s} had entered Mecca with the intention of performing an Umrah al Mufradah and did not enter into ihram for Hajj.

His departure on the Day of Tarwiyah was therefore neither a breach nor an abandonment of obligation, but a lawful and deliberate act in the face of imminent danger.

¹¹⁰ The cruelty of Amr ibn Sa'id ibn al A'as is evident in his rule over Medinah and Mecca, marked by tyranny and contempt for sacred limits. Upon becoming governor, Amr ibn Sa'id summoned Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Rafi' and demanded, "Who is your master?" When he replied, "Messenger of Allah^{saws}," Amr ibn Sa'id ordered him flogged repeatedly until, after five hundred lashes, he was forced to say, "You are." (al Iqd al Farid, vol. 3) Abu Mikhnaḥ relates Amr ibn Sa'id later flogged the people of Medinah, including supporters of Ibn al Zubayr, among them Muhammad ibn Ammar ibn Yasir. When news of Imam al Hussein's^{a.s} martyrdom reached him, Amr ibn Sa'id mocked the women of Banu Hashim, called it vengeance for Uthman, and declared it a victory from the pulpit. When Yazid later suspected Amr ibn Sa'id of leniency toward Ibn al Zubayr, Amr ibn Sa'id was dismissed in Dhu al Hijjah 61 AH. Amr ibn Sa'id went to Syria to defend himself but was killed in the palace of Abdul Malik ibn Marwan, ending his rule in humiliation.

This understanding is affirmed in the narrations preserved in al Wasa'il, al Kafi, and Tahdhib al Ahkam from Imam al Sadiq^{a.s}. Mu'awiyah ibn Ammar reported:

“Indeed, al Hussein performed Umrah in Dhu al Hijjah, then departed on the Day of Tarwiyah for Iraq while the people were heading to Mina. And there is no harm in performing Umrah in Dhu al Hijjah for one who does not intend Hajj.”

Likewise, when Ibrahim ibn Umar al Yamani asked Imam al Sadiq^{a.s} concerning one who performs Umrah during the months of Hajj and then returns home, Imam al Sadiq^{a.s} replied:

“There is no harm. Indeed, al Hussein ibn Ali left on the Day of Tarwiyah for Iraq, and al Hussein had performed Umrah.”

Shaykh al Tabarsi records this in A'lam al Wara, preserving the expression ‘Tamam al Hajj’ (completion of Hajj), indicating that the pilgrimage itself was relinquished before its fulfilment.¹¹¹

By the first week of Dhu al Hijjah, tension in Mecca had reached its peak. Muslim ibn Aqil’s letter from Kufa had arrived only days earlier, and reports spread that men from Damascus had infiltrated the pilgrims themselves.

A number of Imam al Hussein’s^{a.s} Shi'ah committed to join him, as did nobles from the tribes of the Hijaz and Basra who had learned of his presence.

Some gathered around the Imam^{a.s} in reverence; others watched in silence, unable to grasp the magnitude of what was unfolding.¹¹²

Beneath this outward calm, however, the threat of Yazid’s agents loomed ever closer.

More rumours spread that men from Damascus had infiltrated the pilgrims themselves, waiting only for the moment to strike. The danger of an assassination was closing in.

Before leaving, Taysir al Matalib further narrates from Zayd ibn Ali, from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein^{a.s}, that the Imam^{a.s} stood within the Haram and addressed his companions:

“Praise be to Allah^{AZJ}! Whatever He wills shall be! There is no power but with Allah^{AZJ}! Blessings of Allah^{AZJ} be upon His Messenger^{saws}.

O people! The collar of death for mankind is like a necklace around the throat of a young maiden; that is, it is assured. And my own eagerness to meet my ancestors is no less than the eagerness of Prophet Ya'qub to meet Yusuf and his brother.

There is a battlefield waiting for me; it is as if I can see the limbs of my body being torn apart by frenzied wild beasts, filling their engorged bellies with my flesh.

There is no escape from what the Pen of Destiny has written.”

¹¹¹ While Shaykh al Tabarsi’s version faithfully reflects al Irshad, later copyists appear to have confused the phrase tamam al hajj (completion of the pilgrimage) with itmam al hajj ((performance of the pilgrimage). This substitution materially alters the meaning: the former indicates that the pilgrimage was left incomplete, whereas the latter suggests that the Imam^{a.s} had entered its rites. The authentic wording, ‘tamam al Hajj’, accurately reflects the Imam’s^{a.s} deliberate relinquishment of the outward pilgrimage.

¹¹² Muslim ibn Aqil dispatched his decisive letter to Imam^{a.s} twenty-seven days before his own martyrdom, on the 20th of Dhu al Qa'dah. Allowing roughly ten days for the courier’s trek, the letter would have reached Mecca in the final days of Dhu al Qa'dah or at the dawn of Dhu al Hijjah.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued his sermon,

“We, the Ahlul Bayt, are pleased with Allah’s ^{AZJ} pleasure; we remain steadfast in the face of His ^{AZJ} trials so that He may award us with the reward of those who are patient.

The family and offspring of the Prophet ^{saws} are not detached from him; they will never be separated from one another and shall be brought together in the blessed enclosure of Paradise.

The Prophet’s ^{saws} eyes will shine when he gazes upon them, and Allah’s ^{AZJ} promise concerning them shall be fulfilled. Indeed, whoever is prepared to lay down his life for us should travel with us. Allah ^{AZJ} willing, I depart Mecca tomorrow.”

The precise moment of the Imam’s ^{a.s} departure is variously reported, but it is established that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} left before the 10th of Dhu al Hijjah.

Tahdhib al Ahkam narrates from Ibrahim ibn Umar al Yamani, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} set out for Iraq on the Day of Tarwiyah, the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah. Nafasul Mahmoom likewise records that on Tuesday, the Day of Tarwiyah, the Imam ^{a.s} was fully prepared to depart Mecca.

On that same day in Kufa, Muslim ibn Aqil rose against Ibn Ziyad following the arrest of Hani ibn Urwah. The critical pivot in the departure of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} from Mecca was the imminent arrival of this pompous Umayyad governor, Amr ibn Sa'id, with armed forces, which rendered any further stay impossible.

Al Irshad relates that Amr ibn Sa'id was haughty, arrogant, and devoid of restraint. With the armed forces of Amr ibn Sa'id entering Mecca that very day, the Imam ^{a.s} decided to delay no longer. Before the first light of dawn, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} withdrew from the sacred city.

Amr ibn Sa'id would go on to perform the Hajj with the people and to govern Mecca and Medinah that year. From this calculated scheme, the Umayyad plot yielded mixed results.

They failed to assassinate Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} within the sanctuary of the Ka'bah.

Yet Yazid’s scheme achieved a grievous outcome nonetheless: it compelled the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} to leave this holy sanctuary of Mecca.

As recorded in al Futuh, in the final preparations for his journey toward Iraq, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} provided those companions who agreed to accompany him with provisions, they amounted to ten dinars each and a camel for their supplies. Al Futuh states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would then personally place his daughters and the women of his household into their respective howdahs upon their mounts. Thus, having entrusted his affair entirely to Almighty Allah ^{AZJ}, the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws} Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} now turned away from the House of Allah ^{AZJ} for the final time, and set his final course toward Iraq.

“Therefore, you set out in company of your children, kinsfolk, followers, and supporters. You disclosed the truth and clear proofs, summoned people towards Allah ^{AZJ} with wisdom and fine exhortation, ordered the establishment of the limits of divine law, and obedience to the One ^{AZJ} Who should be worshipped, and forbade people from wickedness and oppression. Therefore, you resisted them after advising them and stressing over divine proofs against them.” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

THE DEPARTURE FROM MECCA

THE PLEA OF MUHAMMAD AL HANAFIYYAH

Before the hours of parting drew near and the command of Allah ^{AZJ} became firmly manifest in the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his brother Muhammad ibn Ali al Hanafiyyah would come once more to meet the Imam ^{a.s}.

This is recorded as the final meeting between Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and Muhammad al Hanafiyyah, as recorded in Ithbat al Wasiyyah, which is cited by al Majlisi in Bihar al Anwar.

Al Hanafiyyah found his brother in Mecca during the days of Dhu al Hijjah, when the city stood on the threshold of Hajj.

The air was heavy with the scent of sandalwood, the murmurs of pilgrims preparing for Mina, and an unspoken tension beneath the outward serenity of the sanctuary, as Yazid ibn Muawiyah began to conspire ever more to assassinate the Imam ^{a.s} within Mecca.

Thus, this became the final night of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in Mecca.

Similarly, al Malhuf narrates from Muhammad ibn Dawud al Qummi, through his chain of narrators, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that Muhammad al Hanafiyyah entered upon his brother on the night before the Imam ^{a.s} intended to depart Mecca and said to him:

“My brother, you know well that the people of Kufa are the very ones who betrayed your father and your brother before you.

I fear that they will betray you as they did them. Remain here in Mecca, for you are the most honoured and noble person in this sacred sanctuary.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with calm certainty,

“My brother, I fear that Yazid ibn Muawiyah will send men to assassinate me in the haram, and I would become the cause of the violation of its sanctity.”

Alarmed, Muhammad al Hanafiyyah pleaded further,

“If you are afraid of that, then go to Yemen, or elsewhere, where you would be safer and no one could attack you.”

The Imam ^{a.s} responded simply, “I shall consider what you have said.”

They parted that night with an unspoken understanding between them, for Muhammad al Hanafiyyah sensed that his brother’s heart was already settled.

When dawn broke, Muhammad al Hanafiyyah learned that his brother had already made preparations to depart. The desert wind carried the faint sound of the caravan preparing to advance beyond the city’s edge.

Overcome with urgency, Muhammad al Hanafiyyah hastened after Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and came to the mount upon which the Imam ^{a.s} sat, seizing the reins of the camel.

“O brother,” he cried, “did you not promise me that you would consider my words?”

The Imam ^{a.s} turned to Al Hanafiyyah and said gently, “Indeed, I did.”

“So what has led you,” Al Hanafiyyah asked, “to proceed so hastily?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon him with eyes that bore the light of prophecy,
 “My brother, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} came to me after we last spoke and said,
 ‘O Hussein, depart, for Allah ^{AZJ} desires to see you slain.’”

At these words, Muhammad al Hanafiyyah was struck with grief. He placed his hand upon his heart and recited the verse:

“Indeed we belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and indeed to Him we return” (Q2:156)

Muhammad al Hanafiyyah then followed the caravan a little further, his steps unsteady beneath the weight of sorrow.

“O Abu Abdillah,” he said, “what is your reason for taking these women with you when you depart under such circumstances?”

Ithbat al Wasiyyah states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied in a solemn tone:

“The Prophet ^{saws} informed me that Allah ^{AZJ} wills that they shall be taken as captives.”

Muhammad al Hanafiyyah lowered his gaze, unable to speak.

Al Hanafiyyah was now convinced that the path before his brother was the path of tragedy and shahadah, chosen by Allah ^{AZJ} as the fulfilment of the prophetic covenant.

Muhammad al Hanafiyyah stood still for a long while, watching as the caravan moved further away, the banners fluttering and the sound of hooves fading into the stillness.

When at last the dust settled, Al Hanafiyyah whispered the verse softly to himself:

“Indeed we belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and indeed to Him we return” (Q2:156)

And so the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} began to distance itself from Mecca.



THE LETTER OF ABDULLAH IBN JAFAR

Among those whose hearts trembled with sincere sorrow was Abdullah ibn Jafar ibn Abi Talib ¹¹³, the husband of the noble Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} and the son of Jafar al Tayyar, the martyr of Mu'tah, to whom the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} promised wings in Paradise.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Harith ibn Ka'b al Walbi, who narrates from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that when word reached Abdullah ibn Jafar that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had set out from Mecca, Abdullah ibn Jafar was gripped with anguish.

Abdullah ibn Jafar knew the people of Kufa all too well. He had witnessed their treachery toward Imam Ali ^{a.s}, and he had lived through their abandonment of Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. Their promises were always loud, but their loyalty was brittle.

Fearing that his brother-in-law was heading toward certain death, Abdullah ibn Jafar took up his pen in desperation.

He wrote a letter with reverence, entrusted it to his two sons, Awn and Muhammad, and sent them swiftly after the departing caravan.

The letter, as preserved in al Tabaqat al Kubra, read:

“As for what follows,

I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ} to turn back when you receive my letter, for I fear that the path you have chosen will lead to your death and the destruction of your household.

If you perish today, the light of the earth will be extinguished, for you are the beacon of those who are guided and the hope of the believers.

Do not hasten on your journey, for I will come to you soon after you receive this letter. And Peace.”

In his distress, Abdullah ibn Jafar also turned to the governor of Mecca, and hurried towards the court of the haughty Amr ibn Sa'id ibn al As.

Hoping to restrain violence through diplomacy, Abdullah ibn Jafar urged Amr ibn Sa'id,

“Write to al Hussein, offering him security, and promise to treat him with goodness and conciliation. Write to him with assurances of trust, and insist that he returns; perhaps al Hussein will be persuaded and return.”

Amr ibn Sa'id replied with thinly veiled contempt,

“Write what you wish, and bring it to me so that I may seal it.”

¹¹³ Abdullah ibn Jafar ibn Abi Talib, known as Abu Jafar, was a companion of the Prophet ^{saws} and the son of Jafar ibn Abi Talib and Asma bint Umayy. Born in Abyssinia, Abdullah ibn Jafar returned to Medinah at the age of eight, where the Prophet ^{saws} accepted his bay'ah and later oversaw his upbringing after his father's martyrdom at the battle of Mu'tah. Abdullah ibn Jafar married Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} and was known for his noble character and generosity. Abdullah ibn Jafar accompanied Imam Ali ^{a.s} at Jamal, assisted in returning A'ishah to Medinah, advised on the appointment of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr over Egypt, and was present at Siffin, though Abdullah ibn Jafar did not fight. Abdullah ibn Jafar remained devoted to Imam al Hasan ^{a.s} and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, but was not present at Karbala, finding solace in the martyrdom of his sons alongside the Imam ^{a.s}. He died in 80 AH at the age of eighty.

A letter was thus composed in the court, and it read:

“In the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From Amr ibn Sa'id to al Hussein ibn Ali.

As for what follows,

I pray to Allah ^{AZJ} to turn you away from the path that leads to your death and to guide you to what is right. I have learned that you are heading to Iraq.

I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ} to desist from causing dissension, for I fear that you will perish upon this path. I have sent to you Abdullah ibn Jafar and Yahya ibn Sa'id, so return to me with them.

I give you my assurance of security and conciliation, generosity and good companionship. On this, Allah ^{AZJ} is my witness, my guarantor, my observer, and my protector. And Peace.”

From the tone of the letter, and from the reply that followed, it becomes evident that these words were not the voice of the noble Abdullah ibn Jafar.

Rather, they bear the imprint of Amr ibn Sa'id himself, for certain phrases carry a subtle reproach and condescension toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, a tone that Abdullah ibn Jafar would never have adopted.

Once the letter was sealed, Amr ibn Sa'id entrusted it to his brother Yahya ibn Sa'id, instructing Yahya to accompany Abdullah ibn Jafar and present the message to the Imam ^{a.s}. Yahya was to serve as the diplomatic face of Umayyad authority, a courier of promises meant to entice Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} back to Mecca.

They hurried along the path and overtook the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the road, already beyond the sanctuary. The letter of Amr ibn Sa'id was read aloud before the Imam ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari records that the Imam ^{a.s} listened.

Then, with tranquil certainty, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wrote in reply to Amr ibn Sa'id:

“As for what follows,

The one who calls towards Allah ^{AZJ}, performs righteous deeds, and professes Islam has not rebelled against Allah ^{AZJ} and His Prophet ^{saws}.

You have called me to security, goodness, and conciliation. Know that the best security is that of Allah ^{AZJ}, and He will not grant security on the Day of Judgement to one who did not fear Him in the world.

We beseech Allah ^{AZJ} to grant us that fear in this world which will earn us His security on the Day of Judgement.

If you sincerely intended conciliation and goodness toward me by your letter, then may you be rewarded in this world and the hereafter. And Peace.”

Abdullah ibn Jafar now realised that diplomacy could not alter Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} determination, so Abdullah pressed him further, pleading,

“We beseech you, return. Do not go to the people who betrayed your father and your brother.”

But Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with quiet finality, addressing Abdullah ibn Jafar and Yahya.

“I saw in a dream the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and I was commanded with an affair which I am proceeding with. It is a command I cannot disobey.”

They asked, “What did you see?”

Al Tabaqat al Kubra states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said,

“I have not disclosed it to anyone, and I will not disclose it until I meet my Lord ^{AZJ}.”

It dawned upon Abdullah ibn Jafar that the Imam ^{a.s} would for sure not turn back, and his heart submitted to the decision of the Imam ^{a.s}.

With heavy resignation, Abdullah ibn Jafar said, “Then I entrust you to Allah ^{AZJ}.”

Turning to his sons, Abdullah ibn Jafar commanded them,

“Go, both of you, with your uncle al Hussein!

Remain by his side always, and give your lives for him should the need arise.”

And thus, Awn and Muhammad ¹¹⁴, the sons of the valiant Abdullah ibn Jafar and noble Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a}, rode onward with the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, onwards to Kufa.



¹¹⁴ Abdullah ibn Jafar had two sons, Muhammad and Awn, who accompanied Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and were martyred with him. On hearing this, Abdullah ibn Jafar said, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, had I been present, I would not have left al Hussein until I was killed alongside him.” Both Shi'i and Sunni sources widely agree that they were the sons of Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a}, as affirmed by Ibn Sa'd, Tarikh al Tabari, Shaykh al Mufid, and Allamah al Majlisi. Some later Sunni genealogists, such as Ibn Hajar, differed, attributing them to other mothers, but this contradicts the earlier and more established reports.

THE PURSUIT OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

When Imam al Hussein {a.s} distanced himself from Mecca on the Day of Tarwiyah, the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah, his caravan moved with solemn purpose through the heat and stillness of the Hijaz. Behind the Imam {a.s} lay the House of Allah {AZJ}, spared from the desecration that Yazid's agents had prepared; and before the Imam {a.s} stretched the open roads of the desert.

The written reply of Imam al Hussein {a.s} reached the Umayyad governor swiftly.

Al Iqd al Farid similarly relates that when Amr ibn Sa'id learned that the Imam {a.s} had already passed beyond the bounds of Mecca, Amr ibn Sa'id erupted in rage and declared,

"Mount upon every camel between the heavens and the earth and pursue him!"

To allow Imam al Hussein {a.s} to escape from the grasp of the Meccan authorities was a grave error on the part of Amr ibn Sa'id, for the Imam {a.s} was not to be permitted to move freely beyond their reach. Unable to seize the Imam {a.s} within the Sanctuary, they now sought to pursue Imam al Hussein {a.s} upon the open road.

It was along this road that the first open confrontation took place between the Umayyad authorities and Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Harith ibn Ka'b al Walbi, who narrates from Uqbah ibn Sim'an, that as the Imam's {a.s} caravan advanced, it was intercepted again by Yahya ibn Sa'id ibn al A'as. ¹¹⁵ Yahya had been ordered to physically block the Imam's {a.s} path and enforce the command of his brother, the governor, Amr ibn Sa'id al Ashdaq.

This same Yahya ibn Sa'id had only earlier carried the governor's letter of feigned goodwill. Now, Yahya appeared not as a messenger, but as an enforcer, accompanied by a group of armed riders.

They urged their mounts forward until they stood face to face with the Imam {a.s}.

"Where are you going?" they demanded.

"Return to Mecca!"

Al Akhbar al Tiwal states that this envoy of Amr ibn Sa'id dared to block the path, saying,

"The governor orders you to turn back. So turn back, or we will force you to do so."

Imam al Hussein {a.s} did not answer them as of yet.

The riders of Amr ibn Sa'id then attempted to obstruct the caravan physically, striking the camels with their whips.

At this agitation, the companions of Imam al Hussein {a.s} now moved to defend the caravan, forcing their way through. The opposing groups clashed, exchanging blows with their whips.

The confrontation erupted into shouting, but the swords had yet remained sheathed.

¹¹⁵ Yahya ibn Sa'id, the haughty man who confronted the Imam {a.s} on the road outside Mecca, remained loyal to his brother, Amr ibn Sa'id. When Amr was later besieged, Yahya fought beside him with a thousand men and slaves, but they were routed. He was imprisoned, then released, and fled first to Basra and finally to Kufa. There he swore allegiance to Abdul Malik to preserve his life, and later died, extinguishing the final remnant of the cursed Ashdaq line.

In their arrogance, the riders of Amr ibn Sa'id shouted directly at the Imam {a.s},

"O Hussein! Do you not fear Allah {AZJ}?!"

You leave the community and cause division among this nation!"

At that moment, amid the turmoil, Imam al Hussein {a.s} now raised his voice and recited with authority the verses of Allah {AZJ}, the Mighty and Majestic:

"And If they deny you, then say, 'My deeds are mine and your deeds are yours.

You are free of what I do and I am free of what you do!'" (Q10:41)

A hush fell upon all those present. With these words, the Imam {a.s} drew a clear line of separation between truth and falsehood, between those who invoked Islam and those who wielded its sword against the grandson of its Prophet {saws}.

The encounter ended without battle, yet its meaning was profound: the first stand of the Imam al Hussein {a.s} against the authority of the regime had now concluded.

According to al Akhbar al Tiwal, when news of this confrontation reached Amr ibn Sa'id, apprehension seized him. Amr ibn Sa'id now feared that if the Imam {a.s} was not willing to return, then further interference might provoke a conflict that would spiral beyond control.

Unwilling to bear responsibility for an open clash with the Imam's {a.s} caravan, Amr ibn Sa'id swiftly ordered his forces to withdraw and clear the path.

Al Kamil fi al Tarikh similarly records that Imam al Hussein {a.s} refused to halt or turn back, and instead continued onward without hesitation.

Beyond Mecca, as the caravan pressed northward into the vastness of the desert, the letters from Kufa travelled alongside them, bound within the saddlebags.



BACKGROUND - THE JOURNEY FROM MECCA

In considering the circumstances surrounding the departure of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} from Mecca before the completion of the Hajj season, two distinct yet interrelated aspects merit reflection, one grounded in historical record, and the other in jurisprudential analysis.

The Historical Context

There is no dispute among historians that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} departed from Mecca before the 10th of Dhu al Hijjah; what differs, however, is the precise date of this departure.

Various narrations propose differing dates, the 3rd, 7th, 8th, or 9th of the month, but the weight of historical evidence inclines decisively toward the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah, known as the Day of al Tarwiyah.

This position is not based merely on convention, but on the reliable transmission of Muawiyah ibn Ammar in al Kafi and Tahdhib al Ahkam, who relates directly from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} that Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} departure occurred on that very day.

The convergence of early reports and later scholarly corroboration secures this view as the most authentic account.

The Juridical Consideration

A commonly circulated assumption, found in both Muqatil literature and early biographical compilations, asserts that on the Day of al Tarwiyah, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} altered his intention, transforming his pilgrimage from Hajj to Umrah, and then departed Mecca prematurely. The origin of this belief appears to lie in the narrative stylings of early compilers, who sought to harmonise the Imam's ^{a.s} sudden departure with devotional protocol.

Shaykh al Mufid, in al Irshad, describes that

“When al Hussein committed to depart for Iraq, he circumambulated the Ka'bah (tawaf), traversed between al Safa and al Marwah (sa'y), trimmed his hair (taqsir), and emerged from his state of ihram, thus completing an Umrah, for he was unable to perform the Hajj.”

Similarly, Allamah al Majlisi, reflecting on both the Imam's ^{a.s} departure from Medinah and his early exit from Mecca, interprets these acts within a framework of existential necessity. From the transmitted accounts, he writes, it is evident that the Imam ^{a.s} left from Medinah to Mecca in fear for his life, and that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, may my soul, and the souls of my parents and children be his ransom, departed Mecca once convinced that assassination was imminent. He thus refrained from completing the Hajj, exited from ihram, and departed vigilant and wary. His enemies, may Allah ^{AZJ} curse them, had closed every refuge before him.

Bihar al Anwar further cites that Yazid had dispatched Amr ibn Sa'id ibn al A'as with a large military contingent to oversee the Hajj, commanding Amr ibn Sa'id either to seize the Imam ^{a.s} secretly or, failing that, to kill Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

From these reports, thirty agents from Banu Umayyah were reportedly embedded among the pilgrims for this purpose of assassinating the Imam ^{a.s}.

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} became aware of this plot, it is reported that the Imam ^{a.s} exited the ihram of Hajj and performed an Umrah al Mufradah instead.

Although this narrative has gained wide circulation, its juridical accuracy is questionable. Firstly, both the narration of Muawiyah ibn Ammar and that of Ibrahim ibn Umar al Yamani, the latter preserved in Tahdhib al Ahkam, explicitly affirm that the Umrah performed by Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was an Umrah al Mufradah, not an Umrah al Tamattu'.

This distinction is crucial: one who performs Umrah al Mufradah is not bound by the obligation of Hajj thereafter and may leave Mecca freely.

Hence, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was not in a state of ihram at the time of his departure, and no juristic impediment existed to prevent the Imam ^{a.s} from leaving.

Muawiyah ibn Ammar recounts that he once asked Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} about the distinction between Umrah al Tamattu' and Umrah al Mufradah. Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} replied:

“The one who performs Umrah al Tamattu' must follow it by completing the Hajj, whereas the one who performs Umrah al Mufradah may act freely thereafter.

Al Hussein performed Umrah al Mufradah during the month of Dhu al Hijjah, and then departed for Iraq on the Day of al Tarwiyah while the people proceeded toward Mina.

There is no prohibition in performing Umrah al Mufradah in Dhu al Hijjah for one who does not intend the Hajj.”

Secondly, the principles of jurisprudence in Tahdhib al Ahkam categorically preclude the conversion of a Hajj ihram into that of an Umrah. Once the ihram of Hajj has been entered, it cannot be revoked or re-designated.

Should the pilgrim, for any reason, be unable to complete the Hajj, the only lawful exit from ihram is through the act of animal sacrifice; even then, the pilgrimage remains that of Hajj, not Umrah.

This foundational principle therefore undermines some of the reports that are suggesting that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} ‘converted’ his pilgrimage.

Therefore, some Maqatil narrations suggest that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} altered his Umrah al Tamattu' to an Umrah al Mufradah, as if to imply equivalence between the two.

Yet the sound traditions from the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} establish clearly that such a transformation is impermissible and cannot be accepted as authoritative.

Thus, the reliable conclusion is that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} entered Mecca with the intention of performing an Umrah al Mufradah and departed without ever entering into ihram for Hajj. The departure of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the Day of al Tarwiyah was therefore not a juridical breach, but a deliberate and lawful act, consistent with both his awareness of impending danger and his adherence to the divine law.

Consequently, it is most probable that the celebrated Du'a al Arafah, a supplication reflecting the deepest spiritual intimacy with Allah ^{AZJ}, was therefore recited on the 9th of Dhu al Hijjah, during his final hours in Mecca before setting forth upon his destined path.

THE STATIONS OF THE ROAD

On the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah in the year 60 AH, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] departed from the sacred city of Mecca, beginning his final and fateful journey toward Kufa.

The departure took place on the Day of al Tarwiyah, during the days of Hajj.

This moment marked the turning point from the period of seclusion of the Imam ^[a.s] in the sanctuary of Mecca to the open path of destiny that would culminate in Karbala.

al Futuh records that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] departed Mecca accompanied by eighty-two individuals, comprising his Shi'ah and members of his household.

At the outset of the journey, the Imam ^[a.s] did not immediately follow the customary north-eastern route toward al Sifah, the usual first station on the Mecca to Kufa road.

Instead, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] turned north-westward toward al Tan'im, a point situated on the road leading to Medinah. This deliberate deviation, approximately 9 km removed from the main route, has long invited reflection among historians.

It is plausible that the Imam ^[a.s], fully aware of Umayyad surveillance and the orders already issued to intercept him, intended by this manoeuvre to mislead or delay any pursuit. Equally plausible is that this turn was a conscious act to draw the attention of pilgrims arriving from Medinah, so that news of his departure, and the circumstances that compelled it, would circulate widely among them. In either case, the act reveals calculated prudence and a clear awareness of the political reality encircling his caravan.

That awareness is laid bare when one examines the letter Yazid ibn Muawiyah dispatched to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad during these very days, a letter preserved in Tarikh al Ya'qubi and dated to the moment when it became clear that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had departed Mecca and was advancing toward Iraq.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah wrote to Ibn Ziyad that news had reached him that the people of Kufa had written to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], inviting the Imam ^[a.s] to come to them, and that the Imam ^[a.s] had already set out upon the road towards them.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi preserves this letter of Yazid ibn Muawiyah in stark clarity:

"News has reached me that the people of Kufa have written to al Hussein, inviting him to come to them. He has left Mecca and is heading towards them.

Of all possible places, your location, and of all possible times, your time, has been beset with the problem of dealing with him.

If you kill al Hussein, then so be it; but if you do not, you will be reduced to your former lowly status, and that of your father, Ziyad. Beware, do not let al Hussein escape you."

The letter bore the unmistakable urgency of a ruler cornered by fate and grasping at authority to confront this impending threat.

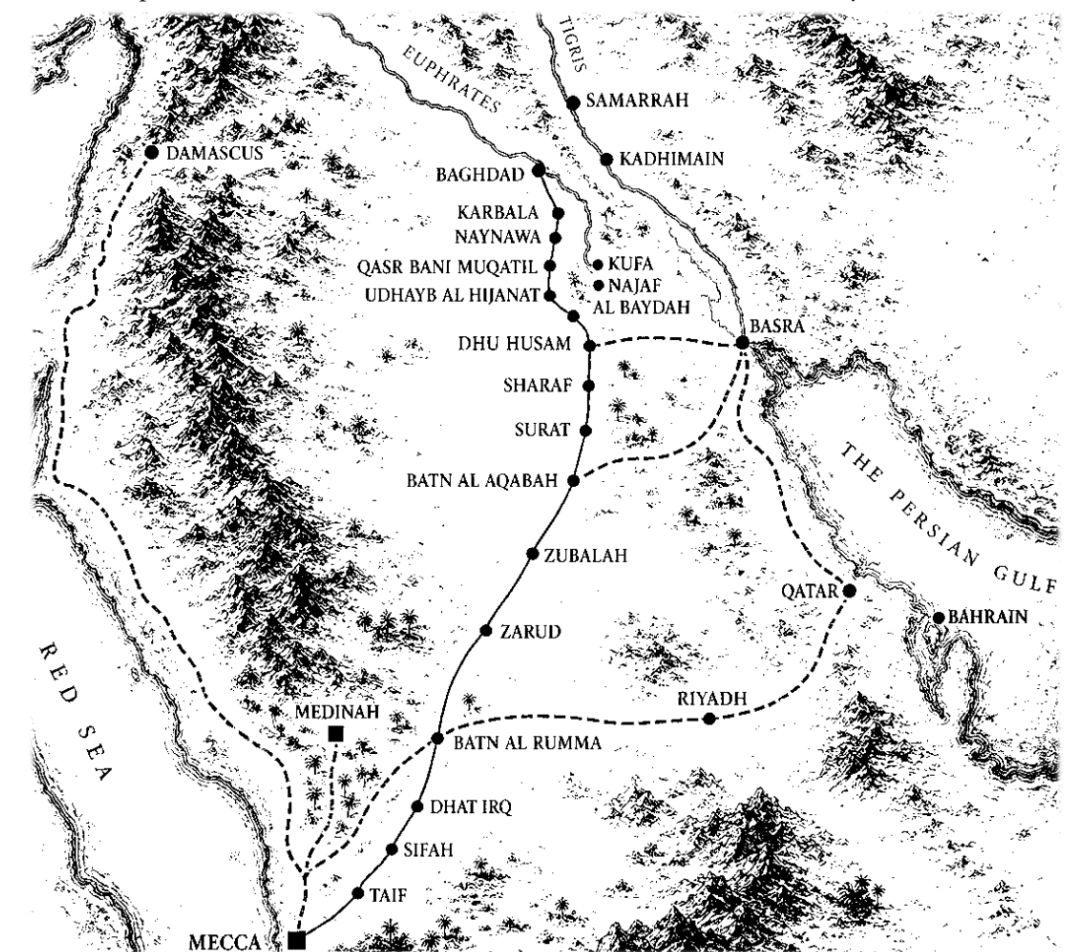
By the 10th of Dhu al Hijjah, according to al Tabaqat al Kubra, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was already advancing toward Iraq, accompanied by his family members and sixty leading men of Kufa who had joined the Imam ^[a.s] along the way.

From al Tan'im, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and his caravan rejoined the Mecca to Kufa route, continuing across a sequence of well-documented stations that punctuated the long desert journey. According to the classical itineraries preserved in early sources, the route unfolded through the following order of halts:

(1) al Tan'im, (2) al Sifah, (3) Bustan ibn Amir, (4) Dhat Irq, (5) Ghamrah, (6) al Muslah, (7) al Uth'iyah, (8) Ma'dan Bani Salim, (9) al Amaq, (10) al Silliyyah, (11) al Rabdhah, (12) Maghithah al Mawan, (13) al Naqrah, (14) al Hajir, (15) Sumaira', (16) Tuz, (17) Fayd, (18) al Afjur, (19) al Khuzaymiyyah, (20) Zarud, (21) al Tha'labiyyah, (22) al Bitan, (23) al Shaquq, (24) Zubalah, (25) al Qa', (26) al Aqabah, (27) Wadiqah, (28) Sharaf, (29) Dhu Husam, (30) al Baydah, (31) Udhayb al Hijanah, (32) al Rahimah, (33) Qasr Bani Muqatil, (34) al Taff, and finally (35) Karbala.

When these distances are measured cumulatively, the total span of the journey is calculated to be approximately 1,447 kilometres. The caravan's progress, slowed by the weight of its escort, the severity of the desert heat, and the repeated encounters, pauses, and turning points along the road, extended over roughly twenty-five days.

Ultimately, on the 2nd of Muharram in 61 AH, the grandson of the Prophet ^[saws] would reach the plains of Karbala, and the land would be forever transformed by his arrival.



AL TAN'IM

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} pressed onward along the desert road until the caravan reached al Tan'im, a valley situated, according to Mu'jam al Buldan, at a distance of two farsakhs from Mecca. In later measurements, this distance has been assessed as a single farsakh, approximately 6 km, and, with the expansion of the sacred city, the site now lies within its widening urban boundary at the mouth of the highway leading from Medinah and Jeddah.

To the right of the route rises a mountain known as Na'im, and to the left another bearing the same name; the valley that stretches between them is called Na'iman. There stands a mosque, and it is at this point, the nearest boundary of the sacred precinct, that pilgrims customarily assume ihram.

It is related in Matalib al Su'ul and other works that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was accompanied by eighty-two men drawn from among his companions, his bondsmen, and the members of his household. As previously mentioned, al Makhzun fi Tasliyat al Mahzun records that the noble Imam ^{a.s} gathered those who had devoted to accompany him on the road to Iraq and granted to each of them ten gold dinars, along with a camel for the transport of their provisions and belongings.

It was at al Tan'im that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} encountered a caravan dispatched by Bahir ibn Raysan ¹¹⁶ to Yazid ibn Muawiyah. Among the goods borne by this caravan was 'wars', a plant resembling sesame, highly prized for its dye, from which a substance known as 'al ghumrah' is produced, as well as finely crafted garments intended for Yazid.

Ibn Nima states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, being the rightful Imam and Yazid ibn Muawiyah an usurping tyrant, confiscated the caravan's load.

Bihar al Anwar presents another report, stating that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} instead hired a number of camels from the caravan to carry the belongings of his family and companions. The Imam ^{a.s} then addressed the camel drivers, saying:

"Whoever among you wishes to accompany us to Iraq may do so, and we shall pay him in full and treat him well. Whoever wishes to part from us at this point, we shall give him his due in proportion to the distance he has travelled."

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through al Harith ibn Ka'b al Walbi, who narrated from Uqbah ibn Sim'an, that those who chose to part from Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} received their wages in full, calculated precisely according to the distance already travelled.

Those who elected to remain with the Imam ^{a.s} were granted their complete hire, and the Imam ^{a.s} clothed them from the garments of the caravan.

¹¹⁶ Bahir ibn Raysan al Himyari was Yazid's governor over Yemen, a man known for observing the stars. Later, Abdullah ibn Muti al Adawi once regarded Bahir ibn Raysan as an ill omen when Ibn al Zubayr appointed him governor over Kufa. Bahir ibn Raysan was also the acknowledged master of Tawus al Yamani, who later died in Mecca in the year 105 AH.

Al Irshad narrates from Ali ibn Yazid, who reports from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that throughout their journey with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, he would neither halt at any station nor depart from one without recalling the story of Prophet Yahya ibn Zakariyya ^{a.s} and his martyrdom. Likewise, Majma al Bayan records that at one stopping place, the Imam ^{a.s} said: "A day most despicable in the sight of Almighty Allah ^{AZJ} was that on which the severed head of Prophet Yahya ibn Zakariyya was presented to an adulteress from among the Banu Isra'il."

From al Tan'im, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being al Sifah.

AL SIFAH

Al Sifah lay between Hunayn and the boundary stones of the Sacred Precinct, to the left of one entering Mecca. It was a quiet stretch of road, neither fully within the sanctuary nor wholly beyond it, a place where pilgrims paused and travellers crossed paths before committing themselves to what lay ahead.

It was here that Abdullah ibn Sulaym and al Madhri ibn al Mushma'il arrived, and here that fate brought them into the company of the celebrated poet al Farazdaq ibn Ghalib. ¹¹⁷

At that time, al Farazdaq was still a young Bedouin, not yet thirty years of age, but already renowned for the sharpness of his tongue and the force of his verse. Al Farazdaq stood upon the road at al Sifah when he saw a caravan approaching, unaware that before him was the caravan of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

Tarikh al Tabari records that when al Farazdaq recognised the travellers, he greeted Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and prayed,

"May Allah ^{AZJ} grant your wishes and bring your aspirations to fruition."

The Imam ^{a.s} replied with calm deliberation and asked,

"Inform us of the news of the people you have just left, O Aba Firas?"

Al Farazdaq hesitated, then asked, "Truthfully?"

The Imam ^{a.s} answered without hesitation, "Yes, I seek the truth."

Kashf al Ghummah relates that al Farazdaq then explained his experience:

"You have asked one who knows. The hearts of the people are with you, but their swords are with the Banu Umayyah. The decree will descend from the heavens, and by Allah ^{AZJ}, He does what He wills."

¹¹⁷ Hammam ibn Ghalib, known as Abu Firas al Farazdaq, was born in Basra in 25 AH and was a noble of Banu Tamim. Renowned for his poetry blending satire and political commentary, he was devoted to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, though his sharp verse often led to exile between Basra and Kufa. During Ziyad ibn Abihi's rule, he sought refuge in the Hijaz and later composed an elegy upon his death. He returned to Basra and performed hajj in 60 AH. Though he later praised figures like al Hajjaj and Sulayman ibn Abdul Malik, his loyalty remained with the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}. He is best known for his famous ode praising Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, recited before Hisham ibn Abdul Malik, who imprisoned him in anger. The Imam ^{a.s} later sent him 12,000 dirhams, which he accepted reluctantly. He died in 110 AH and is regarded as one of the greatest Arab poets and a devoted supporter of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} responded with composed approval and a verse:

“You have spoken the truth. The matter belongs to Allah ^{AZJ}, and Allah ^{AZJ} will do whatever He chooses.

‘Every moment, our Lord ^{AZJ} decrees a new matter.’ (Q55:29)

If His decree brings us what we desire, we thank Him for His bounty, and even in thanking Him we rely upon His aid.

But if the decree is other than what is hoped for, that does not mean that the one whose intention is sincere, and whose heart is clothed in God-wariness, has transgressed.”

Kashf al Ghummah further adds that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued, exposing the condition of the people with piercing clarity:

“I see nothing but truth in your words. People are enslaved to wealth, and religion is but a phrase upon their tongues. They remain faithful to it so long as it sustains their livelihood, but when they are tested by affliction, only a few remain steadfast.”

Tarikh al Tabari states that al Farazdaq replied,

“Yes. May Allah ^{AZJ} grant you success in what you seek and safeguard you from that which you fear.”

Then, overcome by reverence, al Farazdaq asked the Imam ^{a.s} questions concerning vows and the rites of Hajj. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} answered each one with clarity and precision. When the exchange was complete, the Imam ^{a.s} urged his mount forward and said simply,

“Peace be upon you.”

Thus they parted.

Ansab al Ashraf preserves a similar encounter through the narration of al Zubayr ibn al Kharrit, in which al Farazdaq later recalled:

“I met al Hussein at Dhat Irq while he was enroute to Iraq. The Imam ^{a.s} said to me,

‘How do you see the condition of the people of Kufa? I carry with me a saddlebag filled with their letters.’”

Al Farazdaq narrates that he replied with words both sincere and prophetic:

“They will betray you, so do not go. You are going towards a people whose hearts are with you, but whose hands will act against you.”

Yet Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not turn back. Despite the warning, the Imam ^{a.s} continued on his path, unmoved by fear or doubt.

Abu Mikhnaf, quoting Abu Janab from Adi ibn Harmalah from Abdullah ibn Sulaym, observed that this account appears to differ from another narration, in which the same transmitters, Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and al Mudri ibn al Mushammal al Asadi, declared: “We caught up with al Hussein at Zarud,” several stages beyond al Sifah on the road to Kufa.

This discrepancy may be settled if the phrase ‘We came until we reached’ is understood to mean that they had journeyed out of Kufa, entered Mecca at al Sifah, performed the rites of pilgrimage, and then later overtook the Imam ^{a.s} at Zarud.

Al Tabari further transmitted, through Hisham from Awanah ibn al Hakam from Labtah ibn al Farazdaq ibn Ghalib, this recollection in the poet’s own words:

“I performed Hajj in the year sixty and entered the Sacred Precinct during the days of pilgrimage, when I met al Hussein ibn Ali departing Mecca.

I inquired whose caravan it was, and they told me it was that of al Hussein.

I approached al Hussein and said, ‘May my father and mother be ransomed for you, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}! What has hastened you from Hajj?’

Al Hussein answered, ‘Had I not hastened, I would have been taken,’ meaning killed.”

This same account is preserved in al Tabaqat al Kubra, which adds that when al Farazdaq pleaded, “If you would only wait until the people complete their Hajj, I think the pilgrims would rally beside you,”

The Imam ^{a.s}, fully aware of Yazid ibn Muawiyah’s designs, replied with quiet finality,

“We are not safe from them, O Aba Firas.”

From al Sifah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Dhat Irq.

DHAT IRQ

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} reached the waystation of Dhat Irq, an encounter took place, preserved in the historical record through multiple chains and names. The strong similarity between this report and the earlier encounter with al Farazdaq suggests a possible variant transmission of the same episode, attributed differently in the sources. Yet the possibility of two distinct encounters cannot be excluded.

Abu Mikhnaf, through the narration of Muhammad ibn Qays, records that the Imam ^{a.s} met a man of Banu Asad, identified in the sources as Farazdaq ibn Ghalib al Asadi, though some narrations refer to him as Bishr ibn Ghalib.

According to al Futuh, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} addressed him, asking,

“To which tribe do you belong?”

The man replied, “I am from Banu Asad.”

The Imam ^{a.s} asked, “And from where are you coming, O brother of Banu Asad?”

He answered, “From Iraq.”

The Imam ^{a.s} continued, “And how did you leave the people of Iraq?”

The man responded with painful honesty: “O son of the daughter of Allah’s Prophet ^{saws}, I left them while their hearts were with you, but their swords were with the Banu Umayyah.”

al Futuh states that the Imam ^{a.s} affirmed the truth of this assessment, replying,

“You speak the truth, O Arab brother. Allah ^{AZJ}, the Almighty, will do whatever Allah ^{AZJ} chooses and will decree whatever Allah ^{AZJ} wills.”

This exchange, transmitted also by al Khawarizmi, reveals with stark precision the moral paralysis of the people of Iraq. Their recognition of truth was intact, yet their capacity for action had been crushed by fear, intimidation, and attachment to worldly safety.

Bihar al Anwar relates that Bishr ibn Ghalib then asked about a verse of the Qur'an.

“O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, inform me about the words of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Mighty and Majestic: *‘Beware of the Day We will summon every people with their leader’*.” (Q17:71)

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied:

“There is an Imam who calls to guidance and the people respond to him, and an Imam who calls to misguidance and the people respond to him. These will be in Paradise and those will be in the Fire.

It is as the Mighty and Majestic has said,
‘And warn of the Day of Gathering, about which there is no doubt, when a group will be in Paradise and another in the Blaze.’” (Q42:7)

At Dhat Irq, another report further illuminates the gravity of the Imam’s ^{a.s} position at this stage of the journey. Rayashi, through his chain of narrators, relates that a traveller once set out for the pilgrimage but became separated from his companions and lost his way.

As he wandered through the barren expanse, he saw tents and mules in the distance.

Approaching, he asked to whom the encampment belonged and was told that it belonged to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. He asked, “Is it al Hussein, the son of Ali and Fatimah?”

They replied in the affirmative and directed him to the Imam’s ^{a.s} tent.

The narrator states that he approached until he saw the Imam ^{a.s} seated at the entrance of his tent, reclining upon a pillow, reading a letter with solemn composure.

He offered his salutations, and the Imam ^{a.s} returned them graciously.

Then the man asked,

“O son of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}! May my parents be your ransom!

Why have you halted in such a barren desert, without habitation, without fortresses, and without protection?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with words heavy with foreknowledge and sorrow:

“The people have terrified me, and these are the letters of the people of Kufa, those who will kill me.

When they commit this crime, leaving no sanctity unviolated, Allah ^{AZJ} will appoint a man over them who will slaughter them and disgrace them more than the menstrual cloth, the ‘faram’, of a slave-girl.”

These words echoed a speech the Imam ^{a.s} had already made earlier in Mecca:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! They will not leave me until they spill the blood of my heart.

Then, when they do so, Allah ^{AZJ} will appoint a man over them who will humiliate them more than the menstrual cloth, the ‘faram’, of a woman.”

From Dhat Irq, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being al Hajir.

AL HAJIR

As Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} pressed onward from Mecca, his caravan moved steadily across the arid stretches of Arabia until it reached al Hajir, a harsh and rugged tract lying within the highlands of Najd. Classical geographers in Mu'jam al Buldan and in Taj al Arus identify this region as part of Batn al Rumma, a known station along the routes taken by travellers journeying from Kufa and Basra toward Medinah. It was a land shaped by isolation, long accustomed to the passing of caravans, yet indifferent to the burdens they carried.

Within this desolate expanse, as reported by Abu Mikhnaf through Muhammad ibn Qays, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} brought his caravan to a halt, preparing to dispatch yet another messenger to Kufa.

According to Tarikh al Tabari, while encamped at al Hajir, in the lonely valley of al Rummah, the Imam ^{a.s} composed a letter and entrusted it to Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, charging him with delivering it swiftly to the people of Kufa.

The letter read: “In the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From al Hussein ibn Ali to his brothers from among the believers and Muslims.

Peace be upon you. Verily, I praise to you Allah ^{AZJ}, there is no god but He ^{AZJ}.

As for what follows: The letter of Muslim ibn Aqil has reached me, informing me of your favourable intentions and of the decision of your leaders to assist us and to seek our rights.

I pray to Allah ^{AZJ} to bless our endeavours and to grant you a great reward for this. I have set out towards you from Mecca on Tuesday, the 8th of Dhu al Hijjah, the Day of Tarwiyah. When my messenger arrives before you, then hasten and strive in your preparations, for I will arrive among you in the next few days, Allah ^{AZJ} willing.

Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah ^{AZJ}.”

This message, written with sincerity, was dispatched in hope, yet it stood in tragic contrast to the grim reality already unfolding in Kufa.

It had been twenty-seven nights since Muslim ibn Aqil had written to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, assuring the Imam ^{a.s} of the readiness and allegiance of the Kufans, declaring:

“As for what follows: Indeed, the scout does not lie to his own people. Most of the people of Kufa are with you, so come once you have read my letter. And Peace.”

The people of Kufa themselves had reinforced this conviction with fervent pledges,

“You have a hundred thousand swords here to assist you, so do not delay.”

Yet within the brief span of those twenty-seven nights, everything had changed. The same city that had sent fervent pledges of loyalty had turned treacherous; the very men who professed allegiance now stood silent as Muslim ibn Aqil faced betrayal and execution.

The news of these events had not reached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, as he continued under the impression that Muslim’s message still held true, that the call from Kufa awaited him.

From al Hajir, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being al Qadisiyyah.

AL QADISIYYAH

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Yunus ibn Abi Ishaq al Sabi'i that the news of Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} departure from Mecca reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad in Kufa, and it struck Ibn Ziyad with intensified fear and deep agitation.

The calm Ibn Ziyad had affected vanished, replaced by restless urgency. Without hesitation, Ibn Ziyad summoned Hussein ibn Tamim, the commander of his police, and dispatched him at once with a large force, commanding Hussein ibn Tamim to encamp at the outskirts of al Qadisiyyah ¹¹⁸, the first great city of Iraq standing at the threshold of the Hijaz desert.

From this encampment at al Qadisiyyah, the calculating Hussein ibn Tamim extended his preparations with methodical precision. Ibn Tamim organized the cavalry and spread them like a tightening snare across the approaches to Kufa.

Detachments were stationed southward from al Qadisiyyah toward Khuffan, then westward as far as al Qatqatanah ¹¹⁹, more than twenty miles from al Rahimah along the Kufan road, and northward as far as the mountain of La'la. Khuffan was a village near Kufa, known for its spring that belonged to Banu al Abbas.

Thus was woven a vast net of surveillance and intimidation, cast in anxious anticipation of the Imam ^{a.s} nearing the outskirts of Kufa.

In their dread, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and Hussein ibn Tamim entrenched themselves early, erecting military fronts against a small caravan consisting of the Imam ^{a.s}, his family, and a handful of devoted companions.

Al Tabaqat al Kubra records that Ubayd Allah instructed Hussein ibn Tamim with chilling clarity, "Wait there, and apprehend anyone whom you do not recognize."

At the same time, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had dispatched trusted messengers toward Kufa, bearing letters to his supporters. Yet the roads they travelled were no longer open, they had now become watched and controlled under the design of Ibn Ziyad.

Those who rode these paths faced the constant threat of interception at al-Qadisiyyah, where Hussein ibn Tamim stood vigilant, ready to seize any envoy and deliver him into the hands of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. No messenger passed freely; each journey carried the weight of likely capture.

Al-Qadisiyyah thus became the axis of interception, a decisive point where solitary riders were halted, examined, and detained, their letters taken before they could reach their destination. In this manner, communication between Kufa and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was effectively strangled, leaving the Imam ^{a.s} isolated from the events of Kufa and its people.

¹¹⁸ Al Qadisiyyah was also the site where Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas once commanded the Muslim forces in the Battle of al Qadisiyyah against the Sasanian Persian Empire in 16 AH.

¹¹⁹ One tradition records that the news of Muslim ibn Aqil's martyrdom would later reach the Imam ^{a.s} while the Imam ^{a.s} was halted at this very place, al Qatqatanah.

Shaykh al Mufid relates in al Irshad, through Muhammad ibn Abi Talib al Musawi, that when Walid ibn Utbah received word of Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} movement toward Iraq, Walid wrote a warning to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad:

"As for what follows:

al Hussein is coming toward Iraq, and he is the son of Fatimah ^{s.a}, and Fatimah ^{s.a} is the daughter of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}.

Beware lest you behave badly with him and invite upon yourself and your kin a commotion in this world that will never be diminished, while the noble and the common alike will remember it until the end of time."

But these words of Walid ibn Utbah did not arise from genuine apprehension, but political caution, and concern for the reputation of the Umayyad house itself. Still, Ubayd Allah paid no heed to the warning. Ibn Ziyad neither softened his hand nor restrained his tenacity.

And so the caravan of the Imam ^{a.s} continued its advance, leaving behind the quiet gravel of al Sifah and moving steadily toward the uncertain horizon of Kufa.

From al Qadisiyyah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being al Khuzaymiyyah.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN YAQTAR

The vice grip in Kufa was suffocating, and now with the city on edge, more catastrophes would start to mount, and with it dictate the fate of the messengers of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. When the Imam ^{a.s} was on his sacred journey, during the early stages of his march toward Iraq, the Imam ^{a.s} had dispatched his first messenger, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar al Himyari, bearing a letter to Muslim ibn Aqil in Kufa.

The Imam ^{a.s} had not yet received news that his emissary, Muslim ibn Aqil, had already been martyred, nor that Kufa had been subdued by terror.

Abu Mikhnaf relates through Abu Ali al Ansari, from Bakr ibn Musab al Mazani, that later narrators confused this mission with that of Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi.

Yet the earliest and most reliable accounts affirm that it was Abdullah ibn Yaqtar who was first sent forth from the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} toward Kufa.

At al Qadisiyyah, the cavalry of Hussein ibn Tamim intercepted Abdullah ibn Yaqtar. Bound in chains, Abdullah was brought before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

The governor read the letter aloud, his fury rising with every word, and then issued a command heavy with malice: Abdullah ibn Yaqtar was to be taken to the rooftop of the palace and forced to curse Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, declaring the Imam ^{a.s} and his father to be liars before the gathered people of Kufa.

Ibn Ziyad barked, "Curse the liar, al Hussein, son of the liar, Ali ibn Abi Talib! Then come down, and then I may decide your fate."

Ansab al Ashraf records that the bound messenger appeared to comply, recognizing in this command his final opportunity to proclaim the truth. Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad's order was not merely cruelty; it was strategy. Ibn Ziyad sought to force the envoys of the Imam ^{a.s} into public renunciation, hoping thereby to extinguish the last flickering embers of loyalty still alive in Kufa. Ascending the palace wall, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar lifted his voice and cried out:

"O people! I am the messenger of al Hussein, son of Fatimah, daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

I have come to summon you to aid him and to stand against the son of Marjanah, the son of Sumayyah, the illegitimate one, son of the illegitimate, may Allah ^{AZJ} curse him!"

The governor's face twisted with rage. In a voice thick with fury, Ibn Ziyad ordered that Abdullah ibn Yaqtar be hurled from the rooftop. His blessed body struck the stones below with crushing force, shattering upon impact, yet life still clung to Abdullah ibn Yaqtar.

Abdullah lay upon the ground, moving and gasping, his final breaths escaping in agony.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah ibn Yaqtar.

It is reported that Abdul Malik ibn Umayr al Lakhmi approached him and slit his throat. The people, witnessing this, cried out, "Woe unto you! Why did you do that?"

Abdul Malik replied coldly, "I only wished to ease his suffering."

In another narration, Hisham said: Abu Bakr ibn Ayyash narrated to us from one who informed him, saying,

"By Allah ^{AZJ}, it was not Abdul Malik ibn Umayr who slew him, but rather a tall, curly-haired man who resembled him."

Mizan al I'tidal states that this same Abdul Malik would later become judge of Kufa after al Sha'bi, and that Abdul Malik died in 136 AH at the age of 103.

With the martyrdom of Abdullah ibn Yaqtar, communication between the Imam ^{a.s} and the city of Kufa fell into increasing silence.

Realising this, another envoy, Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, was already moving along the same watched paths, unaware that the snare of al Qadisiyyah, which had claimed Abdullah ibn Yaqtar, awaited him as well.



THE MARTYRDOM OF QAYS IBN MUSHIR AL SAYDAWI

At al Hajir, Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, the trusted messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], was dispatched toward Kufa. At al Qadisiyyah, Qays was seized and brought in chains before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, all this whilst the Imam ^[a.s] himself continued his advance toward Iraq. The news of the fate of his envoys had not reached the Imam ^[a.s] at this point.

When the governor Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad read the letter, his suspicions hardened into certainty: the noble Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was now alarmingly close to Kufa. Al Tabaqat al Kubra relates that Ibn Ziyad barked out to Qays ibn Mushir,

“Allah ^[AZJ] has killed Muslim ibn Aqil! So stand before the people and abuse the liar, the son of the liar!”

The demand was intended to humiliate the message of the Imam ^[a.s] and silence its truth.

Al Kamil fi al Tarikh states that Qays ibn Mushir knew well that refusal meant immediate death. Yet beneath his outward calm lay an unshakable faith; Qays intended to use this final opportunity to deliver the message Qays carried from the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

For Ibn Ziyad, forcing Qays ibn Mushir to publicly curse the Imam ^[a.s] would be a triumph of intimidation, a desperate attempt to fracture the dwindling loyalty within Kufa. However, for Qays, this was most likely his last opportunity to proclaim the truth before his end.

Qays was taken to the roof of the governor’s palace, overlooking the assembled people of Kufa who had been gathered to witness his execution. There, Qays raised his voice:

“O people! Without doubt, al Hussein ibn Ali is the best of Allah’s ^[AZJ] creation. He is the son of Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

I am his messenger to you. I left him at al Hajir, so respond to his call!”

Having proclaimed the truth, Qays did not stop there. Knowing that his fate was now all but sealed, he went further still. Qays ibn Mushir invoked blessings upon Amir al Mu'minin Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s], and openly cursed Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and his father.

The crowd stirred, and Ibn Ziyad’s face darkened with rage. In fury, Ibn Ziyad commanded that Qays ibn Mushir be hurled from the rooftop of the palace.

Tarikh al Tabari also records that Ibn Ziyad ordered Qays to be thrown from the roof of the palace; al Kamil fi al Tarikh likewise states that they pushed Qays from the heights.

The body of Qays ibn Mushir struck the stone courtyard below with a terrible crash; his bones were shattered, and his pure soul returned to his Lord ^[AZJ]. Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Muhammad ibn Qays, this same account, which is recorded in Ansab al Ashraf.

In al Malhuf, another account is preserved. It states that when Qays ibn Mushir neared Kufa, he was intercepted by Hussein ibn Numayr, who intended to search Qays.

Realizing the danger of a confidential letter being exposed to prying eyes, Qays ibn Mushir tore the letter of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] into pieces, concealing its contents. This infuriated the deputy of Ibn Ziyad, for valuable insight and information was now lost. Infuriated, Hussein ibn Numayr then sent Qays ibn Mushir to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

When brought before the governor, Ibn Ziyad asked, “Who are you?”

Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi replied,

“I am one of the Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful Ali and his son, al Hussein.”

Ibn Ziyad demanded to know why Qays ibn Mushir had torn the letter.

Qays answered, “So that you may not learn what it contained.”

The governor then demanded about ‘who’ had written it and to ‘whom’ it was addressed.

Qays replied, “It was from Hussein ibn Ali to a group among the people of Kufa, whose names I do not know.”

Enraged, Ibn Ziyad declared, “You will not leave me until you reveal their names, or ascend the pulpit and curse Hussein ibn Ali, his father Ali, and his brother al Hasan, or else I shall tear your limbs apart, joint by joint!”

Qays responded defiantly, “I will not disclose their names, but I am ready to curse.”

Qays ibn Mushir was then made to ascend the pulpit and began by praising and glorifying Allah ^[AZJ]. Qays invoked blessings upon the blessed Prophet ^[saws], followed by words of reverence for Imam Ali ^[a.s], Imam al Hasan ^[a.s], and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], beseeching Allah ^[AZJ] to increase His ^[AZJ] mercy upon them. Then Qays sent curses upon Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, upon his father, and upon all the oppressors of Banu Umayyah, from the ‘first to the last’.

Then Qays ibn Mushir proclaimed:

“O people! I have been sent by al Hussein toward you, and I left him at al Hajir, so respond to his call!”

Shaykh al Mufid narrates in al Irshad that at this point, Qays ibn Mushir was thrown down with his hands bound together, and his bones were crushed upon the stones below.

May Allah’s ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi.



AL KHUZAYMIYYAH

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued his journey until the Imam ^{a.s} reached the watering place known as al Khuzaymiyyah, a quiet station lying before Zarud along the long road from Mecca. This halt stood upon the well-worn path taken by caravans and pilgrims, and for those approaching from Kufa, Mujam al Buldan records that al Khuzaymiyyah lay approximately thirty-two miles beyond al Thalabiyyah.

Along this route, it served as one of the recognised resting places where travellers would pause, water their mounts, and gather their strength before pressing onward through the desert expanse.

The land around al Khuzaymiyyah was open and austere, marked by the stillness of the plain and the silence that often accompanied the more remote waystations. Here, the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} moved with quiet determination, advancing step by step.

Though the road appeared outwardly unchanged, unseen forces were already tightening their grip upon the region ahead.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Muhammad ibn Qays that during this same period, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had issued strict commands that the roads stretching from Waqisa toward Syria and Basra be blocked and sealed.

Guards were placed, movement was restricted, and no traveller was permitted to enter or depart freely. These measures were intended to isolate Kufa, suppress communication, and prevent news or supporters from reaching Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The land itself was being closed in, its pathways turned into barriers.

Unaware of these newly imposed restrictions, the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued along this route until they encountered a group of nomads dwelling in the open desert.

The Imam ^{a.s} halted and inquired of them about the condition of the roads and the affairs of the surrounding regions. The men answered with apprehension and uncertainty, saying,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we know nothing except that we are neither permitted to enter therein nor allowed to come out.” Their words carried the weight of fear and confusion, reflecting the shadow of authority and force.

Despite this ominous news, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not turn back. Al Futuh relates that the Imam ^{a.s} pressed on until he reached the waystation of al Khuzaymiyyah, where the noble Imam ^{a.s} brought the caravan to a halt. There, the caravan rested for one night and one day.

The tents were set, the animals watered, and the people of the camp gathered themselves in the stillness of the desert, their surrounding illuminated by the presence of the Imam ^{a.s}.

When morning arrived and the quiet of the night gave way to the pale light of dawn, the sister of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a}, approached the Imam ^{a.s}. Her heart was unsettled, and her voice carried the gravity of what she had witnessed. She said,

“O dear brother, should I not tell you what I heard last night?”

It is reported that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to her and gently asked what it was that she had heard. She replied,

“I went out during part of the night to fulfil a need, and I heard a voice calling:

‘O eye, flow abundantly with tears, For who will weep over the martyrs after me?

Over a people being driven by death, To the place where its promise will be fulfilled?’”

The words hung in the air, bearing the weight of forewarning and lament.

Al Futuh states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} listened quietly, neither startled nor shaken, and then replied with measured calm,

“O dear sister, whatever has been decreed shall surely come to pass.”

His words carried the weight of steadfast certainty, for the land appointed for the Imam ^{a.s} was no longer a distant prospect, but an approaching reality. The gathering winds of trial would soon yield to an affliction that would stir the heavens. In acceptance of this decree, the caravan prepared again to set forth.

From al Khuzaymiyyah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Zarud.

ZARUD

Zarud lay hushed beneath the weight of the desert sun, a lonely stopping place between al Khuzaymiyyah and al Thalabiyyah on the long road that stretches from the Hijaz toward Kufa, exactly as it is recorded in Mujam al Buldan. The land there was harsh and spare, scattered with coarse gravel and stubborn weeds.

At this desolate halt, reports would detail an incident of two weary pilgrims of the tribe of Asad, Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and Mundhir ibn Mushmail al Asadi, as they reined in their mounts after having completed the rites of Hajj just days before.

Al Irshad and the narrations of Abu Mikhnaf preserve their account directly. Having fulfilled their pilgrimage in the preceding days, their concern was now singular and urgent: to reach the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the road, to see with their own eyes what course his affair had taken and in what state the Imam ^{a.s} now journeyed. ¹²⁰

With that settled, they pressed on without delay. Their two she-camels paced swiftly across the open land until, at last, the faint outline of tents shimmered on the horizon. It was there, at Zarud, that they drew near to the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

As they approached, the two Asadi pilgrims noticed a solitary traveller coming from the direction of Kufa. He veered away from the road and angled his path so as to avoid the encampment entirely, as though he wished to pass unseen. He did not know that this was the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} himself.

¹²⁰ Abu Mikhnaf also narrates this report from Abu Janab al Kalbi, from Adi ibn Harmalah al Asadi, from Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and Mundhir ibn Mushmail al Asadi.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had halted at Zarud and appeared to be waiting, perhaps intending to speak with this man, but the traveller pressed on without pause, leaving the tents behind him. The two Asadis watched this mysterious traveller intentionally bypass the path and leave. Curiosity and unease stirred between them, and one said to the other, “Come, let us go and question him, for he will surely have news from Kufa.” They turned their camels and rode across the gravel plain in haste until they caught up with the lone traveller. Drawing alongside him, they greeted the traveller with peace. “And upon you be peace and the mercy of Allah ^{AZJ},” the traveller replied. “To which tribe do you belong?” the Asadi pilgrim asked. “An Asadi,” the traveller answered. “We are of the Asadi also, what is your name?” The traveller, feeling a flicker of ease at meeting his Asadi kinsmen, replied, “I am Bukayr ibn al Muthabbah.” The two pilgrims gave their own names and lineages in the old desert fashion, then pressed Bukayr ibn al Muthabbah for news. “Tell us of the people you left behind in Kufa.” Bukayr spoke with the heaviness of a man carrying fresh grief. “I left Kufa only after Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah had been killed. I saw their legs tied with ropes, their corpses dragged through the streets of Kufa.” The words fell like stones. This was grave news and ominous for the fate of the caravan of the Imam ^{a.s}. Without further delay, the two Asadi riders turned their camels back toward the caravan Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. They rode on until they reached the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} when they had encamped again at al Thalabiyyah for the night. Shaykh al Mufid also records in al Irshad that the two men went to the Imam ^{a.s} and travelled alongside the Imam ^{a.s} until the caravan halted there for the night. ¹²¹ Thus, those two Asadi pilgrims who had first drawn near to the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} at Zarud finally stood before him at al Thalabiyyah, carrying within them the bitter tidings of martyrdom that had already struck Kufa. Night began to settle over the encampment, its stillness broken only by the quiet movements of the caravan. Within that camp, the two travellers waited for the moment when they might address the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}. in some discreet capacity to deliver the devastating news of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah, and the perils that now stood in Kufa. From Zarud, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being al Thalabiyyah.

¹²¹ This report conflicts with others from the same narrators that place the meeting with al Farazdaq at al Sifah, several stations before Zarud. Its apparent meaning is that they only met Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at Zarud, which would be unlikely if they had performed Hajj, since al Sifah lies at the start of the route and the Imam ^{a.s} departed on the Day of Tarwiyah. Despite this, neither Abu Janab, Abu Mikhnaf, nor al Tabari noted the discrepancy. It is possible they met the Imam ^{a.s} briefly at al Sifah before Hajj and again at Zarud after completing it, or that the sequence of events was later conflated.

THE CALL OF DESTINY; ZUHAYR IBN QAYN

As recorded in al Akhbar al Tiwal, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued his journey until the Imam ^{a.s} reached the waystation of Zarud. It was a barren expanse, a wide open plain where desert winds swept across the land without obstruction. This would be the station at which destiny would intervene, and a shining star would be drawn into the orbit of the Imam ^{a.s}. It was here that fate prepared the meeting of Zuhayr ibn Qayn with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Abu Mikhnaf relates, through al Suddi ¹²², from a man of Banu Fazarah, the detailed circumstances that led Zuhayr ibn Qayn to receive this call of destiny. ¹²³ The Fazari narrator recounts that Zuhayr ibn Qayn was returning from the Hajj with his companions, traveling along the same road as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The political atmosphere of the time weighed heavily upon Zuhayr and his caravan. The Umayyad authorities had made it dangerous for anyone to show allegiance or even proximity to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and the camp of Zuhayr ibn Qayn was keenly aware of the consequences of association. For this reason, they made deliberate efforts to avoid the caravan of the Imam ^{a.s} at every stage of the journey. Whenever the Imam’s ^{a.s} caravan set forth, Zuhayr ibn Qayn would delay his own departure and allow distance to grow between them. When the Imam ^{a.s} halted to rest, Zuhayr and his companions would press forward, simply to avoid encamping near the Imam ^{a.s}. This pattern continued day after day, a calculated evasion shaped by fear and the weight of political caution. But destiny does not always permit avoidance. The narrator continues that eventually they reached a point where separation became impossible. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} pitched his tents on one side of the plain, and the camp of Zuhayr ibn Qayn was forced to establish theirs on the other. This is reported to have occurred when the Imam ^{a.s} arrived at a watering station shortly after Zarud. There was no longer room for distance between the camps. As the Imam ^{a.s} surveyed the area, his gaze fell upon a solitary tent pitched apart from the others, standing quietly along the edge of the road. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} inquired as to whom it belonged, and the Imam ^{a.s} was informed, “It belongs to Zuhayr ibn al Qayn al Bajali. He had gone to perform the Hajj and is now returning to Kufa from Mecca.” Upon hearing this, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} sent a messenger to Zuhayr with a simple yet momentous request: “Come to meet me; I wish to speak with you.”

¹²² Ismail ibn Abdul Rahman al Suddi, Abu Muhammad al Qurashi, a freedman of Kufa, known as al Awar and al Suddi al Kabir. Ismail ibn Abdul Rahman was called al Suddi for sitting at the suddah by the mosque gate. Ismail ibn Abdul Rahman died in 127 AH.

¹²³ This narration takes place during the rule of al Hajjaj. Al Suddi and a man from Banu Fazarah gathered in the house of al Harith ibn Abi Rabi'ah in al Tamarin, a property once owned by Zuhayr ibn al Qayn. As Syrian troops avoided the area, they met there quietly. Al Suddi then asked his companion about his time with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, leading to the account of Zuhayr ibn Qayn. This report appears in al Irshad and al Khawarizmi.

The Fazari narrator relates that while the people of Zuhayr ibn al Qayn's camp were seated, partaking of their meal, the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] suddenly entered their camp. He was escorted into the main tent and greeted them all with peace.

Some among them returned the greeting, while others sat in silence, bewildered by his presence and by what it might signify.

Then the messenger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] spoke clearly and without hesitation:

"O Zuhayr ibn al Qayn, Aba Abdillah al Hussein ibn Ali has sent to summon you."

At that moment, all movement ceased within the tent seized.

Every hand froze in mid-air, every voice fell silent. The stillness that descended upon the tent was so complete that it was narrated, 'as though birds had perched upon our heads.'

All eyes turned toward Zuhayr ibn Qayn. Every man present knew how determined they had been to avoid any contact with the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] until this moment.

Zuhayr ibn Qayn lowered his head. He hesitated, weighed down by dread and uncertainty. He had never intended to meet the Imam ^[a.s], hence all this effort having deliberately avoided the Imam's ^[a.s] presence throughout the journey. Silence lingered heavily in the tent.

Then a voice emerged from behind the curtain inside the tent, from the women's side.

It was Dalham bint Amr, the wife of Zuhayr ibn Qayn. Her words cut through:

"Glory be to Allah ^[AZJ]!

Does the son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] send for you, and you would refuse to go?!

Glory be to Allah ^[AZJ]! Go to him, O Zuhayr! Listen to what he says, then return."

Zuhayr ibn Qayn placed the food from his hands upon the ground. He did not argue, though hesitation still clung to him. Slowly, and with visible reluctance, Zuhayr rose and prepared himself to go to the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

The Fazari narrator continues that some little time passed as Zuhayr ibn Qayn sat in the blessed company of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and after a short while, Zuhayr returned.

Strangely, Zuhayr was not the same hesitant man who had left. His steps were now brisk and purposeful, his posture upright, his movements animated.

A transformation had overtaken Zuhayr ibn Qayn. His face shone with a radiant serenity, illuminated by certainty, conviction, and peace of heart. The people of his camp stood stunned. Before a question could be raised or a word spoken, Zuhayr ordered his tent to be struck and reassembled beside the tent of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Astonishment rippled through the camp. This was the very man who had once gone to great lengths to avoid the Imam ^[a.s], yet now he desired nothing but proximity to him.

Seeing the confusion upon their faces, Zuhayr ibn Qayn addressed his companions:

"Whoever wishes to follow me, let him do so. Otherwise, this is our last parting."

They crowded around Zuhayr ibn Qayn, questioning him relentlessly, unable to fathom the source of this sudden transformation, desperate to understand what had wrought so astonishing a change. Had Zuhayr been enticed by wealth, seduced by promises of rank and honour, or swayed by some worldly ambition unknown to them?

Only then did Zuhayr ibn Qayn relate to them a memory long carried within him.

"Let me tell you something: we once fought at Balanjar ¹²⁴, and Allah ^[AZJ] granted us victory with much spoil. Among us was Salman al Farsi (or Salman al Bahili). Salman said to us,

'Do you rejoice over what Allah ^[AZJ] has granted you and the spoils you have gathered?'

We replied, 'Indeed, we do.'

Salman then said, 'If you live long enough to see the youth from the family of the noble Muhammad ^[saws], then be more joyful to fight beside them than you were for these spoils.'"

A broad smile spread across the radiant face of Zuhayr ibn Qayn, his joy unmistakable.

"By Allah ^[AZJ]! That day has come!

As for me, I entrust you to Allah ^[AZJ] and will join al Hussein!"

Behind the curtain, Dalham bint Amr listened, still struggling to comprehend the swiftness of this transformation. Zuhayr then turned toward her and called out with a jubilant voice:

"I set you free and I divorce you! Return to your home with your brother, for I do not wish that any suffering or captivity should reach you. May only good be written for you! For I have pledged myself to die at the side of al Hussein!" ¹²⁵

Zuhayr ibn Qayn personally returned the dowry of Dalham to her and entrusted her safety to his cousin, instructing him to return Dalham securely to her family. From behind the curtain, the sound of weeping could be heard. Dalham wept over Zuhayr leaving the camp, yet her faith stirred anew that her husband was now joining the side of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Dalham bint Amr stood at the edge of the camp as her husband Zuhayr gathered his possessions hurriedly and prepared to join the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Pride and sorrow intertwined within the heart of Dalham. As Zuhayr ibn Qayn moved forward with confidence and joy, she called out to Zuhayr:

"May Allah ^[AZJ] aid you and send goodness to you! I only ask that on the Day of Resurrection you remember me in the presence of Hussein's grandfather ^{[saws]!}"

Al Akhbar al Tiwal relates that Zuhayr ibn Qayn then turned once more to his companions and declared:

"Whoever among you yearns for martyrdom, let him remain; and whoever feels aversion to it, he is free to depart."

However, the camp of Zuhayr ibn Qayn was not willing to accompany Zuhayr, and thus not one of them chose to stay with Zuhayr. They rose, gathered their belongings, and departed toward Kufa, taking his wife Dalham and her brother with them.

The Fazari narrator concludes: "By Allah ^[AZJ], Zuhayr ibn al Qayn never ceased to stand at the forefront of al Hussein's army until he was martyred."

¹²⁴ Balanjar, a Khazar city near Derbent, was conquered in 33 AH by Salman ibn Rabi'ah al Bahili. Some reports state Salman al Farisi was present and addressed Zuhayr, but this conflicts with chronology, as he likely died earlier, suggesting confusion in attribution.

¹²⁵ Abu Mikhnafr narrates from Dalham bint Amr, wife of Zuhayr ibn Qayn, also recorded in al Irshad. Zuhayr later expressed resentment over Muawiyah's recognition of Ziyad and the killing of Hujr ibn Adi.

AL THA'LABIYYAH

The two Asadi pilgrims, Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and Mundhir ibn Mushma'il al Asadi, continue their narration by saying that they caught up with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and remained in his company until the Imam ^{a.s} descended at al Tha'labiyyah for the night.

Al Tha'labiyyah lies beyond al Shaquq for one traveling from Kufa toward Mecca. It takes its name from Thalaba, a man of Banu Asad, as recorded in al Mu'jam.

They now dared to walk upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} after the Imam ^{a.s} had settled at the station and sat surrounded by his companions. The Asadi pilgrims greeted the Imam ^{a.s} with peace, which the Imam ^{a.s} returned graciously. They then proceeded to find means to speak to the Imam ^{a.s} about the grave news they carried,

“May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you. We have some news.

If you wish, we can speak it publicly, or if you prefer, we can speak privately.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon the two weary pilgrims, then turned his gaze toward the companions gathered around the Imam ^{a.s} and gave permission,

“There is nothing secret from these men.”

The Asadi pilgrims exchanged glances, first with one another, then toward the group gathered near Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. They then said,

“Did you see the traveller whom you passed by late yesterday?”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, “Yes, and I intended to question him about Kufa.”

The Asadi pilgrims replied, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, we have already obtained the latest news from him and spared you the effort of questioning him. He is a man from the tribe of Asad, one of us. He is of sound judgement, truthfulness, and intelligence.”

Sweat gathered upon their brows, as one of them finally spoke of the devastating news,

“He told us that he left Kufa only after Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah had been killed, and that he saw them being dragged by their feet through the market.”

At these words, the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was struck with grief, and sorrow became visible upon his blessed face. A stunned silence swept across the tent.

The Imam ^{a.s} exclaimed, “We belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him we shall return!

May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on both of them!”

Eyes turned toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, then toward the two Asadi pilgrims, as the news settled upon them. The weight of the sorrow was so sudden and devastating that the noble Imam ^{a.s} repeated these words again and again, his voice laden with the pain of loss and separation. The veil had been lifted from the treachery of Kufa, and the truth of its betrayal stood exposed. The news of martyrdom shook those seated in his presence.

The Asadi pilgrims fell silent. Witnessing the anguish upon the Imam ^{a.s}, they pleaded,

“We beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, think of the danger to your life and the lives of your household. Do not proceed any further from here, for you have no trustworthy supporter or Shi'ah in Kufa; rather, we fear that the people there will turn against you.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then turned to his companions, the marks of heartbreak and tears etched upon his noble features, and addressed the sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib, saying,

“What is your opinion, now that Muslim ibn Aqil has been killed?”

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through a lengthy chain, that the sons of Aqil rose at once and said,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we will not depart until we take our revenge or taste what our brother tasted in martyrdom.” ¹²⁶

Yet the loss of his companions still pressed heavily upon the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Abu Mikhnaf further narrates, through a lengthy chain, that the Imam ^{a.s} turned back to the Asadi pilgrims and said in a voice weighed down by sorrow,

“There is no goodness left in life after the death of such men.” ¹²⁷

The silence continued to weigh heavily upon the gathering.

After some intimate conversations with the Imam ^{a.s}, the Asadi pilgrims realised that the Imam ^{a.s} was still firmly committed to continue his journey.

They said to the Imam ^{a.s}, “May Allah ^{AZJ} cause you to prosper.”

The Imam ^{a.s} likewise returned their prayer with solemn grace:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy upon you both.”

The Asadi pilgrims narrate that they remained with the company of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} when one of his companions spoke from amongst the gathering in the tent,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, surely you are not the same as Muslim ibn Aqil; if you enter Kufa, the people may flock around you.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} heard these words but remained silent, his face still shadowed by the grief of Kufa's betrayal and the brutal murder of his companions and their desecration.

The apparent sense of this narration indicates that the news of the killing of Muslim ibn Aqil had not yet become public at this point. It will later be shown that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} announced this news openly to his companions at the station of Zubalah through a letter which Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} presented to the people there.

From this, it is more likely that his statement, ‘There is nothing hidden from these,’ meant that among those present at that moment, the matter would remain confined, and the news would not yet be made public. Thus, the matter remained concealed until Zubalah.

Al Ya'qubi, however, reports that the news of Muslim ibn Aqil's death reached the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at the point of al Qatqaniyyah.

The Asadi pilgrims continued to stay with the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} until, when the time of pre-dawn arrived, they narrate that the Imam ^{a.s} instructed his youths and servants,

“Gather plenty of water.”

¹²⁶ Abu Mikhnaf said: Amr ibn Khalid narrated to me, from Zayd ibn Ali ibn Artat, Jafar ibn Ziyad al Ahmar, Sa'id ibn Zayd, Suwayd ibn Abdul Aziz, Umar ibn Abdul Rahman Abu Hafs al Abbar, Yahya ibn Hashim al Samsar, and a group of others. This report is also transmitted in al Irshad, in the works of al Mas'udi (vol. 3), and by Tadhkirat al Khawass.

¹²⁷ Abu Mikhnaf said, from Abu Janab al Kalbi, from Adi ibn Harmalah, from Abdullah ibn Sulaym and al Mudari ibn al Musham'il al Asadi. In al Irshad, it was narrated by Abdullah ibn Sulayman.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that water was gathered in abundance.

When the caravan was prepared, they set out once more, travelling onward into the boundless plain until they reached the place of Zubalah.

In al Malhuf and Bihar al Anwar, it is also related that when dawn broke, a man from among the people of Kufa named Abu Hirrah approached the Imam ^{a.s} and greeted him.

Abu Hirrah said, “O son of the noble Prophet ^{saws}, why did you leave the Sanctuary of Allah ^{AZJ} and His Prophet ^{saws} from Medina?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied,

“Woe be to you, O Abu Hirrah!

The Banu Umayyah confiscated my wealth, and I bore it with patience.

They insulted me, and I endured.

But then they sought to spill my blood, even within the Sacred Sanctuary, so I left.”

The Imam ^{a.s} continued,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, an oppressive people will kill me, and Allah ^{AZJ} will abase them, and will set over them a sword that will not return to its sheath until He humbles them.

Then Allah ^{AZJ} will raise a man against them who will disgrace them more severely than the people of Saba, whose ruler was a woman who governed their wealth and their lives.”

Shaykh Abu Ja'far al Kulayni similarly relates in al Kafi, from Hakam ibn Utaybah, that another man would soon encounter the Imam ^{a.s} at al Tha'labiyyah. He approached the noble Imam ^{a.s}, and greeted him, and the Imam ^{a.s} returned his salutation.

The Imam ^{a.s} then asked him, “Where are you from?”

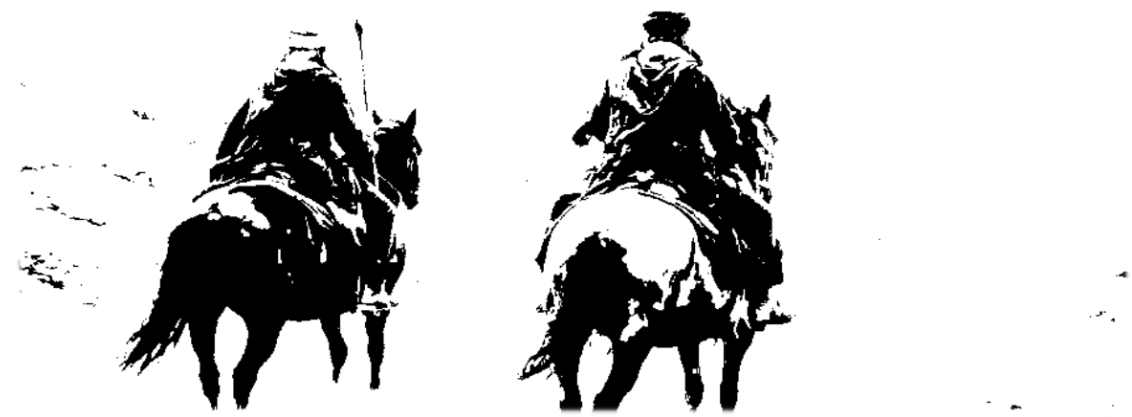
The man replied, “From Kufa.”

Basa'ir al Darajat records that as the conversation continued, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, O brother from Kufa! Had I met you in Medinah, I would have shown you the traces of Jibra'il in my house, where he brought the revelations upon my grandfather.

O brother from Kufa, do the people who have derived knowledge from us in the first place know better, while we are assumed to be ignorant? This could never be!”

From al Tha'labiyyah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Zubalah.



ZUBALAH

Zubalah lay before al Shaquq for one traveling from Kufa toward Mecca. At this station stood a fortress and a mosque belonging to Banu Asad. The place itself took its name from Zubalah, a woman of the ancient tribe of the Amaliq, as recorded in Mu'jam al Buldan.

It was a well-known waystation on the long desert road between Mecca and Kufa, remembered by travellers and chroniclers alike.

It was here that the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} paused, and it was here, according to the historians, that one of the most decisive turns of his journey unfolded.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu Ali al Ansari, who narrates from Bakr ibn Musab al Mazani, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would not pass by any group settled near water except that they joined the Imam ^{a.s} and travelled in his company, until Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} reached the point of Zubalah.

With every halt, the caravan grew, and with it grew the expectations of those who walked and rode beside the Imam ^{a.s}. Many believed they were moving toward victory, toward a city prepared to receive the Imam ^{a.s} with open arms.

At this desolate stage, a lone rider approached the camp, dust rising from the hooves of his mount. He dismounted in haste. It was Iyas ibn al Athil al Tai.

Iyas had been sent by Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, acting in accordance with the final will of Muslim ibn Aqil, the words spoken by Muslim as he was being led toward the governor's palace and into the presence of Ibn Ziyad. This moment had occurred just four days before the caravan reached Zubalah.

Muslim ibn Aqil had specifically instructed Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath to include the following words in his letter:

“Ibn Aqil has sent me to you. He is being held prisoner by the people. He does not want you to come here only to be killed. And he says,

‘Return with your family, and do not be lured by the promises of the Kufans, for they are the companions of your father, who wished to be rid of their company, whether through natural death or assassination.

Indeed, the people of Kufa have deceived you, and have deceived me; and the one who has been deceived is left with few choices.’”

Tarikh al Tabari also relates that four nights later, Iyas ibn al Athil had reached the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and delivered the letter. Iyas informed the Imam ^{a.s} of the capture of Muslim ibn Aqil and placed his written message into his hands.

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} read the letter, he recognised its truth at once. Its words bore the unmistakable voice of Muslim ibn Aqil, leaving no room for doubt.

The Imam ^{a.s} held tightly to the final lines of his cousin, and his grief was renewed.

For a moment, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was silent.

The crowd gathered to the Imam ^{a.s}, eager to hear the news that the rider had brought. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} drew in a deep breath, and with a sigh heavy with sorrow, he said:

“Whatever has been destined by Allah ^{AZJ} will happen; we consign ourselves, and the corruption of our nation, to the judgement of Allah ^{AZJ}.”

Yet even as the weight of these words settled upon the camp, heavier tidings followed.

Abu Mikhnaf also narrates that another news reached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at Zubalah of the execution of his first messenger, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar, in Kufa. ¹²⁸

The fate of his other messenger, Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi, was still unknown, suggesting that Abdullah ibn Yaqtar had indeed been the first envoy sent ahead by the Imam ^{a.s}.

Both of these slain messengers had been dispatched toward Kufa before the Imam ^{a.s}, had the news that Muslim ibn Aqil had already been betrayed, abandoned, and slain.

This was now the second representative of the Imam ^{a.s} to be brutally executed in Kufa. It was not merely an act of violence, but a deliberate message from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, a declaration of how Ibn Ziyad intended to deal with the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} should he continue his course toward Kufa.

Upon hearing this news, the Imam ^{a.s} lowered his voice and said with sorrow,

“Verily we are Allah’s ^{AZJ}, and verily unto Him we shall return.”

Now more people had gathered. With deep lamentation, the Imam ^{a.s} repeated,

“Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy be upon them.”

The Imam ^{a.s} looked upon the multitude that had gathered around his caravan. His heart was firm, yet heavy with sorrow. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} unfurled a letter and called out, raising his voice so that every soul in the camp could hear him:

“In the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

As for what follows: There has reached us a grievous report, the killing of Muslim ibn Aqil, Hani ibn Urwah, and Abdullah ibn Yaqtar.

The ones claiming to be our Shi’ah have deserted us, so whoever among you wishes to turn back, let him turn back, for there is no obligation upon him from us.”

The chroniclers would later note that this was the first public declaration by the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} announcing the abandonment he now faced from Kufa.

Though news of the killing of Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah had already reached the Imam ^{a.s} earlier at Zarud, the Imam ^{a.s} had ordered that it remain confined within his council until this moment at Zubalah.

The effect upon those who had joined the caravan along the road was immediate and devastating. Men began to disperse from the camp. Riders mounted their animals, while others slipped away quietly on foot across the plain. One by one, they departed.

None remained except those who had set out with the Imam ^{a.s} from Medinah, and a small number who had joined along the way with clear conviction and unwavering faith.

¹²⁸ Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abu Janab al Kalbi, from Adi ibn Harmalah, from Abdullah ibn Sulaym.

Many of those who left were Bedouins who had imagined that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was advancing toward a city united behind the Imam ^{a.s}, ready to offer allegiance and strength. But the conscience of the Imam ^{a.s} would not permit them to proceed under illusion. He would not allow men to march forward unaware that they were being led toward slaughter.

Once the veil was lifted, only those would remain who understood the path and accepted its price, those prepared to uphold the Imam ^{a.s}, and, if destiny demanded, to die with him.

It is for this reason that the Imam ^{a.s} often recalled the martyrdom of Prophet Yahya, son of Prophet Zakariyya, alluding that the Imam ^{a.s} too would be slain in the same manner, his blessed head severed and carried as a gift, just as the head of Prophet Yahya had once been.

In al Malhuf, it is related from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} that:

“We accompanied al Hussein from Mecca, and he did not halt at any place nor depart from it except that he remembered Prophet Yahya. Then one day he said:

‘One of the most wretched things of the world in the sight of Allah ^{AZJ} is that the head of Yahya was taken as a gift to one of the adulteresses of Bani Israil.’”

Thus is explained why the Imam ^{a.s} permitted those companions to depart, and this alone suffices beyond all other explanations.

When the pale gleam of pre-dawn rose over Zubalah, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} ordered his young men to draw water. Every skin was filled. The mood within the camp more sombre.

After standing in prayer in that still hour before dawn, the caravan moved on into the widening light, the fortress of Banu Asad receding behind them, silent upon the horizon.

From Zubalah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Batn al Aqabah.

BATN AL AQABAH

Batn al Aqabah lay silent beneath the vast desert sky, a lonely station on the Meccan road. It was a place known to travellers, resting after Waqisa and before al Qa, a narrow interval along the route of those journeying toward the Sacred House. Here, the land stretched bare and unadorned, its stillness broken only by the whisper of wind over the sand.

At this desolate point, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} ordered his ever-diminishing caravan to halt and pitch camp.

The company that had once departed Mecca with hope and expectation had grown smaller with every stage of the journey. Some had turned back; others had been diverted by fear or uncertainty. Those who remained did so with clarity of purpose, though the road ahead grew darker with each passing mile. Batn al Aqabah offered no comfort.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, in a report likewise preserved in al Irshad, that news of the halt spread quickly among the travellers of the region.

Al Irshad further records that at daybreak, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} instructed his companions to fetch water and to fill their skins abundantly.

The command was deliberate, measured, and without explanation, and the men moved swiftly to carry it out. Once the water skins were filled, the caravan set out again, pressing forward until they once more reached Batn al Aqabah and halted there.

It was reported that an elderly man from Banu Ikrimah approached the Imam ^{a.s}.

His name was Amr ibn Lawdhan.

Drawing near, Amr ibn Lawdhan asked, “Where are you headed?” ¹²⁹

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} answered plainly, “Kufa.”

At those words, the old man’s concern deepened. His voice trembled as he spoke,

“I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ} to turn back.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, you are only heading toward spears and sharpened swords. If these people who have sent for you had supported you by engaging in battle and had paved the way for your arrival among them, then going to them would be justified.

However, in the circumstances you describe, I do not think that you should go.”

The plea lingered in the still air of Batn al Aqabah. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} listened without interruption, his commitment unshaken. Then the Imam ^{a.s} replied with calm certainty,

“O servant of Allah ^{AZJ}, that which concerns you is not hidden from me.

However, the decree of Allah ^{AZJ} cannot be overcome.”

Al Irshad, as well as Ilam al Wara, preserves further words spoken by the Imam ^{a.s}:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, they will not leave me alone until they tear out my heart from my chest; and when they do that, Allah ^{AZJ} will cause them to be subjugated under one who will humiliate them, until they become the most debased of communities among the nations.”

Kamil al Ziyarat narrates from Shihab ibn Abd Rabbih, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that when Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} reached Batn al Aqabah, he addressed his companions and revealed,

“I do not doubt that I shall be killed.”

Faces turned toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in alarm. Eyes widened in disbelief, unable to comprehend that the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} could be slain.

They asked, “How are you so certain, O Aba Abdillah?”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied solemnly, informing them briefly of a dream he had seen that night.

They asked, “What did you see?”

The Imam ^{a.s} said,

“I saw dogs snapping at me; among them was a mottled dog that attacked me more viciously than the rest.”

No one questioned the truthfulness of his words, nor the divine insight of an Imam such as the grandeur of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Those who heard these stark words of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} felt the weight of destiny settle upon their hearts.

¹²⁹ Abu Mikhnaḥf records this through the chain of Abu Ali al Ansari from Bakr ibn Musab al Mazani. Al Irshad narrates it from Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and Mundhir ibn Mushmail al Asadi.

After a brief stay, the Imam ^{a.s} rose again, and with it came the signal that the brief refuge of Batn al Aqabah had reached its end.

Torches were extinguished, the caravan stirred to life, and beneath the vast and unyielding desert sky, the company of the Imam ^{a.s} returned to the road once more.

From Batn al Aqabah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Sharaf.

SHARAF

According to Tarikh al Tabari, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} advanced until the Imam ^{a.s} reached the oasis of Sharaf, a lonely and exposed outpost situated two miles from Waqisa, standing at the very edge of the lands of Iraq. It was a place known to travellers and armies alike, a station where the desert briefly yielded water before returning to its unforgiving vastness.

The historians record that Sharaf took its name from a man called Sharaf, who was the first to uncover a spring at that spot.

With time, the presence of water transformed the site into a place of rest and passage, and many wide and sweet wells were dug there, their abundance noted in Mu'jam al Buldan.

Long before the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} arrived, Sharaf had already witnessed moments of consequence, for it was here that Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas once encamped with his forces before advancing toward the Battle of al Qadisiyyah.

The land around Sharaf lay open and silent, its horizon stretched wide beneath the sky. Though water was present, the place bore no comfort, and its isolation seemed to weigh upon those who passed through it.

When the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} arrived, it did not linger beyond necessity, yet the stop itself carried meaning. The Imam ^{a.s} had already entered a phase of the journey in which each station brought them dangerously closer to the city of Kufa.

As the hour before dawn arrived, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} followed his established practice.

The Imam ^{a.s} instructed his young men and attendants to draw water, conscious of the long stretches of barren land that lay ahead.

They moved quietly through the stillness of the night, filling their vessels generously until water was gathered in abundance.

The desert air was cool and unmoving, and the sky remained dim, the stars fading slowly as the horizon prepared to receive the first light.

With the approach of morning, the caravan resumed its journey, the measured movement of camels and the soft steps of men advancing in unison.

Sharaf receded behind them as the Imam ^{a.s} continued toward Iraq.

Al Futuh recounts that, while travelling along the road toward Kufa, the Imam ^{a.s} now encountered a man coming from that very city. When they drew near one another, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} asked him, “Where are you coming from?”

The man replied, “From Kufa.”

The Imam ^{a.s} then again enquired about the condition of its people. The traveller hesitated before answering, burdened by what he had witnessed, and then spoke with words that struck the heart and deepened the grief already shadowing the Imam ^{a.s}.

The man said, “I did not leave before I saw Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah al Madhhiji, may Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on them both, slain, their bodies hanging upside down upon a scaffold in the meat market, their heads cut off and sent to Yazid ibn Muawiyah.”

The weight of these words settled heavily upon the gathering. It is narrated that, upon hearing this, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wept long and bitterly. His grief was not only for the slain Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah, but for the corruption of a community that had chosen fear over faith. In his sorrow, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to the words of submission, reciting,

“We belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him we shall return.”

Al Akhbar al Tiwal relates that not long after this, the caravan encountered another man departing from Kufa. As before, the Imam ^{a.s} enquired about the state of the city and its people. After exchanging greetings, the man replied,

“I left Kufa after Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah had been killed. I saw youngsters dragging their corpses by their legs.”

The harrowing reality was now confirmed by multiple witnesses. Once again, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wept upon hearing of their fate, and once again the Imam ^{a.s} repeated,

“We belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him we shall return. We entrust our lives to Allah ^{AZJ}.”

The man from Kufa, shaken by what he had seen and fearing for what lay ahead, pleaded with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. He said,

“I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, to consider the danger to your life and the lives of your household whom we see with you. Turn back to your home and abandon the journey to Kufa, for by Allah ^{AZJ}, you have no supporter there.”

The sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib stood listening as these grim accounts were related.

They turned to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and said,

“We have no desire to live after our brother, Muslim, and we will not turn back even if we are killed.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} repeated his words of sorrow,

“There is no goodness left in life after the death of such men.”

After this encounter, the Imam ^{a.s} departed from that place and continued his journey. The caravan pressed on through the early hours of the day, moving steadily beneath the rising sun until midday approached.

From Sharaf, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Dhu Husam.

THE MOMENT OF INTERCEPTION

DHU HUSAM

Tarikh al Tabari relates that, as the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} pressed onward through harsh and broken land, cutting steadily across the bare spine of the desert, it reached the region known as Dhu Husam.

According to the historians, Dhu Husam was the name of a mountain that rose starkly from the surrounding plain. The distance between Dhu Husam and Adhib al Hijanat, on the road leading toward Kufa, was thirty-three miles.

Shaykh al Mufid, in al Irshad, and likewise al Tabari, record that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had continued his march from Sharaf until the sun had climbed high and midday approached. The caravan advanced with urgency, the heat bearing down upon men and mounts alike.

The earth beneath their feet was dry and unforgiving, and the horizon itself seemed to waver beneath the weight of the sun. It was during this advance, while the desert lay hushed in its stillness, that the calm of the journey was suddenly broken.

A man from the caravan cried out in a raised voice, “Allahu ^{AZJ} Akbar!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} repeated the takbir, his voice steady and composed, and then asked, “Allahu ^{AZJ} Akbar, but why did you say the takbir?”

The man replied, “I saw palm trees.”

At once, the two Asadi pilgrims, Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and Mundhir ibn Mushmail al Asadi, turned toward the Imam ^{a.s} in disbelief.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we have never seen palm trees in this place.”

The Imam ^{a.s} then turned to them and asked, “Then what do you think he has seen?”

They shaded their eyes against the fierce glare of the sun and gazed long into the distance, where the heat distorted every shape and outline. After a moment, the Asadi pilgrims replied, “We believe that he has seen the front ranks of horsemen and their spears.”

The first man looked again, fixing his gaze upon the horizon. His certainty hardened.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, I also see the same!”

At that moment, what had remained concealed was made clear. The hunters who had long been approaching Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had finally emerged into view. Their lances glinted faintly like thin lines of fire, rising and falling as they advanced across the plain.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not hesitate. The Imam ^{a.s} turned to his companions and asked,

“Is there not a defensive position that will shield our rear, so that we may face these people from one direction only?”

The Asadis replied without delay,

“Yes, indeed there is! Dhu Husam lies nearby, to the left of our route. If you can reach it before them, it will serve you well”, meaning that it would shield them from encirclement.

Immediately, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] turned his mount sharply to the left, guiding the caravan away from the open road and toward the mountain. His companions followed duly, pressing onward across the plain until they reached Dhu Husam ahead of the approaching force.

When the approaching cavalry saw the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] alter its course, they too changed direction, angling toward the same position.

Upon reaching Dhu Husam, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] dismounted and ordered that the tents be pitched. Camp was established beneath the looming presence of the mountain, its rocky mass standing at their backs.

Tarikh al Tabari records that before long, the horizon began to stir. What had once been a distant shimmer settled into lines of movement, lances, banners, and mounted figures advancing steadily through the heat.

From the camp of the Imam ^[a.s], the formation could now be seen clearly as it drew near.

A thousand horsemen soon emerged, led by al Hurr ibn Yazid al Tamimi al Yarbū'i.

Beneath the relentless blaze of the midday sun, the battalion advanced in ordered ranks and halted opposite the camps of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and his companions.

By then, the Imam ^[a.s] and those with him were prepared. Turbans were drawn low, faces veiled against the scorching wind, and swords fastened at their sides. They stood composed and unmoved as the lines of soldiers settled before them.

Bihar al Anwar states that their leader al Hurr ibn Yazid rode forward and said,

"Peace be upon you, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], and the mercy of Allah ^[AZJ] and His blessings."

The Imam ^[a.s] replied, "And upon you be peace. Who are you, O servant of Allah ^[AZJ]?"

Al Hurr replied, "I am al Hurr ibn Yazid."

The Imam ^[a.s] asked, "O Hurr, are you against us or with us?"

Al Hurr remained silent. Yet Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] did not turn to confrontation.

Seeing the parched and exhausted faces of the opposing army, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] instead turned toward mercy and said to his young men,

"Give these people water. Quench their thirst, and water the horses gently, sip by sip."

Tarikh al Tabari states that his companions moved at once.

They brought forth the water they had drawn earlier and offered it freely to the soldiers of al Hurr until every man was satisfied. Each companion used whatever vessel he possessed, some their qasa (large wooden bowls), others their tisas (smaller vessels), and others still their atwar (containers of brass). They showed the same care to the animals, allowing each horse to drink calmly, three, four, or five mouthfuls at a time, before leading it aside for the next, until no man and no beast remained thirsty. ¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Hisham, from Abu Mikhnaf, from Abu Janab, from Adi ibn Harmalah, from Abdullah ibn Sulayman al Asadi and al Madhri ibn al Mushmail al Asadi.

Among those who arrived last from al Hurr's detachment was a man named Ali ibn al Taan al Muharibi. He later recalled:

"I was among the last of al Hurr's men to arrive. When al Hussein saw the thirst upon me and my horse, he said, 'Make your mount sit.' He had used the word 'rawiyah' for camel, but in my dialect that word meant waterskin. When he saw my confusion, he said gently, 'O son of my brother, make the camel kneel.' I did so.

Then he said, 'Drink.' But each time I tried, the water dribbled away. Then al Hussein said, 'Fold the neck of the waterskin.' He used the word 'ikh'nith' for fold, but we would say 'ittif' for that, so I was again uncertain. Then al Hussein himself rose and folded the skin with his own hands. Only then did I drink, and my mount drank as well."

Al Tabaqat al Kubra records that it was Hussein ibn Tamim who had earlier dispatched al Hurr ibn Yazid at the head of this battalion toward the Imam ^[a.s].

The instructions given to al Hurr ibn Yazid were calculated and ominous.

Al Hurr was commanded to remain in close proximity to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] at all times, to prevent the Imam ^[a.s] from turning back, and to deny him any freedom of direction.

Al Hurr was further instructed to herd the Imam ^[a.s] and his caravan in a controlled manner toward Kufa, tightening the circle around them, restricting their movement, and preventing any newcomers from joining their ranks.

Hisham further clarifies that the dispatch of al Hurr ibn Yazid began from al Qadisiyyah. When Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad was informed of the advance of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], Ibn Ziyad ordered al Hussein ibn Numayr al Tamimi, the chief of the constabulary, to establish a camp at al Qadisiyyah and to deploy patrols along the route between al Qatqatanah and Khaflan. Having secured these positions, Ibn Ziyad then sent al Hurr ibn Yazid ahead of al Hussein ibn Numayr at the head of a battalion of one thousand horsemen, with orders to intercept the Imam ^[a.s] before he could reach Kufa and to bring his movement under direct control.

It was a moment of immense consequence, for on the scorched plains of Dhu Husam, the grandson of the Prophet ^[saws] stood for the first time before the ranks of Yazid's army.

From Dhu Husam, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] continued onward, with the next station being al Baydah.



THE CALL OF DESTINY; AL HURR IBN YAZID

As the sun climbed higher over the desolate plain of Dhu Husam and the hour of the noon prayer drew near, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} remained unwavering in his devotion to prayer, unmoved by the presence of the armed force now arrayed before him. The Imam ^{a.s} instructed his mu'adhdhin, al Hajjaj ibn Masruq al Ju'fi, to give the adhan.

The call rose into the burning air, its echo rippling across the sands, reaching both the tents of the Imam ^{a.s} and the ranks of the soldiers who had come to bar his path.

When the time came for the iqamah, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stepped forward. The Imam ^{a.s} wore a waistcloth, a cloak, and sandals. The Imam ^{a.s} praised Allah ^{AZJ} and glorified Him, then turned toward the assembled soldiers of al Hurr and addressed them with words both solemn and searching:

“O people! I have a justification before Allah ^{AZJ} and before you all.

I did not come toward you until I had received your letters and your messengers saying,

‘Come to us, for we have no leader, ‘imam’; perhaps Allah ^{AZJ} will unite us in guidance under you.’

Now, if you remain true to that resolve, I am here. If you convince me of your sincerity in your pledges and promises, then I will come to your city. But if you do not desire this, and you no longer wish for me to come, then I shall leave you and return to where I came from.”

Silence fell. Not a word of affirmation, not a single declaration of loyalty. The vast desert stood still. Seeing no response, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to his mu'adhdhin and said,

“Give the call to begin the prayer.” And so the prayer was called and established. ¹³¹

When the prayer concluded, the Imam ^{a.s} turned calmly toward the commander who stood before him, al Hurr ibn Yazid. With composed courtesy, the Imam ^{a.s} addressed al Hurr:

“Do you wish to pray separately with your companions?”

Al Hurr, recognising the sacred personality before him, replied without hesitation,

“No; rather, you lead the prayer, and we shall pray with you.”

Thus, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} led them all in prayer. His voice rose with tranquil authority, his recitation perfect and flowing, his bowing and prostration akin to that of his father and grandfather, the seal of the prophets, Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}.

When the prayer ended, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned to his tent, his companions gathering around him, their hearts watchful and anxious.

Al Hurr withdrew to his own position. A tent had been pitched for him, and a number of his men clustered nearby, while the rest of his troops remained in formation, drawing their mounts close and guiding them into the narrow shade cast by their bodies as the midday heat pressed down relentlessly upon them.

¹³¹ At this point, the chain of transmission from Abu Mikhnaf, who recorded much of this journey, breaks off. To continue the narration, the reports of Hisham al Kalbi, through Laqit and Ali ibn al Ta'an al Muharibi, were drawn upon to preserve these events.

When the time for the afternoon prayer arrived, the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prepared to resume the journey. The Imam ^{a.s} emerged from his tent and ordered the adhan to be called. Again, he led those present in prayer. When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} concluded the prayer, he turned to face the people. Standing before them, humble in bearing yet commanding in presence, the Imam ^{a.s} praised and glorified Allah ^{AZJ}, then spoke with renewed clarity:

“As for what follows: O people! If you are conscious of Allah ^{AZJ} and know the rights of those who possess rights, that will be more pleasing to Him.

We, the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, are most deserving to govern over you, more than those who have seized what is not theirs. They rule you by force and oppression. But if you are not content with us, and have forgotten our rights, and your hearts have changed from what you wrote in your letters and conveyed through your messengers, then I shall depart from your midst.”

At this, al Hurr ibn Yazid spoke, troubled and unsettled.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we do not know of these letters that you speak of.” ¹³²

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned and called out,

“O Uqbah ibn Sim'an! Bring the two saddlebags that contain their letters.”

Uqbah obeyed. He brought forward two saddlebags heavy with papers, of the type described in Majma' al Bahrayn, with twin compartments and openings, and placed them before the assembled men.

Scroll after scroll was unfastened, letters upon letters unfurled across the sand, each one a written pledge from those who had summoned Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to Kufa, each one bearing a plea for his leadership, each one calling him their Imam ^{a.s} and imploring him to come. These were manifest documents. Yet al Hurr replied, persisting in denial,

“We are not among those who wrote to you. Our orders are only this: once we find you, we shall not leave you until we bring you to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.”

At this, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} answered firmly, his tone resolute, yet laced with a prophetic warning that seemed to pierce the heart of al Hurr: “Death is closer to you than that.”

Then, turning to his companions, the Imam ^{a.s} commanded, “Arise, and mount up.”

They obeyed at once. A solemn gravity settled over the camp. The companions mounted, waiting as the women and children were made ready.

When all was prepared, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said, “Let us depart.”

But as the caravan began to move, the soldiers of al Hurr surged forward, positioning themselves between the Imam ^{a.s} and the road.

Spears glinted beneath the sun. The path was barred. The road was now cut off.

The free movement of Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} caravan was now openly obstructed by force.

¹³² Later, on the Day of Ashura, when the moment of final choice arrived, this same al Hurr would recall these very letters he now denied. As narrated by Sibt ibn al Jawzi, he would say: “Yes, by Allah, we wrote to you, and we were the ones who invited you. May Allah distance falsehood and its people! By Allah, I will not choose this world over the Hereafter.” Then he would strike his horse and ride toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. But that moment was yet to come.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned sharply toward al Hurr and said sternly:

“O Hurr! May your mother mourn over you! What do you intend?!”

The words struck al Hurr. Al Hurr shrank beneath their weight and replied, his voice subdued and trembling:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, if any other Arab than you had spoken such words to me, and had been in the position that you are now in, I would not have hesitated to tell him that his own mother should mourn his death, whoever he was. But by Allah ^{AZJ}, I could never mention your mother except with the utmost reverence possible.”

Al Hurr had referred, of course, to Sayyidah Fatimah al Zahra' ^{s.a}, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. Even in this tense confrontation, al Hurr could not bring himself to utter a word that would dishonour her; his restraint bore witness to the reverence her memory commanded.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} asked again, his tone cutting through the silence:

“So what do you intend?!”

Al Hurr replied, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, I wish to take you to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.”

“Then by Allah ^{AZJ}, I will not follow you,” the Imam ^{a.s} declared.

“And by Allah ^{AZJ}, I will not allow you to depart,” al Hurr answered.

Their words clashed, resolute and unyielding. One narration states that this exchange was repeated three times.

Al Hurr, however, recoiled once more before the towering dignity of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Struggling between obedience to his orders from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and his inner fight with his faith, along with reverence for the Imam ^{a.s}, al Hurr sought a compromise.

“I have not been instructed to fight you,” al Hurr spoke cautiously.

“My orders are simply not to leave your side and to bring you to Kufa. If you are averse to this course, then choose a path that will neither take you to Kufa nor back to Medina; that will be a holding solution between us until I write to Ibn Ziyad for further instructions.

Meanwhile, you may write to Yazid ibn Muawiyah if you wish, or to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, if you prefer. Perhaps, as a result, Allah ^{AZJ} will bring about a solution that will free me from any further involvement in your affair.”

Then, with hesitant urgency, al Hurr added:

“Why do you not take this route leading leftwards towards al Udhayb and al Qadisiyyah?”

Sensing that al Hurr himself was bound by duty yet deeply reluctant to shed blood, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} considered the proposal. Al Udhayb lay some thirty-eight miles away.

The Imam ^{a.s} accepted the suggestion and agreed to alter course.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Uqbah ibn Abi al Ayyar, narrates that at this moment the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to address his companions. The Imam ^{a.s} praised Allah ^{AZJ} and glorified Him ^{AZJ}, then spoke with solemn clarity:

“Indeed, you have all seen what has been done with us; the world has become a façade and has changed, its goodness has continually receded, breaking into small scattered pieces. Now, no more than a trace of it remains, like the residue at the bottom of a vessel or a trivial pasture with sparse grass. Do you not see that truth is not practised, and falsehood is not prevented? In these circumstances, the believer would truly yearn to meet Allah ^{AZJ}; indeed, I do not see death except a blessing, and living with the oppressors as nothing but disgrace.”

Then Zuhayr ibn al Qayn rose and turned to those companions beside him.

“Do you wish to speak,” he asked, “or shall I?”

They answered unanimously, for Zuhayr was a man of eloquence and courage:

“No, rather, you speak.”

Zuhayr praised Allah ^{AZJ} and glorified Him, then said:

“We have heard your words, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. May Allah ^{AZJ} continue to guide you. By Allah ^{AZJ}! Even if this world were an eternal abode for us, and we could live in it forever, yet we would abandon it to help you or to stand by you.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, we would still choose to rise with you rather than remain in it.”

The heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} filled with gratitude and pride. The grandson of the Prophet ^{saws} prayed for Zuhayr ibn al Qayn and spoke noble words about him.

An alternative narration recorded by Sibte ibn al Jawzi relates that at this stage of the journey the Imam ^{a.s} was still unaware of the events that had unfolded in Kufa. According to this report, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not learn of the fate of Muslim ibn Aqil until the Imam ^{a.s} was three miles from al Qadisiyyah. It was there that al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi informed him that Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwah had been killed, that Ibn Ziyad had entered Kufa, and that preparations for war were already underway.

Al Hurr urged the Imam ^{a.s}: “Return from Kufa.”

Similarly, Bihar al Anwar relates that al Hurr revealed to the Imam ^{a.s}:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, I have been sent to kill you. I seek refuge with Allah ^{AZJ} that I should be resurrected from my grave with my forelock bound and my hands shackled to my neck, cast upon my face into the Fire.

O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, where are you going? Return to the sanctuary of your grandfather, for you will be killed.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied to al Hurr by reciting these couplets:

“I shall continue, for there is no shame in death for a youth when he intends what is right and fights as a muslim, offering himself in consolation to the righteous, separating himself from destruction and opposing the criminal.

If I die, I will have no regret, and if I live, I will not be disgraced. It is humiliation enough that you live while being coerced.”

And so, with his loyal companions beside him and his path narrowing with every step, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} departed from Dhu Husam. Al Hurr and his men, still bound by their charge, continued to accompany the Imam ^{a.s}.

AL BAYDAH

Al Baydah lay silent upon the sun-scorched plain between Waqisa and Udhayb al Hijanat, as recorded in Mu'jam al Buldan. It was a desolate stretch of land, bare and unadorned, where the horizon dissolved into wavering heat and the sky pressed down with relentless intensity. The sand bore no sign of habitation and no shade, only the slow movement of wind carrying dust across the plain.

It was here, according to Tarikh al Tabari, where Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Uqbah ibn Abi al Ayyar, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} called his small caravan to a halt. The command passed quietly among his companions.

The camels were brought to rest, their burdens lowered, and the men dismounted. Weapons were set aside, reins loosened, and a solemn stillness descended over the camp.

Facing not only his own companions but also the soldiers who had been sent to intercept him, the Imam ^{a.s} stood. He praised Allah ^{AZJ}, glorified Him ^{AZJ}, and reminded those present of the weight of responsibility that comes with hearing the truth:

“O people! Verily, Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} said: ‘Whoever sees a tyrannical ruler make permissible what Allah ^{AZJ} has forbidden, break the covenant of Allah ^{AZJ}, oppose the practice (sunnah) of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and behave with the servants of Allah ^{AZJ} with sinfulness and oppression, but does not stand up to him by actions or words, then Allah ^{AZJ} will consign them both to the same place on the Day of Judgement.’”

The Imam ^{a.s} continued, exposing the reality of the rule under which people now laboured:

“Indeed, these rulers have committed themselves to the obedience of Satan and abandoned the obedience of the All-Merciful.

They have openly displayed their corruption, dispensed with the divine penal code, embezzled the property given to the Muslims (fay’), made lawful that which Allah ^{AZJ} has forbidden, and made forbidden that which He has allowed.”

There was sorrow in his voice; his words were measured. The Imam ^{a.s} turned to the matter that weighed heavily upon the hearts of those before him:

“I am the most qualified to change all that. Your letters were received by me, and your messengers came to me with your pledges of allegiance and assurances that you would not betray me to the authorities or abandon me.

Now, if you honour your pledges, you will prosper, because I am al Hussein, the son of Ali, and the son of Fatimah, the daughter of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws}. My life is with your lives, and my family is with your families, and I am the ideal leader for you.”

But now the tone of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} hardened:

“However, if you choose not to follow through with your pledges and renege on your oaths of allegiance, then by my life, this is not something unheard of from you!

You have done this to my father Ali, my brother Hasan, and my cousin, Muslim ibn Aqil!”

The names hung in the air, each carrying its own history of betrayal and loss.

“Foolish is the one who would be deceived by you after all this; you would have missed your true blessing and lost your God-given opportunity.

Whoever reneges on his oath ultimately harms his own interests. Allah ^{AZJ} will soon make me needless of you. Peace, and the mercy and blessing of Allah ^{AZJ}, be upon you.”

With these words, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} invoked the divine warning contained in verses of the Qur'an, stripping away any illusion that this was merely a political choice:

“*Surely those who pledge allegiance to you, O Prophet ^{saws}, are actually pledging allegiance to Allah ^{AZJ}. Allah’s ^{AZJ} Hand is over theirs.*

Whoever breaks their pledge, it will only be to their own loss. And whoever fulfils their pledge to Allah ^{AZJ}, He will grant them a great reward.” (Q48:10)

According to the account preserved by Abu Mikhnaf, transmitted through Uqbah ibn Abi al Ayyar, al Hurr rode beside the Imam ^{a.s} after this address. There was disturbance in his bearing and sincerity in his words:

“O Hussein,” al Hurr said, lowering his voice, “I remind you by Allah ^{AZJ} concerning your soul. For I bear witness that if you fight, you will surely be killed, and if you are killed, you will surely perish, as far as I can see.”

The Imam ^{a.s} met al Hurr with unshaken calm. There was no fear in his reply, only clarity:

“Is it death with which you seek to frighten me?

Is the worst you can do to me that you will kill me?”

Then, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said:

“I do not know what to say to you, but I will say what the brother of al Aws said to his cousin when he met him while going to support the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and his cousin said to him: ‘Where are you going? You will surely be killed!’

So the brother of al Aws replied:

‘I shall proceed, for in death there is no shame for a youth

If he intends truth and struggles as a Muslim, And sacrifices his soul for the righteous men,

Then leaves behind one destroyed, deceived, and forced into disgrace.

If I live, I will not regret; and if I die, I will not be blamed,

It is enough humiliation for you to live in disgrace and subjugation.”

These verses, also preserved by Ibn al Athir in al Kamil and by al Mufid in al Irshad, passed through the camp like a desert wind, carrying determination and rebuke in equal measure.

Al Hurr fell silent. He did not respond. Al Hurr drew his reins back and guided his horse away. From that moment onward, al Hurr marched on a parallel line, his company on one side of the barren track and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the other, neither merging nor separating, until they reached the next stage of their destined journey.

From al Baydah, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Udhayb al Hijanat.

UDHAYB AL HIJANAT

The caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} pressed onward until it arrived at Udhayb al Hijanat, a desolate valley belonging to the tribe of Banu Tamim, stretching toward the lands of Najaf. Situated on the fringes of al Sawad, the fertile lands of Iraq, it lay approximately six miles from al Qadisiyyah. In former times, this region had served as a Persian military outpost, and before that, it had been used as the grazing ground for the cavalry of al Numan, the king of al Hirah.

The place derived its name from the Hajin horses that were kept there, steeds of mixed lineage, and for this reason it came to be known as Udhayb al Hijanat.

It was at this lonely station, amidst silence, dust, and the vast openness of the desert, that four riders emerged upon the horizon, approaching the camp from the direction of Kufa. They were Nafi ibn Hilal, Mujamma ibn Abdullah, Umar ibn Khalid, and al Tirmimah ibn Adi, who served as their guide. As they drew nearer to the Imam ^{a.s}, one among them raised his voice in verse, his words carried upon the desert wind:

“O my she-camel, do not be startled by my urging,
But quicken your pace before the break of dawn,
Carrying the best of riders on the best of journeys,
Until you bring me to one of noble lineage,
The glorious free one, generous of heart,
Whom Allah ^{AZJ} has brought forth for the noblest cause,
And whose name shall remain as long as time endures.”

Nafasul Mahmoom preserves further lines of this poetry, recited as the four riders came to a halt before the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Their mounts, wearied by the long road from Kufa, breathed heavily as clouds of dust slowly settled around them. The harsh desert wind moved through the camp, carrying with it the weight of distant tidings. Before them stood the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, surrounded by his family and loyal companions, beneath the vast and unyielding sky of the wilderness.

“The family of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws} are a family of prestige and honour,
They are the masters with fair and illuminated countenances,
Who attack their enemies with brown spears and sharp-edged swords.
O You who possess the power of profit and loss!
Help al Hussein against such rebellious people,
Who are remnants of disbelief, the two sons of Sakhr (Abu Sufyan):
Yazid, who is a habitual drinker of wine,
And Ibn Ziyad, who is an adulterer and an illegitimate son.”

When the Imam ^{a.s} heard these words, he responded with serene conviction, his voice steady and unshaken.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, I hope that whatever Allah ^{AZJ} wills for us is good, whether it be that we are martyred or that we are granted victory.”

At that moment, al Hurr ibn Yazid, who had been stationed nearby to monitor the movements of the Imam ^{a.s}. Al Hurr advanced towards the camp of Imam ^{a.s} and stepped forwards. His expression was tense as al Hurr addressed Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

“These men are from the people of Kufa,” al Hurr said. “They were not among those who accompanied you. I will either detain them or send them back (to Kufa).”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied firmly to al Hurr:

“I will surely protect them from harm just as I protect myself from it. Indeed, these are my supporters and helpers. You had granted me that you would not confront me with anything until a letter from Ibn Ziyad reached you.”

Al Hurr answered, “That is true, but they did not come with you from the beginning.”

“They are my companions,” the Imam ^{a.s} said, “and they are as those who came with me. So if you fulfil what was agreed between us, then good. Otherwise, I will fight you.”

Unsettled but bound by his pledge, al Hurr withdrew. The tension lingered briefly in the air, but no further confrontation followed.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then turned to the four men, his tone now gentle yet searching.

“Tell me,” Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said to the weary four riders,

“What lies behind you in Kufa. What is the condition of the people?”

Mujamma ibn Abdullah al Aidhi answered first:

“As for the notables, their bribes have been made vast, their bellies filled with wealth. Their affection is bought and their loyalty purchased, and they have united as one against you.

But as for the rest of the people, their hearts incline toward you, yet tomorrow their swords will be drawn against you.”

According to Tarikh al Tabari, through the narration of Uqbah ibn Abi al Ayyar, the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then asked the riders about another of his messengers:

“Tell me, do you have any news of the messenger I sent to Kufa?”

They asked, “Who was he?”

“Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi,” the Imam ^{a.s} replied.

The party of four exchanged glances and lowered their heads before one of them spoke to deliver the devastating news:

“Yes. Qays was apprehended by Hussein ibn Tamim in al Qadisiyyah and sent to Ibn Ziyad. He ordered him to curse you and your father, but instead, Qays invoked Allah’s ^{AZJ} blessings upon you both and cursed Ibn Ziyad and his father.

Qays called the people to assist you and announced your arrival. Then Ibn Ziyad ordered that Qays be thrown down from the roof of the palace.”

Al Kamil fi al Tarikh relates that upon hearing this, the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was pierced with grief. Tears filled his eyes and flowed down his radiant face.

The Imam ^{a.s} wept openly, moved by the loyalty of Qays and broken by the news of his martyrdom.

The Imam ^{a.s} recited the verse of the Qur'an,

“Among the believers are men who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah ^{AZJ}. Some of them have fulfilled their pledge with their lives, and others are waiting for their turn. They have never changed their ‘commitment’ in the least.” (Q33:23)

Tarikh al Tabari records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then raised his hands toward the heavens and supplicated:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! Assign an exalted station for me and my followers (Shi'ah) near You. And assemble us in the place of repose of Your mercy, for You have power over all!”

In that still moment, one of his companions, Hilal ibn Nafi al Bajali, stepped forward. His voice was raised with devotion:

“O son of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}! Your grandfather, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, could not compel all hearts to love him, nor could he bring every soul under his command, for among them were hypocrites.

They professed allegiance with their tongues while treachery brewed in their hearts. In his presence, their words were sweeter than honey, but behind his back, their venom was more bitter than colocynth. This continued until the Almighty summoned him unto Himself.

Your father Ali too met the same fate. Though a band of loyal supporters gathered around him, he was forced to contend with the allegiance-breakers, the oppressive deviants, and the renegades. And when the time came, your father departed this world and entered the eternal bliss of Paradise.

Now, those who surround you today are no different from those who surrounded them. As for those who have turned away and broken their oath of allegiance, they have harmed none but themselves. Allah ^{AZJ}, in His mercy, has made us free of need from such people.

So lead us, in tranquillity and with clear vision, to whatever land you choose, be it eastward or westward. By Allah ^{AZJ}, we do not dread what Allah ^{AZJ} has decreed, nor do we shrink from meeting Him. With resolve and insight, we shall seize this moment.

We shall stand with your allies and stand against your enemies.”

Al Kamil fi al Tarikh narrates that Burayr ibn Khudayr al Hamdani then rose. His voice was sharp, his faith blazing.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws},” Burayr proclaimed,

“Allah ^{AZJ} has honoured us through you, so that we may be torn limb from limb in your presence, and on the Day of Qiyamah your grandfather will intercede for us.

As for those who have betrayed the grandson of their Prophet, they shall never find salvation. Fie upon them for what awaits them tomorrow!

They shall groan and wail in the fire of Hell!”

Al Malhuf also relates that Hilal ibn Nafi declared:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we are not reluctant to meet our Lord ^{AZJ}. We are steadfast in our intentions and our purpose. We are the friends of your friends and the enemies of your enemies.”

Al Futuh records that at this station an order arrived from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to restrict the advance of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The Imam ^{a.s} came out accompanied by his sons, his brothers, and his close relatives around him. The Imam ^{a.s} looked upon them for a long moment, then wept.

“O Allah ^{AZJ},” the Imam ^{a.s} said,

“We are the progeny of Your Prophet ^{saws}. These people have dragged us out of our houses, driven us away, and constrained us from the place of our grandfather in Medinah.

The Banu Umayyah have oppressed us. O Allah ^{AZJ}! Take away our rights from them and help us against these tyrants.”

With that, the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} resumed its journey, the army of al Hurr following in its wake.

From Udhayb al Hijanat, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued onward, with the next station being Qasr Bani Muqatil.

“You were the straightest path, the most generous of the creation, and had the brightest record. You were of great ancestry, noble descent, and lofty rank. You were forbearing, upright, always turning to Allah ^{AZJ}, generous, knowledgeable, strong.” Ziyarat Nahiya



BACKGROUND - THE ENVOYS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN ^{a.s}

In the unfolding record of Karbala, the earliest blood shed in connection with the stand of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was not on the plains of Iraq, but along the routes of correspondence that carried his call.

Three emissaries dispatched by the Imam ^{a.s} were executed under the authority of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, their martyrdoms marking the first violent response to the Imam's ^{a.s} movement. Their deaths exposed the regime's deep fear of any message bearing the name of the Imam ^{a.s}, and its determination to sever every line of communication before the call could take root.

The first of these envoys was Abu Razin Sulayman, the devoted servant of the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, commonly known simply as Sulayman.

His closeness to the Imam ^{a.s} and his unwavering loyalty earned Sulayman the solemn distinction of becoming the first martyr of the mission. The Imam ^{a.s} entrusted Sulayman with a letter addressed to the prominent figures of Basra, inviting them to support truth, uphold justice, and stand against tyranny.

Carrying the Imam's ^{a.s} words, Sulayman set out, fully aware of the danger that surrounded such a task.

Upon his arrival in Basra, the message fell into treacherous hands. Mundhir ibn al Jarud, one of the city's influential men, betrayed the trust placed in him and disclosed the contents of the letter to Ibn Ziyad on the eve of the governor's departure for Kufa.

The reaction was swift and merciless. Enraged by the very existence of the Imam's ^{a.s} appeal, Ibn Ziyad ordered Sulayman's immediate arrest and execution. In this act, the first blood of the uprising was spilled.

The second envoy was Abdullah ibn Yaqtar. Historical accounts differ regarding the precise nature of the letter Abdullah carried at the time of his capture. Some reports state that Abdullah bore a message from Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to Muslim ibn Aqil in Kufa, while others indicate that Abdullah ibn Yaqtar was returning with a reply from Muslim ibn Aqil to the Imam ^{a.s}.

Regardless of the direction of the correspondence, the essence of his mission remained unchanged: Abdullah ibn Yaqtar served as a vital link in a fragile and increasingly dangerous chain of communication between the Imam ^{a.s} and his representative in Kufa.

Abdullah ibn Yaqtar was intercepted before he could complete his task. Abdullah was brought before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and martyred by his command, another deliberate act aimed at isolating the Imam ^{a.s} and cutting off his communications with the city of Kufa.

Some narrations suggest that Abdullah ibn Yaqtar was later killed at Karbala itself, but the majority of historical sources place his martyrdom earlier, identifying it as part of Ibn Ziyad's broader campaign to dismantle the Imam's ^{a.s} network of supporters and messengers.

The third envoy was Qays ibn Mushir, a trusted and distinguished messenger whose courage and reliability had already been proven through multiple journeys between Kufa and the Imam ^{a.s}. Qays ibn Mushir carried messages in both directions, navigating roads heavy with surveillance and danger. His steadfast loyalty made Qays one of the most dependable intermediaries during this critical period.

Qays ibn Mushir was eventually captured, and his execution reflected the tightening grip of Ibn Ziyad's rule. By this stage, the governor's forces were systematically intercepting any connection between the people of Kufa and the household of the Prophet ^{saws}. The martyrdom of Qays was not merely the killing of a man, but another step in the regime's attempt to isolate Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} before his stand could reach the city of Kufa.

Together, the deaths of these three envoys stand as the opening martyrdoms of the Karbala narrative. Their blood was the first testimony that the path of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would be one of sacrifice.



THE CALL OF DESTINY; AL TIRMIMAH IBN ADI

Among the four men who joined the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at the station of Udhayb al Hijanat was al Tirmimah ibn Adi ¹³³, a man of insight, faith, and deep concern for the fate unfolding before his eyes.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Jamil ibn Marthad of the Banu Ma'n, records that at Udhayb al Hijanat, al Tirmimah ibn Adi approached the Imam ^{a.s} and spoke with striking frankness.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, I look around and do not see anyone with you.

Even if this group, the army of al Hurr, who surround you now, were to decide to fight against you, they alone would be enough to defeat you.”

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Jamil ibn Murthid, also of Banu Ma'n, that al Tirmimah continued, his voice heavy with foreboding, describing what he had witnessed in Kufa just before setting out to meet the Imam ^{a.s}.

“Yesterday, before I left Kufa to come to you, I observed an army outside Kufa, much larger than any I had ever seen gathered in one place. I asked about them and was told, ‘They have gathered to enlist and pledge allegiance, after which they will march to face al Hussein.’”

The eyes of al Tirmimah widened as he pleaded, “I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ}: if possible, do not proceed even a handspan towards them!”

The Imam ^{a.s} listened attentively, allowing al Tirmimah to speak and unburden his fears.

Encouraged by the Imam’s ^{a.s} silence, al Tirmimah pressed on, now offering not only warning but refuge. “If you intend to settle in a land where Allah ^{AZJ} would keep you safe until you formulate a plan and your options become clear,” he pleaded,

“then let me guide you to our mountain stronghold at a place called Aja. It was a protection for us, by Allah ^{AZJ}, against the kings of Ghassan and Himyar, and from al Nu'man ibn al Mundhir, and from every kind of enemy. By Allah ^{AZJ}, we have never tasted defeat. I myself will travel with you until I settle you in a safe village.

Then we will summon men from the clans of Aja, the clan of Salma, and from the tribe of Tayy. By Allah ^{AZJ}, within ten days you shall have soldiers and horsemen from the tribe of Tayy at your disposal. Then you may remain among us as long as you wish, and if there is a need, I guarantee that twenty thousand Tayy'i swords will fight at your side. By Allah ^{AZJ}, no one will touch you while the light of life gleams in their eyes.”

Once more, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} listened until al Tirmimah had finished. The Imam ^{a.s} saw the sincerity in his words and the genuine devotion that drove his offer. Tarikh al Tabari records that the Imam ^{a.s} then replied with a prayer and a measured response:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} reward you and your clansmen with goodness. However, there is an agreement between us and these people of Kufa, a promise from which we cannot deviate. We do not yet know the final outcome of matters between us and them.”

¹³³ Tirmimah ibn Adi ibn Abdullah al Khayr al Ta'i served as a messenger of Imam Ali ^{a.s} to Muawiyah, an experience that left him deeply affected by the deceit and division he witnessed.

With that, al Tirmimah took his leave, invoking a final supplication:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} repel from you the evil of jinn and men.”

Yet their exchange did not end there. Before departing entirely, al Tirmimah returned once more to explain his circumstances.

“I have procured for my family and dependents from Kufa some provisions and have with me their sustenance money. So I will go to them and deliver it, then I intend to return to you, if Allah ^{AZJ} wills. If I catch up with you, by Allah ^{AZJ}, I will surely be among your supporters.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with words that lingered painfully in al Tirmimah’s heart.

“If you are going to do so, then hasten. May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you.”

Abu Mikhnaf preserves a particularly heart-rending reflection from al Tirmimah himself: “I sensed that the al Hussein was feeling isolated from men, such that he even asked me to hasten back to him.”

In this brief exchange lies a profound insight into the Imam’s ^{a.s} condition at that moment: abandoned by Kufa, surrounded by gathering enemies, and accompanied by only a small and dwindling band of loyal companions. The weight of solitude was already pressing upon the Imam ^{a.s}. Al Tirmimah departed swiftly to his family, left with them what would suffice, gave his instructions, and set out again with the intention of returning to the Imam ^{a.s}. But as al Tirmimah approached Udhayb al Hijanat once more, he encountered Sama'ah ibn Badr, who bore news that shattered him: Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had been slaughtered in Karbala.

Overcome with grief, al Tirmimah turned back his mount, crushed by the knowledge that he would never fulfil his wish to stand among the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Nafasul Mahmoom records another version of al Tirmimah’s final plea during their encounter. In it, al Tirmimah reiterates the strength of the mountain refuge and the unwavering loyalty of the tribe of Tayy.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we fortified ourselves in the mountain called Aja against the kings of Ghassan and Himyar, and against al Nu'man ibn al Mundhir, and against both the black and the red. By Allah ^{AZJ}, humiliation has never entered upon us. So I will travel with you until I bring you down to the village. Then we shall send to the men in Aja and Salma of the tribe of Tayy. By Allah ^{AZJ}, not ten days will pass before Tayy comes to you, on foot and mounted. Then remain with us as long as it pleases you. And if a matter stirs you to act, then I guarantee you twenty thousand men from Tayy, striking before you with their swords. By Allah ^{AZJ}, none shall ever reach you while even one of them blinks an eye.”

This encounter lays bare a crucial truth: Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was not seeking military triumph. Despite the offer of immediate sanctuary, overwhelming manpower, and assured victory, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} declined. His refusal reveals that his mission lay beyond strategy, or force of arms. Nafasul Mahmoom further notes, citing Abu Jafar al Tabari through al Azdi, that al Tirmimah ibn Adi was not present at Karbala and was not among the martyrs.

When al Tirmimah learned of the Imam’s ^{a.s} martyrdom, he turned back, his heart burdened with grief.

QASR BANI MUQATIL

The caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} halted at the junction of two streams that cut through the descending valley of Udhayb al Hijanat, at a place known as Qasr Bani Muqatil.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abdul Rahman ibn Jundub, who relates from Uqbah ibn Sim'an, that toward the latter part of the night, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} gave his command that water be drawn. The Imam ^{a.s} then ordered that grain be ground, and his companions hastened to his instructions, preparing what little provisions they could.

When the caravan set out from Qasr Bani Muqatil and had travelled only a short distance, the Imam ^{a.s} inclined his head into a brief slumber.

Moments later, the Imam ^{a.s} awoke, repeating three times, “Indeed we belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him is our return, and all praise belongs to the Lord ^{AZJ} of the worlds.”

Uqbah ibn Sim'an continues that Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} then rode forward on his horse. He asked gently, “‘Indeed we belong to Allah ^{AZJ} and to Him we shall return. All praise is due to Allah ^{AZJ}, the Lord ^{AZJ} of the worlds.’

O father, may I be sacrificed for you, why did you praise Allah ^{AZJ} and say the *istirja*?”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, “My dear son, I dozed for a moment and saw in my dream a rider approaching upon a horse. He said, ‘You are advancing, and death advances with you toward Paradise.’ Then I understood that we had been informed of our approaching death.” ¹³⁴

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} said,

“O father, may Allah ^{AZJ} preserve you from evil. Are we not upon the path of truth?”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, “Yes indeed, by the One to whom all servants will return.”

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} nobly replied,

“O my father, then we do not mind dying while we are upon the truth.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied tenderly, “May Allah ^{AZJ} reward you, O my son, with the best reward a son has ever been rewarded with for his father.”

Al Tabari, quoting Uqbah ibn Sim'an, relates that when dawn broke, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} dismounted to perform the morning prayer. Once the prayer was completed, the Imam ^{a.s} mounted again without delay and began guiding his caravan leftward, seeking to draw them away from the path of the forces led by al Hurr ibn Yazid.

Al Hurr pursued them and soon blocked their route. The Imam ^{a.s} turned aside from al Hurr, refusing to yield to his direction. Al Hurr then attempted again to compel the caravan back toward Kufa, but the Imam ^{a.s} and his companions resisted, continuing instead toward higher and more open ground. Whenever al Hurr pressed them forcefully toward Kufa, the caravan of Imam ^{a.s} inclined leftward, quietly yet firmly defying his command.

This continued until they reached a place known as Naynawa.

¹³⁴ Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq reports from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} halted at al Udhayb and slept briefly before noon. He awoke weeping, and said, “My son, this is a time when dreams are true. I saw someone say, ‘You hasten forward, while death leads you to paradise.’”

THE CALL OF DESTINY; ABDULLAH IBN AL HURR

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his caravan pressed onward through the barren reaches of the desert until they arrived at the lonely waystation known as Qasr Bani Muqatil, situated between al Qurayyat, al Qatqatanah, and Ayn al Tamr, on the edge of the vast wilderness of what is now Anbar in Iraq.

The place was marked by stillness and abandonment, where the desert stretched endlessly beneath an unforgiving sky. There, the Imam ^{a.s} ordered the caravan to halt.

As the tents were raised and the travelers settled, their attention was drawn to a single tent already standing apart from the emptiness of the plain. It stood alone, isolated.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Mujalid ibn Sa'id, who relates from Amir al Sha'bi, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to his companions and asked,

“For whom are these tents?”

They replied, “It belongs to Abdullah ibn al Hurr al Ju'fi.”

“Ask him to come and see me,” the Imam ^{a.s} instructed.

Abdullah ibn al Hurr al Ju'fi ¹³⁵ was counted among the renowned horsemen of the Arabs and was known as a poet of stature and eloquence.

Politically, Abdullah had inclined toward the third Caliph, Uthman, and through that allegiance had fought at Siffin on the side of Muawiyah. After martyrdom of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, he returned to Kufa, where he settled among its notables, enjoying position and prestige.

Yet when news spread that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was advancing, and that the people of Kufa were being mobilized toward treachery and bloodshed, Ibn al Hurr fled the city.

His withdrawal was not born of neutrality, but of fear. It was an attempt to escape the burden of choice itself, to avoid standing either for truth or against falsehood. It was this very flight that brought Abdullah ibn al Hurr face to face with destiny at Qasr Bani Muqatil.

In al Manaqib it is related that the Imam's ^{a.s} messenger was al Hajjaj ibn Masruq al Ju'fi. He approached the solitary tent and delivered the summons plainly, saying,

“Al Hussein ibn Ali is here, and he calls for you.”

Abdullah ibn al Hurr sighed deeply.

Distress and hesitation weighed heavily upon Abdullah ibn al Hurr as he replied,

“We are from Allah ^{AZJ}, and to Him is our return.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, I only left Kufa because I feared the arrival of al Hussein while I was there.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, I do not wish to see him, nor for him to see me.”

¹³⁵ Mirza Muhammad Astarabadi, citing al Najashi, notes that Ubayd Allah ibn Hurr al Ju'fi transmitted from Imam Ali ^{a.s}. Al Tabari reports that after the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, he was absent from Kufa, later came under suspicion by Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, escaped, and went to Karbala to pray for the martyrs before departing to al Mada'in. Later sources state he expressed deep remorse in verse for refusing the Imam's ^{a.s} call. Dinawari counts him among the notable warriors of Kufa, while Bahr al Ulum notes he combined belief with grave error and lived in regret. Nafas al Mahmoom adds that his descendants were companions of Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}.

When al Hajjaj returned and conveyed this response, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not send another messenger. Instead, the Imam ^{a.s} rose, put on his sandals, and walked himself toward the tent of the hesitant chieftain.

Entering, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} greeted Abdullah ibn al Hurr with peace and sat beside him, inviting Abdullah to the cause of truth.

According to a narration in al Amali from Imam Jafar al Sadiq ^{a.s}, the Imam ^{a.s} addressed Abdullah with words of grave warning:

“O Abdullah ibn al Hurr, you are a sinner and a man in error.

Surely Allah ^{AZJ} will seize you for what you have done if you do not repent to Allah ^{AZJ}, the Blessed and Exalted, at this very moment.

So help me, and my grandfather will be your intercessor before Almighty Allah ^{AZJ}, the Blessed and Exalted.” ¹³⁶

But Abdullah ibn al Hurr recoiled inwardly. He attempted to cloak cowardice in the language of prudence.

“O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, by Allah ^{AZJ}, if I help you, I will be the first to be killed in front of you. However, here is my horse, take it.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, I have never ridden it in pursuit of something except that I have attained it, and I have never been pursued while riding it except that I outran my pursuers.

It is for you, so take it.”

The silence lingered in the air. The invitation of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, a summons toward truth and salvation, had been answered with the offer of nothing more than a horse.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned his face away from Abdullah in disdain. Then the Imam ^{a.s} spoke with measured gravity, his voice carrying both warning and a verse:

“We have no need of you or your horse, *‘Nor would I not take the strayers as helpers’*” (Q18:51)

The Imam ^{a.s} continued, “Then depart, for you are neither with us nor against us.

Whoever hears our call for support, the call of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, and does not come to aid us, Allah ^{AZJ} will cast him upon his face into the Fire of Hell.”

Abdullah ibn al Hurr replied defensively,

“As regards siding with your enemies, Allah ^{AZJ} willing, it shall not happen.”

The Imam ^{a.s} rose to leave, and with that, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned to his tent, leaving Abdullah ibn al Hurr alone, abandoned by his own fear and cowardice.

Alas, O destiny of Abdullah ibn al Hurr al Ju'fi. Salvation itself came walking to your very tent, bearing eternal reward and everlasting honor. Yet it was your own fear and blindness that turned it away. Woe to you O Abdullah ibn al Hurr, for what you forfeited was nothing less than perpetual bliss, within the eternal abodes prepared by Allah ^{AZJ} in a place uninterrupted or lessened by time.

¹³⁶ al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq, quotes from Abdullah ibn al Mansur, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, from his father Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, from his father Imam Ali ibn Al Hussein ^{a.s}.

NAYNAWA

The steady steps of the mount of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} slowed, then came to a halt.

One by one, the animals behind the Imam ^{a.s} followed suit until the caravan stood still, suspended in silence. Dust settled. Reins slackened. Here was Naynawa.

Naynawa had once been counted among the flourishing villages of al Taff, a settled land known for life, passage, and cultivation until the latter part of the second century AH.

Caravans had passed through its outskirts. The plain now lay bare and exposed, stretched wide beneath an unforgiving sky, stripped of shelter and emptied of water.

It was a land that offered no cover and promised no mercy.

The Imam ^{a.s} surveyed the ground before him. The stillness of Naynawa was heavy.

It was an open plain, vulnerable to encirclement and isolation.

Tarikh al Tabari records that as the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} settled upon this desolate ground, a lone rider appeared from the direction of Kufa. At first, the rider was no more than a moving figure upon the horizon.

Gradually, his form became distinct. The reports states that the rider rode a powerful thoroughbred horse, its hooves striking the earth with urgency. The man was armed and alert, a bow slung across his back, his posture rigid with purpose.

From the moment the rider emerged into view, every gaze fixed upon him.

Conversations ceased. The silence of the plain seemed to tighten with each stride of his horse, until the sound of hooves drew near. When the rider finally reined in before the encampment, the tension unsettled the men who watched him.

The rider greeted al Hurr ibn Yazid and the soldiers under his command, exchanging words with them. Yet when he passed before Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions, the rider offered neither greeting nor glance. He did not acknowledge their presence, nor did the rider pause before the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. Instead, he dismounted briskly, produced a sealed letter, and placed it firmly into the hand of al Hurr ibn Yazid.

It bore the mark of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Al Hurr took the letter and broke its seal. As his eyes moved across the lines, the meaning of its contents became clear, and the weight of its command settled heavily upon al Hurr.

The letter read:

“As for what follows,

When my letter reaches you and my messenger arrives, halt al Hussein.

Block the movement of al Hussein, and force him to stop once you are at a plain that has no defence and no water supply.

I have instructed my messenger to remain with you and not to leave until he can report to me that you have complied with my instructions. And Peace.” ¹³⁷

¹³⁷ The word used here by Ibn Ziyad is profoundly significant. According to ibn Manzur in Lisan al Arab, citing al Asmai, it means “detain him.” Ibn Faris, in Maqayis al Lughah, explains it as “to force someone

When al Hurr finished reading, sweat gathered upon his forehead.

The order was explicit, leaving no room for interpretation or delay. Al Hurr was being commanded not merely to stop Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, but to confine the Imam ^{a.s} deliberately upon land chosen for its vulnerability.

This was not a request for supervision, but a calculated step toward entrapment.

Al Hurr was not eager to initiate violence, nor did he wish to be the first to unsheathe a sword against Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Yet al Hurr stood bound by his position and the authority imposed upon him.

The messenger of Ibn Ziyad remained close by, his presence a reminder that every action would be reported back to Kufa.

Al Hurr turned and rode toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and spoke with reluctance.

“This is a letter from the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. He has instructed me to stop you immediately at the place where the letter arrived. This is his messenger, whom he has ordered not to leave until I carry out his decree and instruction.”

A murmur passed through the companions of the Imam ^{a.s}. The meaning of the command was clear to all who heard it. The road ahead was now barred by calculated restraint.

Among those present stood Yazid ibn Ziyad ibn al Muhasir, known as Abul Sha'tha al Kindi al Bahdali ¹³⁸, a companion of the Imam ^{a.s}. His eyes fell upon the courier, studying his face closely. Recognition dawned upon Yazid ibn Ziyad, followed by disbelief that quickly hardened into anger.

Fixing his gaze upon the rider, Yazid ibn Ziyad spoke,

“Are you not Malik ibn al Nusayr al Baddiy?”

“Yes,” the rider replied without hesitation. He, too, was of the tribe of Banu Kindah.

At once, Yazid ibn Ziyad’s voice rose, sharp with anguish and reproach.

“May your mother weep over you! What is this that you have brought?!”

Malik answered coldly, his tone stripped of shame or hesitation.

“What have I brought? I have obeyed my imam and remained loyal to my bay'ah.”

Yazid recoiled at the words and responded with conviction and a verse.

“You have disobeyed your Lord ^{AZJ} and obeyed your imam at the cost of the destruction of your soul! You have earned disgrace and hell-fire, for Allah ^{AZJ}, has said,

‘We made them leaders inviting ‘others’ to the Fire. And on the Day of Judgment they will not be helped’ (Q28:41), and this refers to your imam!”

into a rough or harsh place.” The choice of this term reveals the methodical steps behind corralling Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} toward the prelude of his slaughter.

¹³⁸ Yazid ibn Ziyad ibn al Muhasir was one of the archers among the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and would be among the first to attain martyrdom. He would loose a full hundred arrows that day, later standing to say, “Only five of them missed; I have come to know that I have killed five men.” Abu Mikhnaf also related through Fudayl ibn Khudayj al Kindi that Yazid ibn Ziyad had originally marched with Umar ibn Sa’d but, when the truce proposed by the Imam ^{a.s} was rejected, he crossed over and fought until he was killed; however, this account does not agree with the present narration.

Malik ibn al Nusayr ¹³⁹ stood rebuked and humiliated, unable to respond.

Thus, upon the plain of Naynawa, the forces of coercion closed in. With a single letter, the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was now restrained and redirected, its movement curtailed. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was being driven toward isolation, confined upon a land without fortification and without water, exactly as the cruel design of Ibn Ziyad had intended.

From Naynawa, the journey of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would not continue onward.



¹³⁹ Malik ibn al Nusayr al Baddiy later struck the Imam ^{a.s} with a sword, cutting through his burnus and wounding him. Years later, Abdullah ibn Dabbas informed al Mukhtar of those involved in the killing, including al Baddiy. Al Mukhtar sent Malik ibn Amr al Nahdi, who captured them near al Qadisiyyah. When confronted, it was confirmed he had taken the burnus, and al Mukhtar ordered his hands and feet cut off and left until he died. He bled to death in 66 AH.

THE CARAVAN HALTS

It was the 2nd of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.¹⁴⁰

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Uqbah ibn Sim'an, records that al Hurr ibn Yazid issued his command to halt. The caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was compelled to stop upon a stretch of land devoid of habitation.

It was not a village, nor a settlement, nor a place known for shelter or water. It was a barren expanse, anonymous and exposed, chosen precisely for its isolation.

From this account, it becomes evident that Karbala was not the name of a single village, but rather the designation of a wider region. It formed part of the district of Babylon, known as Kur Babil, a term encompassing several surrounding villages. This understanding is stated explicitly in Kitab al Dalail wa al Masail.

Sensing the danger of the terrain, the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} appealed to al Hurr. They said,

“Let us camp instead at that village,” referring to Naynawa, “or at the other village,” meaning al Ghadiriyyah, “or at another village,” referring to Shufayyah. Each of these places possessed habitation, wells, and shelter.

Al Hurr refused without concession.

“No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, I am not able to do that,” Al Hurr replied.

“This man, the messenger of Ibn Ziyad, has been sent to me as a watcher.”

The chains of authority tightened around al Hurr. Ibn Ziyad’s grip upon al Hurr was absolute, ensuring obedience through constant surveillance.

Sibt ibn al Jawzi narrates that as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was now besieged, the Imam ^{a.s} turned to those around him and asked, “What is the name of this land?”

They replied, “It is called Naynawa, which is a village within this place.”

Another voice said, “Karbala.”

The Imam ^{a.s} responded with words laden with meaning,

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! I seek Your refuge from sorrow, ‘karb’, and affliction, ‘bala’.”

Al Mu'jam al Kabir, quoting al Muttalib ibn Abdullah ibn Hantab, relates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood in solemn silence. His gaze rested upon the desolate earth stretching before him. Tears gathered in his eyes and flowed down his noble face as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said with sorrowful certainty,

“Allah ^{AZJ} and His Messenger ^{saws} spoke the truth; this is indeed a land of sorrow, ‘karb’, and affliction, ‘bala’.”

Karbala, a land that bore the full weight of its name.

¹⁴⁰ Early sources agree that Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} martyrdom occurred on 10 Muharram 61 AH, corresponding to 9 or 10 October 680 CE. While reports differ on the weekday due to variations in early calendars, the dominant view states that he arrived in Karbala on Thursday, 2 Muharram, and that Ashura fell on Friday. Other weekday reports do not affect the agreed date and sequence.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} dismounted, the dust of Karbala rising around his feet. The master of Karbala had arrived at the ground of his destiny. The Imam ^{a.s} bent down and gathered a handful of soil, lifting it slowly to his face. He inhaled its scent, a fragrance heavy with sacrifice and impending trial. Then Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} said,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, this is the land that Jibra'il informed the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} about, and I shall indeed be killed upon it.”

The gaze of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} swept across the horizons of Karbala, his eyes absorbing the desolate plains that stretched before him, silent and vast.

Al Manaqib reports that the Imam ^{a.s} then declared,

“Grief and trial dwell herein.”

The Imam ^{a.s} pointed to another place and said, “This is where our mounts will be stabled.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} pointed again elsewhere, “This is where we will pitch our tents.”

The Imam ^{a.s} paused, surveying several scattered points across the barren earth. Tears welled in his eyes as he pointed one place after another.

“This is where our men will be killed, and this is where our blood will be spilt. My grandfather, the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, has foretold me regarding it.”

The command was given, and the caravan complied. The tents were pitched.

Al Hurr, too, ordered his men to set their camp at a distance, facing the sparse encampment of the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

After the encampment was established, the companions gathered once more around the Imam ^{a.s}. His demeanor had changed. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was solemn, contemplative, and weighed by remembrance. Al Mu'jam al Kabir narrates that after some conversation, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} recalled a moment of profound sorrow. The Imam ^{a.s} said:

“My mother, Lady Umm Salamah, said:

‘One day, Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} was sitting in my apartment, and he instructed me,

‘Do not let anyone enter.’

I (Lady Umm Salamah) stood guard, but in that very moment, al Hussein entered.

Then I (Lady Umm Salamah) heard the sound of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} weeping.

I went to him and saw that al Hussein was seated in his lap, and the Prophet ^{saws} had placed his hand upon his own forehead and was weeping.

I (Lady Umm Salamah) said, “By Allah ^{AZJ}! I did not realize when al Hussein entered!”

The Prophet ^{saws} replied, “Jibra'il was with us in this very room, and he asked me:

‘Do you love al Hussein?’

I (the Prophet ^{saws}) replied: ‘I love al Hussein more than anyone in this world.’

He (Jibra'il) said: ‘Your nation will kill al Hussein in a land called Karbala.’

Jibra'il then brought forth soil from that land and delivered it to him, and Prophet ^{saws} showed it to me (Lady Umm Salamah).”

The companions absorbed these words in heavy silence, their hearts gripped by the destiny that the Imam ^{a.s} himself now calmly foretold.

Many other reports also preserve this foreknowledge of Karbala, conveyed through divine warnings transmitted by his grandfather and his father, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.¹⁴¹

Upon the plains of Karbala, the companions listened in stillness, the weight of inevitability pressing upon their souls.

Zuhayr ibn al Qayn, sensing the storm that loomed ahead, spoke with urgency.

“O son of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}! I see that the matter will become more severe than this. It is much easier fighting the contingent of al Hurr than fighting those who will come after them. By my life, we will not be able to withstand the numbers that will come after these who are now before you.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned from the barren horizon. His expression softened, and with calm compassion the Imam ^{a.s} said,

“I will not be the one to initiate hostilities.”

Al Kamil narrates that Zuhayr persisted.

“Then let us make our way to this village and settle there; it is fortified and located on the bank of the Euphrates. If they prevent us, we will fight them, for fighting them is easier upon us than fighting those who will come after.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} asked, “And which village is that?”

Zuhayr replied, “It is al Aqir.”

The Imam ^{a.s} responded,

“O Allah ^{AZJ}, I seek refuge in You from al Aqir.”

Al Aqir, meaning barren and sterile, had once contained the dwellings of Nebuchadnezzar, the longest-reigning king of the Babylonian dynasty. It formed part of Kur Babil, though over time its name became distorted, later absorbed into the greater region known as Karbala.

Nearby lay al Ghadiriyyah¹⁴², and close to it Shufayyah, whose wells belonged to Banu Asad. Yet none of these places were to be granted to the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari also quotes Ammar al Duhni, who summarizes from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s} that as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} advanced, the vanguard of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad’s cavalry detected him.

Realizing this, the Imam ^{a.s} turned toward Karbala and chose a position with foliage and grass at the rear, ensuring that any attack would come from a single direction.

There Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} halted, and there the tents were raised.

¹⁴¹ Ibn Sa’d, from al Waqidi, narrates that Imam Ali ^{a.s} wept when passing Karbala on his way to Siffin, recalling the Prophet’s foretelling of Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} martyrdom and the soil shown by Jibrail. Similar reports in Bihar al Anwar describe Imam Ali ^{a.s} identifying Karbala as a place of martyrdom, weeping as he pointed to the sites of encampment and where the companions would fall.

¹⁴² Al Ghadiriyyah, named after Ghadhirah of Banu Asad, refers to land near the grave of Awn, son of Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}, about one farsakh (5-6 km) from Karbala, where remains of a fortress known as Qalat Bani Asad still exist.

Al Futuh states that the caravan now settled. Provisions were unloaded beside the banks of the Euphrates, whose waters flowed silently nearby.

A tent was erected for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, beside it the tents of his women and children, and around them the tents of the youth of his household.

Imam al Baqir ^{a.s} states that on that day the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} numbered forty-five horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers.

Kashful Ghummah records that all complied with the Imam’s ^{a.s} command and dismounted, while al Hurr positioned his forces opposite them. Al Hurr then wrote to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, informing Ibn Ziyad that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had halted at Karbala.

Al Futuh narrates that Ibn Ziyad replied with a letter addressed to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}:

“O Hussein. The news of your arrival in Karbala has reached me. The commander of the faithful, Yazid ibn Muawiyah, has written to me. Yazid has said that I should not rest nor eat until I send you to meet Allah ^{AZJ}, the Knowing and the Gracious, or you submit to my authority and the authority of Yazid ibn Muawiyah. And Peace.”

When the letter was presented to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the Imam ^{a.s} read it.

Silence descended upon him and those around the Imam ^{a.s}.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then cast the letter aside with disdain and said, “People who give preference to their own desires over the pleasure of the Creator will never succeed!”

The messenger of Ibn Ziyad asked, “O Aba Abdillah! What is your reply to the letter?”

Imam ^{a.s} replied with finality, “I have no reply for Ibn Ziyad, because Allah’s ^{AZJ} punishment has already been assured for him!”

The messenger of Ibn Ziyad carried these words back.

When they reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, fury consumed him, for Ibn Ziyad now knew that he had set himself further upon an irrevocable path.

Sayyid Ibn Tawus narrates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood amidst his companions and delivered a sermon. The Imam ^{a.s} praised and glorified Allah ^{AZJ} and sent salutations upon his grandfather, and then said,

“You have seen what they have brought forth...” and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} delivered a sermon similar to that which we have quoted earlier when the Imam ^{a.s} met al Hurr.

The caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had now been corralled into the desolate plains of Karbala. There the Imam ^{a.s} would remain, as overwhelming forces gathered against him.

‘Halt al Hussein!’, the command of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had now been fulfilled.

On the other hand, we had the epitome of faith and belief, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

“You were to the Messenger ^{saws}, peace be upon him and his family, a son, for the Qur'an, an authority and a saviour, and for the nation, a support. You were diligent in obedience, a protector of the covenant and oath, keeping away from the paths of the debauched, sparing no effort (in fulfilling the duties), performing prolonged bowing and prostrations, abstaining from the world, like one who is departing from it, looking upon it (the world) through the eyes of one estranged (from it).” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

THE LAND OF KARBALA

THE CALL OF DESTINY; UMAR IBN SA'D

Al Tabari, quoting Ammar al Duhni from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, records that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had already appointed Umar ibn Sa'd ibn Abi al Waqqas as governor of al Rayy before the march of the Imam ^{a.s} toward Kufa, granting Ibn Sa'd full authority over that region.

Along with this appointment, Tarikh al Tabari quotes Uqbah ibn Sim'an that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad placed Umar ibn Sa'd at the head of a Kufan force numbering four thousand men and ordered Ibn Sa'd to advance toward Dastabi, whose name meant 'the beautiful oasis.'

It was a vast district lying between Hamadan and al Rayy, later annexed to Qazwin, as noted in Mujam al Buldan. The Daylamis, identified in later sources as Turks, had attacked the region and seized control of it.

Ibn Ziyad therefore issued a formal letter confirming Ibn Sa'd as governor of the neighboring province of al Rayy and commanded Ibn Sa'd to march out to confront the Daylamis.

Umar ibn Sa'd departed Kufa and encamped at Hammam Ayan, a district within Kufa known for its bathhouse. It belonged to Umar ibn Sa'd and was under the care of his servant Ayan, after whom it was named.

Yet concealed within this appointment was a calculated snare.

When the affair of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} began to unfold, and news reached Kufa of his movement toward the city, Ibn Ziyad swiftly summoned Umar ibn Sa'd.

Ibn Ziyad said to Umar ibn Sa'd,

"First, relieve me of the problem of this man," meaning Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Then Ibn Ziyad added, "March against al Hussein. When we have concluded what lies between us and him, you may resume your previous mission."

Umar ibn Sa'd responded with the instinct of restraint.

"If you can excuse me from this task, then do so, may Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy on you," seeking exemption from marching against al Hussein ^{a.s}.

But Ibn Ziyad refused. Umar ibn Sa'd was too valuable a piece on Ibn Ziyad's board: a man of lineage and name, capable of command and calculation, and suitable for suppressing what the Umayyads perceived as an existential threat.

Ibn Ziyad replied, "Yes, on the condition that you return to us our letter of appointment to the governorship of al Rayy."

At that moment, the brief clarity within Umar ibn Sa'd faltered.

Umar ibn Sa'd said, "Grant me respite today so that I may reflect upon it."

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad consented.

That night, Umar ibn Sa'd wrestled with his decision, holding worldly gain in one hand and fearful consequence in the other. Umar ibn Sa'd consulted those closest to him, yet none urged him toward war against Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Among the most insistent was Hamzah ibn al Mughirah ibn Shubah ¹⁴³, his nephew:

"I beseech you in Allah's ^{AZJ} name, O uncle, do not go out against al Hussein.

If you do so, you will be sinful before your Lord ^{AZJ} and will sever the ties of kinship.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, even if you were to give up everything you possess of this world, your property and every ounce of authority in the land, it would be better for you than to ever meet the Almighty Allah ^{AZJ} with the blood of al Hussein on your hands."

Abu Mikhnaf relates that Abdul Rahman ibn Jundub narrated from Uqbah ibn Sim'an that Umar ibn Sa'd replied,

"I shall do as you say, if Allah ^{AZJ} wills."

Umar ibn Sa'd sat immersed in thought deep into the night, the weight of his decision pressing upon him. Memories and scenes from his past surfaced one after another, until one recollection in particular seized his mind.

The thought gnawed at Umar ibn Sa'd relentlessly until he sat entrenched in his turmoil, unable to escape these memories. While Ibn Sa'd remained in this state, one of his associates, Hisham, came to visit him.

Tarikh al Tabari reports, through Hisham, that he entered upon Umar ibn Sa'd after the command to march had already been issued. ¹⁴⁴ Umar ibn Sa'd told Hisham,

"The governor has commanded me to go out against al Hussein, but I have refused him."

Hisham praised Umar ibn Sa'd and said,

"Allah ^{AZJ} inspired you to do the right thing. May Allah ^{AZJ} continue to guide you.

Excuse yourself, do not be party to this, and do not go out against al Hussein."

Hisham departed, believing Umar ibn Sa'd's commitment to be firm. Yet not long afterward, news reached Hisham that Umar ibn Sa'd was calling men to arms.

Alarmed, Hisham returned and found Ibn Sa'd seated. When Umar ibn Sa'd saw Hisham, he turned his face away in unmistakable shame.

In that instant, Hisham understood, the resolve of Umar ibn Sa'd had collapsed, and the conscience had been sold. Recognizing this, Hisham withdrew from his presence.

Later, Umar ibn Sa'd approached Ibn Ziyad in his court once more and said,

"May Allah ^{AZJ} make you prosper. You appointed me as governor and wrote me a letter of authority, and all the people heard it. If you still deem me suitable for that appointment, then enforce it. Send this army against al Hussein under another commander from among the Kufan nobles, one no less capable than me in confronting him."

¹⁴³ Hamzah ibn al Mughirah was later appointed by al Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al Thaqafi as governor over Hamadan in 77 AH. His brother, Mutarrif ibn al Mughirah, who held authority over al Mada'in, rebelled against al Hajjaj. Hamzah secretly supported him, providing money and weapons. When this reached al Hajjaj, he issued orders to Qays ibn Sa'd al Ajali, who at the time served as chief of Hamzah's police force, sending him his own appointment to Hamadan alongside the command to arrest Hamzah, bind him in chains, and imprison him. Qays carried out the order and he seized Hamzah, bound him, and placed him in confinement.

¹⁴⁴ Tarikh al Tabari states that Hisham reported from Awanah ibn al Hakam, who narrated to Hisham from Ammar ibn Abdullah ibn Yasar al Juhani, from his father.

Umar ibn Sa'd then proposed several names, still grasping at the governorship while pleading not to pay its cost.

But Ibn Ziyad replied sharply, "Do not presume to instruct me about the nobles of Kufa. I have not sought your advice about whom I wish to send. If you are going with our army, then go; if not, then return to us our letter of appointment."

At last, Umar ibn Sa'd relented under the pressure of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

The choice was final. The bargain was struck for the blood of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Umar ibn Sa'd conceded, "Then I will go."

Dawn broke, and the exchange was complete. The governorship of al Rayy had outweighed the life of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

By that morning, Umar ibn Sa'd rose determined and set out toward the Imam ^[a.s.].

Thus, the character of Umar ibn Sa'd is ominously foreshadowed in Tahdhib al Kamal, which quotes Muhammad ibn Sirin from one of his associates. Al Kamal recalls:

"Indeed, the divine favor shown to Ali ibn Abi Talib became manifest in this matter. One day, Ali ibn Abi Talib met Umar ibn Sa'd while he was still a young man and said to Ibn Sa'd: 'Woe to you, O son of Sa'd. How will it be with you on the day you are placed between Paradise and Hell, and you choose the Fire?!'"

It was the 3rd of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

It was the very day after Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s.] caravan had been halted upon the plains of Karbala. On this day, Umar ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas marched out from Kufa with four thousand men, reaching the Imam ^[a.s.] the following day at Naynawa.



THE ARRIVAL OF UMAR IBN SA'D IN KARBALA

Having settled upon the land of Karbala, the forces of Umar ibn Sa'd moved swiftly to establish themselves. Tents were raised in ordered rows, ropes drawn tight against the desert wind, and ranks arranged with the discipline of an army preparing for a confrontation it already sensed to be unavoidable.

Spears were driven into the earth, banners lifted high, and the open plain soon filled with the restless activity of men fortifying themselves for a long and fateful stay.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi records that when Umar ibn Sa'd first encountered Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] on the banks of the Euphrates, the Imam ^[a.s.] was accompanied by sixty-two or seventy-two men, composed of his family members and his loyal followers.

From a distance, the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] watched as canvas after canvas unfurled across the plain.

The desert air carried the sounds of ceaseless motion: the shuffle of feet, the clatter of armour, the low murmur of voices rising and falling like distant thunder.

Dust hung suspended above the ground, stirred by the movement of horses and men, as the opposing encampment grew larger by the hour.

According to Tarikh al Tabari, from within his main camp Umar ibn Sa'd summoned a man named Azrah ibn Qays al Ahmassi. ¹⁴⁵ Umar ibn Sa'd commanded Azrah,

"Go and ask al Hussein what has brought him here, and what he wants."

But Azrah ibn Qays had been among those who had written signed letters to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], calling him to Kufa. Shame overtook Azrah, and he could not bring himself to face the man he had once invited with such insistence.

Sensing his reluctance, Umar ibn Sa'd turned instead to the other tribal leaders who had also written letters to the Imam ^[a.s.].

One by one, they averted their faces and refused the task, each recoiling from the burden of that encounter.

It was then that Kathir ibn Abdullah al Shabi ¹⁴⁶ stood up. Kathir was an unashamed and arrogant man, a cavalier who recoiled from no confrontation.

With brazen confidence, Kathir ibn Abdullah declared,

"I will go to him! By Allah ^[AZJ], if you wish it, I will even kill al Hussein!"

Umar ibn Sa'd replied sharply,

"I do not want him to be killed. Go to him and ask him why he has come here to Kufa."

¹⁴⁵ al Mufid in al Irshad records the messenger's name as Azrah ibn Qays; his biography has already passed among those who wrote to the Imam ^[a.s.], from the hypocrites of the Umayyads in Kufa.

¹⁴⁶ Kathir ibn Abdullah al Sha'bi witnessed the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] and narrated the sermon of Zuhayr ibn al Qayn. He was also the one who participated with al Muhajir ibn al Aws in killing him, and he was the one who pursued al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi al Hamdani to kill him, but when he recognized that he was from Hamadan, he said, "This is our cousin," and refrained from harming him.

At that moment, while the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued to observe the swelling city of tents before them, a lone rider broke away from the enemy ranks.

Hooves struck the desert floor, sending up clouds of dust as the mounted figure advanced toward them. It was Kathir ibn Abdullah, the first messenger of Umar ibn Sa'd.

When Kathir drew nearer, one of the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Abu Thumamah al Sa'idi, recognized him at once.

Alarm quickened his steps as Abu Thumamah hastened to the Imam ^{a.s} and warned him, "May Allah ^{AZJ} grant you well-being, O Aba Abdillah.

The one advancing toward you is the vilest of men, a bloodthirsty and violent man."

Kathir entered the camp with insolence and without greeting, attempting to press further toward the Imam ^{a.s}.

Abu Thumamah rose, stepped before Kathir, and blocked his path.

"Remove your sword," he demanded.

Kathir sneered,

"No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, that would be dishonourable.

I am only a messenger. If you are willing to hear me, I will deliver the message entrusted to me; otherwise, I will depart."

Unmoved, Abu Thumamah replied,

"Then I will hold the hilt of your sword as you speak."

Kathir ibn Abdullah barked back,

"No, by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do not touch my sword!"

Abu Thumamah al Sa'idi also raised his voice,

"Then give me your message and I will convey it, but I will not allow you to come any closer to al Hussein, for you are a wicked man!"

The exchange quickly dissolved into harsh words and insults.

Humiliated and seething with rage, Kathir turned his mount and galloped back to the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd, recounting what had transpired.

Unsurprised by the failure of Kathir ibn Abdullah, Umar ibn Sa'd summoned Qurrah ibn Qays al Hanzali ¹⁴⁷ and said,

"Woe to you, O Qurrah!

Go to al Hussein and ask him what has brought him here and what he wants!"

¹⁴⁷ Qurrah ibn Qays al Hanzali was among the forces with al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi. It is narrated from him by Adi ibn Harmalah al Asadi that he used to say: "By Allah ^{AZJ}, if al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi had made clear to me what he intended to join Al Hussein, I would have gone out with him to al Hussein". Also related in al Irshad, Habib ibn Muzahir had called him to support the Imam ^{a.s}. However, he went back to Umar ibn Sa'd and would not return to the Imam ^{a.s} until he ^{a.s} had been killed.

Unlike the brash messenger before him, Qurrah was measured and composed.

Qurrah mounted his horse and rode out swiftly toward the waiting camp.

Once more, the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} watched as a solitary rider crossed the barren divide beneath the open sky, his horse's hooves striking the earth.

Among those observing was Habib ibn Muzahir. ¹⁴⁸

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} saw the figure approaching, the Imam ^{a.s} asked his companions, "Do you recognize him?"

Habib replied, "Yes. He is from the tribe of Hanzalah, of Banu Tamim. He is the son of our sister. I knew him as a man of sound judgment, and I could never have imagined that he would be present on this battlefield."

Habib ibn Muzahir had not expected Qurrah ibn Qays to be among the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd. Qurrah reached the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} and dismounted. Unlike Kathir, he greeted Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with courtesy and conveyed to him the message of Umar ibn Sa'd.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned his greeting and said,

"The people of your city wrote to me, inviting me to come.

If you now do not wish me to remain, I will turn back from them."

At this, Habib ibn Muzahir stepped forward, astonishment still evident in his gaze, and said, "Shame upon you, O Qurrah ibn Qays!

How can you return to that company of transgressors? Support this man, al Hussein! Through his forefathers, Allah ^{AZJ} honoured you, and us along with you."

Qurrah ibn Qays looked at Habib ibn Muzahir and lowered his gaze, unable to deny the truth, yet too weak to uphold it. Qurrah mounted his horse and said,

"I will return to my commander with your reply, and then I will consider my course."

When Qurrah ibn Qays mounted his horse, the crossroads were before him, salvation on one path and ruin on the other.

Qurrah paused in silent deliberation, then turned his steed and rode down the path he chose.

Al Irshad mentions that Qurrah went and relayed the reply of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to Umar ibn Sa'd. In time, Qurrah ibn Qays did not return to the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}; instead, Qurrah chose his destiny among the transgressors and eternal damnation.

Tarikh al Tabari states that Umar ibn Sa'd, burdened and restless, said,

"I truly hope that Allah ^{AZJ} will spare me from waging war against al Hussein and fighting him."

Umar ibn Sa'd then wrote to Ibn Ziyad, informing him of Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} reply.

The tents of sides now stood firmly upon the plains of Karbala.

The alliance of regret and ambition had already been sealed.

¹⁴⁸ This marks the first appearance of Habib ibn Muzahir in the land of Karbala, though the manner of his arrival is not detailed. His biography has already been recorded among the Shia leaders who had written to the Imam ^{a.s} from Kufa; further aspects of his life will be mentioned later, in the account of his martyrdom.

THE LETTER OF UMAR IBN SA'D TO IBN ZIYAD

Night settled heavily over the encampments on the outskirts of Kufa, its silence broken only by the muffled sounds of soldiers and the restless shifting of men.

From the command pavilion of Umar ibn Sa'd, a rider was hastily dispatched, spurring his mount into the blackness with a sealed letter clutched tightly against his chest.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates from Hasan ibn Fa'id ibn Buqayr al Absi ¹⁴⁹ that he bore witness to this very letter and was present when the message of Umar ibn Sa'd reached the court of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Umar ibn Sa'd had written:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

When I reached the location of al Hussein, I sent my messenger to him and enquired about his mission, his intentions, and his demands.

Al Hussein replied, “The people of this land sent me letters, and their messengers came before me, asking me to come, so I have done so. However, if they are not pleased at my arrival and desire something other than what they conveyed through their messengers, then I will turn away from them and return.”

The sealed letter was read aloud before Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad in the governor’s palace. Ibn Ziyad listened in silence, his jaw clenched and his eyes narrowing with each word.

He pondered, for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was now within his grasp.

The road to Kufa had already been severed, and with a single stroke of his pen, Ibn Ziyad could tighten the noose around the encampment of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad pondered some more, for his actions now would bear consequences.

The blood of Muslim ibn Aqil, Hani ibn Urwah, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar al Himyari, and Qays ibn Mushir al Saydawi had already quenched his thirst for domination.

His authority in Kufa was now unchallenged, his seat secured through fear and force.

Yet a cruel satisfaction flickered across the face of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

The net Ibn Ziyad had drawn with such patience around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had finally closed. The lion of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s} was cornered.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Hassan ibn Fa'id ibn Buqayr al Absi, states that it was then that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad repeated those infamous words:

“Now that our claws are embedded in him, al Hussein seeks to escape, but the time for escape has passed.” ¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Abu Mikhnaf also narrated from Hisham from this same source, also cited in al Irshad, that al Nadr ibn Saleh ibn Habib ibn Zuhayr al Absi narrated from Hasan ibn Fa'id ibn Buqayr al Absi.

¹⁵⁰ And it was narrated by al Sibti, and he added: “That Ibn Ziyad wrote at the bottom of the letter: ‘Now, when our ropes have caught him, he seeks refuge, but it is not the time for escape.’”

The pursuit of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had never been sudden or reactionary. It was a slow and deliberate hunt, shaped by political calculation and merciless tenacity. The prey had been marked long before it ever set foot upon this path.

Seizing his pen, Ibn Ziyad composed a curt and chilling reply:

“In the Name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

As to what follows:

Your letter has reached me, and I have understood what you have mentioned.

Present to al Hussein that he pledge allegiance to Yazid ibn Muawiyah, he and all of his companions. If he does so, then we shall consider our course. And Peace.”

Al Manaqib by Ibn Shahr Ashub adds a further line to the letter:

“And if al Hussein refuses, bring him to me.”

By dawn, the reply of Ibn Ziyad was back in the hands of Umar ibn Sa'd. Ibn Sa'd read the terse command carefully, then exhaled a low, resigned breath.

“I had thought that Ibn Ziyad would not accept any compromise.”

Thus the exchange of letters was complete.

In the pale light of morning, the encampment still stood, outwardly unchanged, yet the shadow over it had deepened.

The pages of history had turned, and with them the nights of reckoning grew fewer.



THE MEETINGS OF IMAM {a.s} WITH UMAR IBN SA'D

As the days of impending war pressed heavily upon the plain of Karbala, and the days of Muharram began to pass. Imam al Hussein {a.s} sought to send a message to Umar ibn Sa'd, not as a commander issuing terms, but as the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} extending a call to the conscience of Ibn Sa'd.

It was during the early days of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The Imam {a.s} would not relinquish any attempt, or admonition to bring the misguided back to the path of faith and Islam.

“You summoned people towards Allah with wisdom and fine exhortation, ordered the establishment of the limits of divine law, and the obedience to the One {AZJ} Who should be worshipped, and forbade (people) from wickedness and oppression.”

Al Khawarizmi narrates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} summoned Amr ibn Qurazah ibn Kab al Ansari, one of his loyal companions, and entrusted Amr ibn Qurazah with the message to Umar ibn Sa'd. Its wording was restrained yet resolute:

“I wish to speak with you. Meet me tonight, between my camp and your camp”.¹⁵¹

Amr ibn Qurazah departed to deliver the summons, aware that his own brother, Ali ibn Qurazah, stood on the opposing side beneath the banner of Umar ibn Sa'd. Blood relations now found themselves divided between truth and obedience, between the grandson of the Prophet {saws} and the machinery of Umayyad power.

Umar ibn Sa'd agreed to the meeting.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates that as night settled over Karbala, both parties advanced toward the appointed ground. Umar ibn Sa'd came forth with around twenty horsemen, and the noble Imam al Hussein {a.s} emerged with a similar number.

Beneath the veil of darkness, the two groups approached one another across the dust.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} halted, cloaked in the solemn calm of one who bore the inheritance of prophethood. Opposite the Imam {a.s} stood Umar ibn Sa'd, representative of a force that had pledged itself to the sons of Sumayyah and Maysun rather than to the grandson of the virtuous Messenger of Allah {saws}.

For a moment, the two lines faced one another in silence.

The silence was broken by the instruction of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The Imam {a.s} instructed his companions to withdraw, keeping with him only his brother al Abbas and his son Ali al Akbar.

Sensing the intent, Umar ibn Sa'd followed suit, motioning his own men back, leaving only his son Hafs and a slave named Lahq at his side.

Step by step, both entourages receded until the distance between them widened to the point that neither party could hear the words being exchanged.

¹⁵¹ Abu Mikhnaf likewise narrates this from Abu Janab, who narrates from Hani ibn Thubayt al Hadrami, who had witnessed the killing of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

They now stood alone, face to face. This solitude was deliberate.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} wished to admonish Umar ibn Sa'd without spectacle, to strip away the armour of command and speak to the man beneath it. Without an audience to impress or a rank to defend, perhaps truth would find a way into the heart of Umar ibn Sa'd.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} spoke, his voice steady yet heavy with sorrow:

“Shame on you. Do you not fear Allah {AZJ}, to Whom is your return?

Do you seek to fight me while you know whose son I am?

Leave these people and join me; that will be better for you with Allah {AZJ}.”

The words struck Umar ibn Sa'd with their full weight. He could not raise his gaze.

His shoulders sagged, and when Ibn Sa'd finally spoke, his reply was thin and evasive, clinging to excuses rather than confronting the truth.

“I fear that my house will be destroyed.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} did not rebuke him. Instead, the Imam {a.s} offered Ibn Sa'd deliverance.

“I will rebuild it for you.”

Still unwilling to surrender, Umar ibn Sa'd grasped at another excuse.

“I fear that my property will be seized.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} assured Ibn Sa'd,

“I will give you better than it from my own properties in al Hijaz.”

Again, the door closed upon his excuses, Umar ibn Sa'd sought yet another pretext.

“I have family; I fear for them.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} replied, “I will guarantee their safety.”

There was nothing left to conceal, and yet Umar ibn Sa'd fell silent.

Umar ibn Sa'd would not speak the truth aloud.

Ibn Sa'd would not confess the governorship of al Rayy, the glittering prize for which he had bartered his soul and his afterlife for eternity.

Though Ibn Sa'd knew that Imam al Hussein {a.s} spoke the truth and would fulfill what he promised, cowardice sealed his tongue.

They spoke at length beneath the cover of night until a portion of it had passed.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates that Umar ibn Sa'd, bound by the temptations of this world, ultimately turned away from every lifeline extended to him.

At last, Imam al Hussein {a.s} rose to leave. Seeing that Umar ibn Sa'd's resolution had hardened into greed and hesitation, the Imam {a.s} delivered to Ibn Sa'd a prophetic warning:

“What has become of you? May Allah {AZJ} cause you to be killed in your bed swiftly.

May Allah {AZJ} not forgive you on the Day you are raised.

By Allah {AZJ}, I pray that you will not partake of the wheat of Iraq.”

The mention of Iraq struck Umar ibn Sa'd like an unveiled accusation. Ibn Sa'd now knew then that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had always known the true weight upon his soul, and the price upon which Umar ibn Sa'd has sold himself.

With a feeble sneer, Umar ibn Sa'd replied mockingly,
 "O Aba Abdillah, there is always barley to replace wheat."

Yet despite his brazenness and ambition, even the haughty Umar ibn Sa'd dare not venture to answer Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] with an outright insult.

Al Manaqib by Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates that the Imam ^[a.s] said to Umar ibn Sa'd:
 "That which consoles me is that after me, you will not taste the wheat of Iraq, but a little."¹⁵²

Thereafter they parted, each returning to his own camp. The lines had now been drawn, and the intentions concealed within their hearts stood unmistakably revealed.

Abu Mikhnaf further narrates, through al Mujalid ibn Said al Hamdani and al Saqab ibn Zuhayr, that during the opening days of Muharram, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and Umar ibn Sa'd met upon the plains of Karbala on three or four separate occasions.

Beneath the shadow of impending war, the two men conferred repeatedly between their opposing camps, while the desert around them bore silent witness to negotiations whose outcome would shape the course of history.

Another testimony comes from Hani ibn Thubayt al Hadrami, who was present that night on the side of Umar ibn Sa'd. Hani ibn Thubayt stated that he was among the twenty riders who escorted Ibn Sa'd to the private meeting and recounted:

"We withdrew from them until we could no longer hear their voices or conversation."

What transpired between them remained unknown to the rest of those on the plains of Karbala. Speculation, however, quickly spread among the ranks.

Rumours circulated that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had offered Umar ibn Sa'd a proposal:

"Come with me to Yazid ibn Muawiyah, and let us leave the two armies behind."

Yet none who repeated this tale had witnessed the meeting.

No one had heard such words spoken. The account had no witness, only conjecture.

Abu Mikhnaf expands upon this conjectural account, alleging that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] offered three alternatives to avert bloodshed:

"That Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] return to the place from which he had come.

That Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] place his hand in the hand of Yazid ibn Muawiyah, who would then decide what lay between them.

Or that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] be sent to any frontier post of the Muslims, to live among its people, sharing what they shared and bearing what they bore."

However, many sources dismiss these accounts as untenable, decisively contradicted by the eyewitness testimony of Uqbah ibn Sim'an, who accompanied Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] throughout every stage of his final journey. This refutation is also echoed by both Tarikh al Tabari and Ibn al Athir.

¹⁵² al Manaqib by Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates that Umar ibn Sa'd replied sarcastically, "O Aba Abdillah! There is always barley instead!" Just as Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had predicted, Umar never did get the governorship of al Rayy, and he was killed by al Mukhtar.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abdur Rahman ibn Jundub, who reports from Uqbah ibn Sim'an:

"I accompanied al Hussein, and I went out with him from Medinah to Mecca, and from Mecca to Iraq. I did not leave him until he was killed. There was not a single word exchanged with people, whether in Medinah, in Mecca, on the road, in Iraq, or in his camp until the day of his martyrdom, except that I heard it. By Allah ^[AZJ], he did not give them what people claim: that he would place his hand in the hand of Yazid ibn Muawiyah, nor that he would allow them to send him to one of the frontier posts of the Muslims.

Rather, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] said: 'Leave me, that I may go forth in this vast land until we see what becomes of the matter of the people.'"

Later historians, including Sibt ibn al Jawzi, would claim an inverse version, that it was not Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] who sought the meeting, but Umar ibn Sa'd who initiated it.

Yet regardless of its origin, both paths arrive at the same end.

Two paths diverged upon the sands of Karbala: one leading toward eternal devotion, the other toward eternal reproach. And with it, passed the early nights of Muharram in Karbala.

"You pursued the path of your grandfather and your father, resembled your brother in will, were loyal to your obligations, possessed pleasant manners, embodied generosity, and spent the nights in prayer. You were of great ancestry, noble descent, and lofty rank." *Ziyarat Nahiya*



THE ALLEGED LETTER OF UMAR IBN SA'D

As the standoff at Karbala tightened and the air grew heavy with uncertainty, it is alleged that Umar ibn Sa'd composed a second letter to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, driven by a final attempt to extricate himself from a war Ibn Sa'd did not fully desire nor controlled.

The moment was one of mounting pressure, and his hesitation was rapidly giving way to inevitability, and Ibn Sa'd found himself seeking any avenue that might delay or deflect the impending clash.

The contents of this letter are striking, for they suggest a willingness on the part of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] to yield allegiance to Yazid ibn Muawiyah, an implication that stands in clear contradiction to the Imam's ^[a.s] firmly established position and moral stance.

Such a claim does not merely raise questions about the accuracy of the report, but also casts light on the desperate context in which it emerged, where narratives could be shaped or presented in a manner that served immediate political aims rather than historical truth.

Shaykh al Mufid reports that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had sent a messenger to Umar ibn Sa'd requesting a private meeting.

The two men met under the cover of night and spoke at length, away from the watchful eyes of both camps. When the meeting concluded, Umar ibn Sa'd returned to his quarters and soon after drafted this letter to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates that the second letter of Umar ibn Sa'd read:

"As for what follows: Indeed, Allah ^[AZJ] has extinguished the flame of discord, united the word, and set right the affair of the ummah.

This is al Hussein; he has given me his word that he will return to the place from which he came, or that we send him to any of the frontier towns of the Muslims that we choose, where he will be a man from among the Muslims, having what they have and bearing what is upon them; or that he goes to Yazid, the Commander of the Believers, and places his hand in his hand, and he may decide between them as he sees fit.

In this there is satisfaction for you and rectification for the ummah."

Abul Faraj adds that Umar ibn Sa'd dispatched a messenger carrying this proposal and further remarked:

"If a Daylami (Turk) had desired this from you and you did not yield to it, you would have committed injustice."

The letter was carried swiftly across the desert to Kufa, bearing with it the fragile hope that the spilling of the blood of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] might yet be averted.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Mujalid ibn Sa'id al Hamdani and al Saqa'b ibn Zuhayr that when Ibn Ziyad read the letter, he appeared, if only briefly, inclined toward acceptance.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad remarked:

"This is the letter of a man loyal to his commander and compassionate toward his people. Yes, I have accepted."

But scarcely had those words settled in the court when Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan rose to his feet. Harsh, belligerent, and consumed by arrogance, Shimr moved swiftly to extinguish that fleeting moment of restraint. His voice cut through the hall with calculated ferocity:

"Do you accept this from him while he has already encamped on your land and is beside you?

By Allah ^[AZJ]! If he departs from your land without placing his hand in your hand, he will be more deserving of strength and honour, and you will be more deserving of weakness and humiliation. So do not grant this, for it is from weakness!

Rather, al Hussein and his companions must surrender to your judgment. If you punish, then you are entitled to punish, and if you pardon, that is for you!"

It was a sharp and deliberate incitement. Shimr framed restraint as surrender and mercy as humiliation, invoking fear of lost authority to provoke Ibn Ziyad's pride.

Then, with calculated malice, Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan added another seed of suspicion:

"By Allah ^[AZJ], it has reached me that al Hussein and Umar ibn Sa'd sit between the two camps and speak for most of the night."

The implication was unmistakable, a suggestion of softness, if not collusion, cast upon Umar ibn Sa'd and designed to poison Ibn Ziyad's mind.

Ibn Ziyad, already inclined toward cruelty and resolute in his desire for Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s] blood, turned to Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan and replied:

"You have spoken well. Your opinion is the correct one."

With those words, the final opportunity to avert the catastrophe was extinguished. The last fragile opening for restraint and the avoidance of bloodshed was deliberately cast aside.



THE SUMMONS OF SHIMR IBN DHI'L JAWSHAN

From within the halls of the governor's palace in Kufa, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad composed his reply to Umar ibn Sa'd. In this letter, all pretence fell away.

The veiled language and political manoeuvring that had once cloaked his intentions gave way to brutal clarity. His words laid bare the long-harboured desire that had guided Ibn Ziyad from the outset: the spilling of the blood of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Abul Faraj relates that Ibn Ziyad dispatched a further message to Umar ibn Sa'd, declaring:

“O son of Sa'd! You have been a man of ease and extravagance.

Now fight this man, al Hussein, and use force against him!

Do not yield to any of his requests until he submits to my command!”

Muhammad ibn Abi Talib relates that Umar ibn Sa'd received this letter, he then deliberately withheld this directive from the Imam ^[a.s], for Ibn Sa'd knew with certainty that the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] would never offer allegiance to Yazid.

This explicit command, stripped of all ambiguity, is likewise preserved in al Irshad and Tadhkirat al Khawass.

Abu Mikhnaḥ narrates from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, who narrates from Humayd ibn Muslim, that without delay Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad summoned Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan. Placing the folded letter into his hand, Ibn Ziyad issued his orders with chilling precision:

“Take this letter to Umar ibn Sa'd and let him offer al Hussein and his companions the chance to submit to my authority.

If they agree, then let him send them to me in submission.

But if they refuse, then he should fight them. If Umar ibn Sa'd does this, then listen to him and obey him.

But if Ibn Sa'd refuses, then you should fight them and take command of the army; attack al Hussein, strike off his neck, and send his head to me.”

Abu Mikhnaḥ further narrates, from al Harith ibn Husayrah, who narrates from Abdullah ibn Shurayk al Amiri, that as Shimr prepared to depart the court of Ibn Ziyad, a man rose beside him. It was Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil. ¹⁵³

His paternal aunt was Lady Umm al Banin, the wife of Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s], who had borne him the valiant sons; al Abbas, Abdullah, Jafar, and Uthman.

Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil spoke, his words measured but urgent:

“May Allah ^[AZJ] make the governor prosper!

The sons of our sister are with al Hussein. If you are in agreement, write a letter of immunity for them.”

¹⁵³ Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil had an aunt named Lady Umm al Banin, daughter of Hizam, who was married to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s] and bore him sons: al Abbas ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn Ali, Jafar ibn Ali, and Uthman ibn Ali. For this reason, Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil referred to her as a sister and said, “The sons of our sister are with al Hussein. If you see fit to write them a letter of safety, then do so.”

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad replied without hesitation:

“Yes, by all means.”

In truth, Ibn Ziyad sensed an opportunity to fracture the ranks of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and strip the Imam ^[a.s] of further support. Ibn Ziyad summoned his scribe at once.

The quill moved swiftly, drafting a pledge of safety for the four brothers, which was then sealed with the governor's mark. Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil sent the letter ahead with his bondsman, a man named Kuzman, who travelled swiftly towards Karbala.

The chroniclers preserve what followed, recording the moment verbatim in al Irshad and al Tadhkirah. When Kuzman reached Karbala, he hurried towards the sons of Lady Umm al Banin and called out:

“Here is a guarantee of immunity which has been sent by your maternal uncle, Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil.”

The brothers answered with one voice:

“Convey our greetings to our uncle, Abdullah ibn Abi al Muhil, and tell him that we have no need of his guarantee of immunity.

Indeed, the guarantee of Allah ^[AZJ] is better than that of the son of Sumayyah.”



THE AMASSING OF ARMIES

THE RECRUITMENT WITHIN KUFA

The efforts of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to mobilise the Iraqi forces toward Karbala now entered their swiftest and most ominous phase. The governor of Kufa sought to gather tens of thousands for a single purpose: the murder of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

Al Futuh relates that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ordered the people of Kufa to assemble within the great mosque. When the congregation had gathered in full, Ibn Ziyad emerged and mounted the pulpit. After praising and glorifying Allah ^[AZJ], Ibn Ziyad addressed the masses:

“O people! You have experienced the rule of the descendants of Sufyan and found them to be as you desired. You know that Yazid is a man of good character, of praiseworthy conduct, benevolent toward the people, a protector of the frontiers, and one who bestows grants when they are deserved. Likewise was his father Muawiyah in his own time.

After him, his son Yazid ibn Muawiyah honours the servants of Allah ^[AZJ], enriches them with wealth, and elevates them in rank. Moreover, the Commander of the Faithful has increased his favours upon you.

Yazid ibn Muawiyah has written to me, instructing me to increase your stipends manifold, and he has ordered that they be made abundant for you all, and that I prepare you to march against his enemy, al Hussein ibn Ali. So listen to him and obey. And Peace.”

With that, Ibn Ziyad descended from the pulpit. The treasuries were opened, and gold and silver poured forth, flowing not only into hands but into hearts.

The stipends once reserved for the people of Sham were now distributed among the people of Kufa. The command was unmistakable: march to Umar ibn Sa'd and join him in war against Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Al Futuh states that, one by one, the commanders stepped forward.

The first to answer the call was Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan al Saluli, who would command four thousand horsemen.

The prospective army of Umar ibn Sa'd now stood at 9,000 men. Then a man called Zayd ibn Rakkab al Kalbi came forward, bound to the oath, commanding two thousand men.

The prospective army of Umar ibn Sa'd now stood at 11,000 men. Then stepped forth al Hussein ibn Numayr al Sakuni, pledging four thousand troops. After him, al Musab al Mari committed three thousand men to the cause.

The prospective army of Umar ibn Sa'd now stood at 18,000 men. And last among the assembly, Nasr ibn Harbah pledged two thousand more.

The prospective army of Umar ibn Sa'd now stood at 20,000 men. Twenty thousand armed men stood arrayed against the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], which contained fewer than a hundred.

Within Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, triumph and euphoria swelled.

This number alone, Ibn Ziyad believed, was sufficient to annihilate Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Yet beyond the tally of swords and spears, a greater victory had already been secured in his mind. Ibn Ziyad had succeeded in forging Iraq, and Kufa in particular, into a single war machine aimed at the household of prophethood.

It was an achievement colossal and cruel in scale.

And yet, an army of twenty thousand was still not enough.

Behind a mask of composure, Ibn Ziyad concealed a blazing pride as he surveyed his commanders. But one notable figure was absent: Shabath ibn Ribī al Riyahi.

Tasliyat al Majalis relates that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad summoned Shabath, saying: “Come to me so that I may dispatch you to fight al Hussein.”

Shabath ibn Ribī feigned illness and sought to excuse himself.

In response, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad sent Shabath a letter, quoting a verse:

“Now then! My messenger has informed me that you pretend to be sick, and I fear lest you be among those who;

‘When they meet the believers they say, ‘We believe’, but when alone with their evil associates they say, ‘We are definitely with you; we were only mocking.’ ^(Q2:14)

If you persist in our obedience, then hasten to come to us.”

Shabath ibn Ribī eventually arrived after the Isha prayer, deliberately timing his entrance so that Ibn Ziyad would not clearly see his face, which bore no trace of illness.

When Shabath arrived, Ibn Ziyad received him warmly, seated him beside himself, “I desire that you go to fight that man, al Hussein, and thereby assist Umar ibn Sa'd.”

Al Manaqib relates that, after flattering Shabath and pressuring him with gifts and wealth, Ibn Ziyad succeeded. Shabath ibn Ribī surrendered to greed and pledged obedience. Shabath was dispatched with one thousand horsemen.

The prospective army of Umar ibn Sa'd now numbered 21,000 men.

Then came Hajjar ibn Abjar, who pledged another one thousand riders.

Al Futuh states that the army thus reached twenty-two thousand men, comprised of both cavalry and infantry, an extraordinary force by any measure.

Al Futuh further states that the prospective army of Umar ibn Sa'd thus reached 22,000 men, comprising both horsemen and foot soldiers, an extraordinary number.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal further reports that Ibn Ziyad instructed al Harith ibn Yazid al Ruwaymi to ride to Karbala and reinforce Ibn Sa'd.

Yet as these commanders were dispatched with their contingents, reports soon reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad that some soldiers failed to arrive at Karbala. The roads that led outward from Kufa did not carry only marching ranks, they also bore quiet acts of refusal.

Some people recoiled at the prospect of waging war for Ibn Ziyad, and cowered away from being in a battle, and thus deserted along the way under the cover of distance, while others lingered behind, delaying, or withdrawing altogether.

In response, Ibn Ziyad moved swiftly to close this breach of obedience. He appointed Suwayd ibn Abdul Rahman al-Minqari to command a cavalry patrol around Kufa, tasking Suwayd with scouring the city and its outskirts to seize anyone who had failed to depart.

The streets and pathways of Kufa, already tense, now fell under scrutiny, as riders searched for those attempting to evade conscription.

While carrying out this order, Suwayd encountered a man from Al Sham who had come to Kufa only to collect an inheritance, an outsider to the unfolding conflict, yet now caught within its tightening grasp.

Suwayd arrested him and sent him to Ibn Ziyad, who ordered that the man be executed publicly and his death made a spectacle. When the people witnessed this, fear spread through Kufa, and they began to depart in masses for Karbala.

Thus finally, twenty-two thousand soldiers were amassed, all arrayed against a single encampment that held scarcely a hundred men.



THE ARRIVAL OF SHIMR IN KARBALA

As the advance of Umar ibn Sa'd with four thousand soldiers pressed forward, other movements unfolded simultaneously across the plains. Reinforcements came in waves, one after another, until the land facing the encampment of Imam al Hussein ^(a.s) was darkened by steel and men. Weaponry was amassed, banners multiplied, and the numbers continued to swell, all converging toward a single, ominous destination.

According to Manaqib and al Luhuf, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad did not cease dispatching troops toward Karbala until twenty thousand horsemen had gathered under the command of Umar ibn Sa'd.

Al Irshad reports, transmitting from the Maqatal of Muhammad ibn Abi Talib, that when Ibn Ziyad sent Umar ibn Sa'd, he was already encamped with nine thousand men.

Umar ibn Sa'd was soon joined by Yazid ibn Rukab al Kalbi with two thousand, followed by the arrival of Hussein ibn Tamim al Sukuni with four thousand.

Thereafter came al Mazini with three thousand men, and then Nasr ibn so-and-so with two thousand more, bringing the total to twenty thousand, composed of both cavalry and infantry.

Al Shafi'i, in his book Matalib al Su'ul, places the number higher, stating that they were twenty-two thousand. Shaykh al Saduq narrates in his Amali, through his chain from Imam al Sadiq ^(a.s), that the gradual amassing of forces reached close to thirty thousand by the time the armies had fully converged in Karbala.

At this stage, a letter from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad reached Umar ibn Sa'd. It carried a tone of command, leaving no space for hesitation:

"I have left you with no excuse against fighting al Hussein, by providing you with a large cavalry and infantry.

Make sure that you do not take any step unless you consult with me constantly, keeping me informed through messengers morning and evening. And Peace."

From that moment onward, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad continued to send message after message to Umar ibn Sa'd, urging Ibn Sa'd to hasten the confrontation and bring the matter to its bloody conclusion.

It was around the 6th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The entire army had now assembled and was firmly placed under the command of Umar ibn Sa'd. Abu Mikhnaf relates from Abdullah ibn Sharik al Amiri that it was then that the most accursed of men entered the plains of Karbala: Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan.

Shimr made his way directly to the tent of Umar ibn Sa'd, the ambitions of Kufa beating within his chest, embodied in the letter of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad that Shimr clutched tightly as he walked.

Dust still hung thick in the air when Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan trudged forwards and entered the command tent of Umar ibn Sa'd and thrust the letter forward.

Umar ibn Sa'd broke the seal and read, and the colour drained from his face.

"Woe be upon you! What is the matter with you? May Allah ^{AZJ} keep you distant from your home! May Allah ^{AZJ} make hateful what you have brought to me!"

Umar ibn Sa'd rebuked Shimr further, for reports had reached Ibn Sa'd regarding the incident in the court of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad:

"By Allah ^{AZJ}, I believe it was you who persuaded him not to consider what I had written to him. You have ruined matters for us after we had hoped to reach an amicable resolution.

Al Hussein will never surrender, by Allah ^{AZJ}!

The blood of his father runs in his veins, and there is a noble soul between his two sides."

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan met the rebuke with a cold, unflinching stare. Shimr was unmoved by reproach and untouched by shame.

"Tell me what you intend to do. Will you carry out the orders of your governor and kill his enemy? If not, then hand over the command of the army to me."

Umar ibn Sa'd replied without hesitation:

"No! There will be no share of glory in this for you.

I will carry out what is required, not you. Go and take charge of the foot soldiers."

And with that exchange, the army of Umar ibn Sa'd stood complete, its ranks filled, its intentions sealed, and its fate now bound.



THE CALL OF DESTINY; THE TRIBE OF BANU ASAD

It was later in the day of the 6th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad continued relentlessly to dispatch reinforcements to Umar ibn Sa'd, until the forces amassed against Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} reached thirty thousand soldiers, drawn from both cavalry and infantry.

The plain of Karbala grew dense with steel and men, and the encampments of the noble Imam ^{a.s} found themselves increasingly hemmed in by an ever-tightening ring of hostility.

It is recorded in Ansab al Ashraf that, at this moment of grave imbalance, Habib ibn Muzahir approached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and said,

"O son of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, there are nomads from the tribe of Banu Asad living here between the two rivers. They are only one station away from us.

Do you permit me to approach them and invite them to join us?

Perhaps, through them, Allah ^{AZJ} will strengthen your position or protect you from harm."

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, "I grant you permission."

Under the cover of night, Habib ibn Muzahir set out toward the encampments of Banu Asad. Habib travelled in disguise so that he might evade the patrols and sentries that surrounded the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}.

When Habib reached the settlement, he removed his disguise, and the men of Banu Asad immediately recognised him, for Habib ibn Muzahir was known among them as a man of faith, virtue, and noble standing.

They asked Habib the reason for his visit.

Habib ibn Muzahir replied,

"I have brought you the best of gifts. I have come to invite you to assist the grandson of our Prophet. He is here with a group of believers, each of whom is better than a thousand men. They will neither abandon him, betray him, nor surrender him to his enemies."

Then, raising his voice with firm conviction, Habib continued his call:

"Umar ibn Sa'd has surrounded them.

You are my tribesmen, and I invite you towards success. Today, heed my words and assist him, so that you may attain honour in this world and the Hereafter.

I swear by Allah ^{AZJ}, whoever among you is martyred in the way of Allah ^{AZJ} alongside the grandson of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws} will attain a lofty station among the companions of Muhammad ^{saws}."

Bihar al Anwar relates that a man named Abdullah ibn Bishr rose at once and declared,

"I am the first to answer this call."

Abdullah ibn Bishr then recited the couplets:

"The people will know, when they hesitate, and when the warriors shrink back in fear,
That I am a steadfast fighter, unwavering, as fierce as a lion in its den, fearless and strong."

His words ignited the hearts of the men of Banu Asad. Resolve surged through the gathering, and soon nearly seventy men rose, armed themselves, and prepared to march toward Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Among those present was a man named Jabalah ibn Amr. Before the group could depart, Jabalah withdrew from their ranks, mounted his horse, and rode swiftly to Umar ibn Sa'd, betraying their intention.

Upon receiving this news, Umar ibn Sa'd reacted with haste and alarm. Ibn Sa'd dispatched Azraq ibn al Harith al Saydawi at the head of four hundred horsemen, ordering Azraq to block the path between Banu Asad and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

As the men of Banu Asad reached the banks of the Euphrates under the darkness of night, they found their passage barred by these forces. Words sharpened into threats, and threats ignited into a clash. Habib ibn Muzahir cried out to al Azraq ibn al Harith:

“Woe to you! What do you have against us?

Leave us alone. Let others bear the burden of our misfortune instead of you.”

Yet Azraq ibn al Harith refused to relent.

Realising that they could not overcome the overwhelming force arrayed against them, the men of Banu Asad withdrew and returned to their settlement.

Fearing the vengeance of Umar ibn Sa'd, the Banu Asad abandoned their encampment altogether, dispersing into the darkness of the night.

Grieved and burdened by the weight of this failure, Habib ibn Muzahir returned to the Imam ^[a.s.] and relayed all that had transpired.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] listened in silence. Then, with a voice heavy with submission and sorrow, the Imam ^[a.s.] said:

“There is no might and no power except with Allah ^[AZJ], the Most High, the Most Great.”



THE BLOCKADE OF WATER

It was the 7th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Tarikh al Tabari records, through the narration of Abu Mikhnaf from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, who in turn narrates from Humayd ibn Muslim al Azdi, that on this day a fateful letter arrived from Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to Umar ibn Sa'd, one that would alter not only the course of events, but the very landscape of Karbala itself.

The letter read:

“As for what follows: Block al Hussein and his companions from the water.

They must not taste a single drop of it, just as was done to the pious, virtuous, and oppressed Commander of the Faithful, Uthman ibn Affan.”

For those willing to see, this command laid bare the sectarian fracture that now defined the plains of Karbala.

The camp of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad framed their cruelty as vengeance for the third Caliph, Uthman, to be exacted upon the son of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s.].

The blade of that grievance was now turned against the household of the Prophet ^[saws].

Humayd ibn Muslim further narrates that, upon receiving this order, Umar ibn Sa'd dispatched Amr ibn Hajjaj with five hundred horsemen, commanding Amr ibn Hajjaj to station himself along the branch of the river nearest to the camp of the Imam ^[a.s.].

They descended upon the banks of the Euphrates and sealed every approach, blocking Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] and his companions from the water, under explicit instruction that they were not to drink from it, not even a single drop.

Thus, the camp of the Imam ^[a.s.] was delivered into the tightening grip of thirst.

Tarikh al Tabari states that this command was implemented three days before the day of Ashura. It was therefore around the night of the 7th of Muharram that the waters of the Euphrates were strictly denied to the family of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

Al Futuh states that the thirst of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], and of those within his camp, soon grew desperate due to the blockade. Their suffering intensified to such an extent that they became severely parched, their bodies weakened, and death by thirst loomed over them.

Al Futuh further relates that, upon witnessing the desperate condition of the camp, the companion Burayr ibn Khudayr approached Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Burayr sought permission to approach Umar ibn Sa'd, hoping that perhaps Ibn Sa'd might be shamed into abandoning such an unabashed act. The Imam ^[a.s.] granted Burayr permission, and the valiant Burayr ibn Khudayr rode forth toward the Euphrates.

When Burayr reached the riverbank, he called out to Umar ibn Sa'd. Shortly thereafter, Umar ibn Sa'd emerged from among the ranks, flanked by his commanders.

They halted before Burayr, facing him across the scorched earth.

Burayr spoke first: “O Umar ibn Sa'd, will you allow the household of the Prophet ^{saws} to die of thirst, while you block the path between them and the Euphrates so that they cannot drink from it? And you claim that you are cognisant of Allah ^{AZJ} and His Messenger ^{saws}?”

Umar ibn Sa'd lowered his head to the ground and remained silent for a time.

Then Ibn Sa'd lifted it and said: “By Allah ^{AZJ}, I know this for certain, O Burayr, that whoever fights them and usurps their right will inevitably enter the Fire.”

Burayr ibn Khudayr continued to admonish Ibn Sa'd, attempting to awaken what remained of his conscience. But with every word, the patience of Umar ibn Sa'd diminished, until at last he lashed out in frustration:

“Woe be upon you, O Burayr! Are you telling me to abandon the governorship of al Rayy and allow someone else to take it? I can never bring myself to accept that!”

All admonition was wasted upon a man so deeply ensnared by the desires of this world. There were no words left that could draw Umar ibn Sa'd toward righteousness.

Burayr ibn Khudayr turned his steed away in disgust, aghast at the paltry prize for which Umar ibn Sa'd was prepared to massacre Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Enraged by the shamelessness that permeated the Kufan ranks, Burayr rode back toward the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}. Upon reaching the Imam ^{a.s}, Burayr said:

“O son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, Umar ibn Sa'd is prepared to kill you in order to secure the governorship of al Rayy.”

Tarikh al Ya'qubi states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued to remonstrate with them in the name of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Almighty, yet they answered the Imam ^{a.s} with nothing but ultimatums. Before the Imam ^{a.s}, they placed only two paths: war or surrender.

A surrender meant arrest; arrest meant delivery to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad for judgement, and beyond that, submission to whatever decree Yazid ibn Muawiyah might pronounce.



THE SIEGE OF EUPHRATES

The searing heat of Karbala bore down mercilessly upon the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, its cruelty magnified by the calculated deprivation of water.

As the sun scorched the plain, thirst tightened its grip upon the children, the women, and the companions alike. The camp stood at the very edge of devastation. The Euphrates flowed close by, yet its life-giving waters had been turned into an instrument of torment.

At this critical juncture, it became necessary to break the blockade by force.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal narrates from Humayd ibn Muslim that when the thirst became severe upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions, the Imam ^{a.s} called for his brother, al Abbas ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, also his standard-bearer and commander.

The Imam ^{a.s} entrusted al Abbas with a mission of grave urgency, dispatching him with thirty horsemen and twenty foot soldiers, each carrying a waterskin, commanding them to force their way through the enemy blockade and bring water back to the camp.

The detachment set out under the leadership of al Abbas. At its head rode Nafi ibn Hilal al Jamali, carrying the standard. Nafi ibn Hilal had earlier sent his horse ahead with four men from Kufa to reach the Imam ^{a.s} while on the road, alongside al Tirmimah ibn Adi. This marks the first report of his arrival to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at Karbala.

By the time the group departed from the camp, night had fallen. Darkness spread across the plain, draping the desert in shadow and concealing their movement as they advanced toward the river.

Tarikh al Tabari records that Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi, stationed with his men at the river, sensed the approach of a lone rider. Amr shouted into the darkness, “Who goes there?” As the rider drew nearer, Amr called out again, “What have you come for?”

Nafi ibn Hilal answered Amr firmly, giving his name, and added,

“I am a cousin of yours from among the companions of al Hussein. I have come to drink from this water which you have prevented us from.”

Amr ibn al Hajjaj shouted back, “Drink as much as you like.”

But Nafi ibn Hilal understood the trap concealed within those words. The water was forbidden not in principle, but in intention; it was denied to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his family alone, while being selectively offered to tempt his companions into abandoning the Imam ^{a.s} for the sake of their own survival.

Without hesitation, Nafi ibn Hilal replied,

“No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, I will not drink a single drop of it while al Hussein is thirsty, as are his companions who stand before you.”

At that moment, the rest of the detachment arrived, and with them al Abbas ibn Ali.

Amr ibn al Hajjaj responded coldly,

“There is no way that all these men will drink from the river!

We have been stationed here for no purpose other than to bar them from the water!”

As the foot soldiers reached the riverbank, Nafi ibn Hilal ordered them forward. They rushed ahead, swiftly filling the waterskins amid an atmosphere thick with imminent violence. In response, the five hundred men under Amr ibn al Hajjaj surged forward in a brutal charge, descending upon the water-carriers with force and fury.

A fierce fight broke out at the river between the two sides. One group of the Imam's ^[a.s] men engaged in combat, while another hurried to fill the waterskins.

This was the situation that al Abbas had anticipated.

With disciplined precision, the mounted companions struck. Al Abbas ibn Ali and Nafi ibn Hilal led the assault, driving their horses directly into the enemy ranks. Steel flashed in the dark as they cut through the formation with determination and steadfast strength, forcing the enemy back and carving a protective corridor for the water-bearers.

When skins were filled, al Abbas and Nafi withdrew to their men and commanded, "Go."

They alone remained behind, two unyielding lions anchoring the rear, shielding the retreat with their bodies. Amr ibn al Hajjaj regrouped his forces and launched another heavy charge, pressing them with renewed aggression. The assault forced them back slightly, yet it failed to break their stand.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim al Azdi, that during this clash, Nafi ibn Hilal speared a man from the tribe of Suda, one of the companions of Amr ibn al Hajjaj. The man dismissed the wound as minor, but it worsened, reopened, and ultimately caused his death.

Al Khawarizmi records that once more, al Abbas and Nafi ibn Hilal repelled the assault, holding their ground until the water-carriers reached safety. Several of the men of Amr ibn al Hajjaj were killed in the fighting, yet not a single companion of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] fell.

Thus, the detachment returned victorious, the waterskins filled, and brought them back to the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

It was from this night, from this decisive act of courage and leadership, that al Abbas ibn Ali was honoured with his eternal title: 'al Saqqa', the Water-Bearer.



THE HASTE TO BLOODSHED

The enemy were now hurried in their attempts to force a battle with the patient Imam ^[a.s].

"Your desires from the world were abstentious, your efforts were far-removed from its embellishments, your glances removed from its joys, and your desire for the hereafter was well-known. When tyranny became wide-spread, injustice removed its veil, wickedness called upon its followers. They rushed to engage you in combat, descended swiftly upon you." ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

Shaykh al Saduq, in al Amali, records a sombre report transmitted by Abdullah ibn al Mansur, who narrated from Imam al Sadiq ^[a.s], from his father Imam al Baqir ^[a.s], from his grandfather Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^[a.s].

The report relates that, as the early days of Muharram slipped away, word reached Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad that Umar ibn Sa'd continued to hesitate. He was agitated that Umar ibn Sa'd had still not yet advanced against Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Instead, reports would inform Ibn Ziyad that Umar ibn Sa'd was sitting with the Imam ^[a.s] in the evenings, engaging the Imam ^[a.s] in discussion, unwilling to draw the sword against him. Ibn Ziyad had now grown incredibly restless with anticipation for the spilling of the blood of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Messengers now travelled ceaselessly between Kufa and Karbala, carrying fragments of news, rumours of hesitation, and whispers of reluctance within the ranks. With every report of delay, Ibn Ziyad's agitation intensified.

With each passing day, Ibn Ziyad demanded greater urgency, pressing for immediate confrontation with the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

At last, as recorded before, it is said that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad issued his first uncompromising command. Ibn Ziyad wrote with blunt cruelty, stripping his words of any pretence of justice or restraint, and sent his message southward toward Karbala:

"When this letter of mine comes to you, do not give al Hussein ibn Ali any respite.

Confine him and block him from the water, just as the water was withheld from Caliph Uthman during the days of the siege."

Tarikh al-Tabari records that a final letter soon followed, bearing the most decisive command of all. This time, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad addressed Umar ibn Sa'd without disguise or diplomacy, his words stripped of all pretence, leaving no room for delay or interpretation. The tone was no longer one of instruction, but of ultimatum, harsh, direct, and irreversible.

Abu Mikhnaf similarly narrates this letter through Abu Janab al-Kalbi, preserving its severity and intent. In this letter, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad declared:

"I did not send you to al Hussein so that you might delay, nor to grant him respite!

Nor did I send you to offer him peace or security, or to plead his case before me.

Listen well: if al Hussein and his companions agree to submit to my authority and surrender, then send them to me in submission. But if they refuse, then fight them until you kill them and mutilate their bodies, for that is what they deserve!"

The letter did not end there. It descended further into savagery, articulating the personal malice of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad in chilling detail:

“When al Hussein is killed, trample his chest and back with horses.

He is a rebel who has divided the people.

I would not normally harm anyone after death, but I have sworn that if I succeed in killing al Hussein, I will do this to him!

If you carry out our command, we will reward you as one who listens and obeys.

But if you refuse, then leave our service and our army, and hand over command of the soldiers to Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan.

We have authorised him to act on our behalf. And Peace.”

This letter would finally seal the fate of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], his family, and his companions. It was a written death sentence, pronounced in cold and unrestrained hatred.

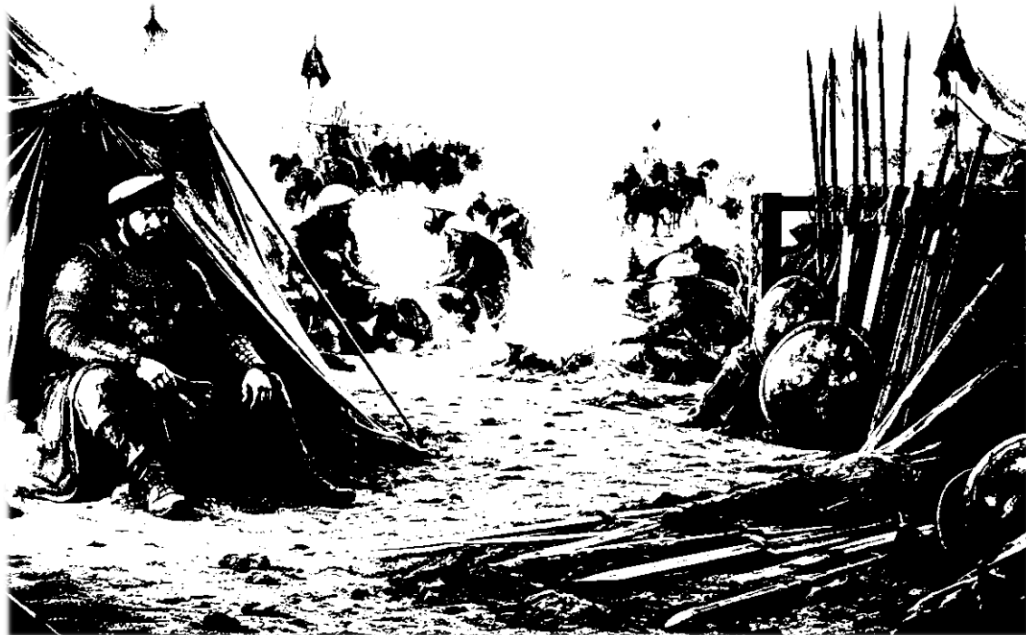
The name of Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan was deliberately invoked as a warning to Umar ibn Sa'd, for if he faltered, Shimr would carry out the deed without restraint.

Tarikh al Tabari states that, upon receiving this final command, Umar ibn Sa'd yielded to the pressure bearing down upon him.

It was the evening before the day of the 9th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Umar ibn Sa'd ordered his forces to prepare for battle with Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] on the following day. The army of Iraq stirred, weapons were readied, and the machinery of violence was set in motion.

As night crept slowly over Karbala, an oppressive stillness settled upon the plain. The silence grew heavier with every passing hour, burdened by what was now inevitable. The last fragile barrier between restraint and bloodshed had been torn away, and the dawn that approached would rise upon a historic day.



THE LETTER OF SAFETY

It was the morning of the 9th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The sun rose over the plain with an unyielding glare, casting long shadows across the encampments and the hardened faces of soldiers.

The plain of Karbala lay under a heavy stillness as the army of Umar ibn Sa'd completed its final preparations for battle.

The clatter of weapons, the tightening of armour, and the restless movement of horses filled the air with the dreaded sense of impending war.

Across the plain, the encampment of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] remained still. The tents stood clustered together, bound not by numbers or arms, but by faith, kinship, and unwavering conviction. Within them were women, children, and a small band of loyal companions.

It was then that Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan advanced from the ranks of the opposing army. Tarikh al Tabari records that the accursed enemy Shimr strode toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], his armour clinking loudly against the hush of the open plain.

When Shimr reached the outer edge of the tents, he halted, raised his voice, and called out toward the gathered companions:

“Where are the sons of our sister?”

His voice echoed across the stillness, but no one answered Shimr. The enemy of Allah ^[AZJ] was met with silence.

Al Malhuf relates that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] then turned to his brothers and said:

“Reply to him, even though he is a reprobate. He is from your maternal uncles.”

Among the Arabs, any man belonging to the tribe of one's mother was regarded as a maternal uncle, a khal, a designation rooted in lineage rather than affection.

From among the tents emerged al Abbas, Abdullah, Uthman, and Jafar, the sons of Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s.] and Lady Umm al Banin, daughter of Hizam ibn Rabiah al Kilabi.

They stepped forward together, their posture firm, their expressions composed, their hearts bound entirely to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Facing Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan, they called out:

“What do you want?!”

Shimr raised a parchment before them, his voice carrying a feigned note of concern:

“O sons of my sister, come and join my side, for you all have a guarantee of immunity.”

The response came without hesitation. Their allegiance to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] did not waver for an instant. They cursed Shimr openly, declaring:

“May Allah ^[AZJ] curse you and curse your guarantee of safety!

Even though you are our uncle, how can you grant us immunity while there is no immunity for the son of the Messenger of Allah ^{[saws]?}”

Their words struck with clarity and force. Yet Shimr, unwilling to retreat in disgrace, persisted. Al Malhuf states that he called out again, his voice now edged with desperation:

“Do not get yourselves killed along with your brother, al Hussein. Give your allegiance instead to the Commander of the Faithful, Yazid ibn Muawiyah.”

At this, al Abbas ibn Ali stepped forward, his voice rising like thunder:

“May your hands perish! A curse be upon your offer of immunity!

O enemy of Allah ^{AZJ}, do you ask us to leave our brother and master, al Hussein, the son of Fatimah, and enter into the service of the accursed, son of the accursed?”

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan stood stunned, his pride stripped from him, humiliation washing over his face. With heavy steps and burning rage, Shimr turned away and trudged back toward the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd, scorched by the open curses of the sons of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, hurled at him before all, sharp and unforgiving in their truth.



THE DRUMS OF WAR

It was the afternoon of the 9th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The sun had climbed mercilessly into the sky, pouring its unbearable heat upon the sands of Karbala. From the camp of the enemy came the summons of war.

“They confronted you with injustice and aggression. They violated your divine rights and oath. They angered your Lord ^{AZJ} and your grandfather, Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, and initiated battle against you. Hence, you stood firm to their spears and strikes. So when they saw you firm, fearless, and courageous, they set up their most malicious deceptions against you, and fought you with their deceit and viciousness.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

Tarikh al Tabari records that Umar ibn Sa'd, the appointed commander, prepared to address his army. Before Ibn Sa'd stood a vast force, more than thirty thousand armed men, horsemen and foot soldiers alike, their ranks dense.

Slowly and deliberately, the steed of Umar ibn Sa'd advanced until he reached the front of the amassed army. By this time, the Asr prayer had just been completed.

Umar ibn Sa'd tightened the reins of his horse and brought it to a halt. His gaze swept across the formations before him, lingering upon the commanders and banners aligned for battle. Abu Mikhnaf relates from Harith ibn Hasirah, who relates from Abdullah ibn Sharik, that as the sun approached its zenith on the 9th of Muharram, Umar ibn Sa'd raised his hand high and called out in a loud voice:

“O horsemen of Allah ^{AZJ}! Mount up, may you be blessed!”

Jeers erupted from the ranks. At the command of Umar ibn Sa'd, the cavalry mounted their steeds and began their advance toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions.

Thud.

The sound struck the earth, dull and heavy.

Thud.

It grew louder, joined by the deep roll of war drums. Thirty thousand men were on the move.

Countless hooves beat against the plain until the ground trembled beneath their approach. The noise swelled into a thunderous clamour that rolled across the open land.

The companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood watching as this spectacle unfolded before them: an ocean of hatred advancing toward their small and solitary camp.

The ground beneath them shook as the enemy closed the distance with every step.

The enemy's cavalry drew nearer, their cries of war echoing across the desolate plain.

Tarikh al Tabari states that at that moment Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was seated before his tent, his sword resting beside him. Overcome briefly, the Imam rested his eyes, his noble head bowed upon his knees. It was then that his sister, Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a}, alarmed by the mounting noise and the advancing army, hurried toward the Imam ^{a.s}.

Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} approached and cried out in distress,

“O brother, do you not hear the clamour that has drawn near?”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] slowly lifted his head, his gaze steady upon the plains of Karbala, and answered in a sombre tone,

“Indeed, O sister. I have just seen my grandfather Muhammad ^[saws], my father Ali, my mother Fatimah, and my brother al Hasan in a dream. They were calling to me,

‘O Hussein! Soon you will come to us.’”

Grief overwhelmed her. Sayyidah Zaynab ^[s.a] struck her face and cried out, “Woe unto me!”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] reassured her gently, “Woe is not for you, dear sister. Be patient. May the Most Merciful have mercy upon you.” ¹⁵⁴

At that moment, al Abbas ibn Ali entered, his presence urgent. Al Abbas said,

“O Master! The people have advanced towards you.”

Indeed, the enemy now marched closer to the camp.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] turned to al Abbas with haste and said,

“Ride out and meet them, O Abbas, O my brother, may my soul be ransomed for you.

Ask them what the matter is, what has changed their minds, and whether they have received any new instructions.”

Al Abbas mounted his steed, accompanied by nearly twenty riders, among them Zuhayr ibn al Qayn and Habib ibn Muzahir. They rode forth to meet the advancing cavalry, and the horse of al Abbas surged ahead of the rest, fearless and commanding, until they halted before the opposing ranks.

Al Abbas urged his steed forward and called out clearly,

“What has changed your mind? What do you want?”

They replied, “An order of the governor has come. We are to offer you the choice of submitting to his authority, or else we will fight you.”

With unwavering valour, al Abbas replied to them,

“Do not act hastily until I return to Aba Abdillah and inform him of what you have said.”

The enemy halted and answered, “Go and inform him, then return to us with his reply.”

Al Abbas turned his horse and rode swiftly back. al Abbas conveyed the message to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], while the remaining riders held their ground, facing the enemy without retreat.

In the tent of the Imam ^[a.s], the two brothers stood in a moment of weighted silence, for counsel and admonition had long ceased to soften the hearts of those before them.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] placed his noble hand upon the shoulder of al Abbas and said to him, “Return to them. If you can, convince them to delay the confrontation until tomorrow morning. Keep them away tonight so that we may spend the night in prayer to our Lord ^[AZJ], to supplicate to Him and seek His forgiveness.

For Allah ^[AZJ] knows that I have always loved praying to Him, reciting His Book, supplicating to Him frequently, and seeking His forgiveness.”

¹⁵⁴ Al Malhuf and Bihar al Anwar, vol. 44, transmit an alternative account that Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} struck her face and cried out in anguish. Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] addressed her, saying, “Be calm, lest the enemy rejoice over our sorrow,” seeking to restrain her grief.

Al Abbas bowed in obedience, took his leave with courtesy, and hastened back upon his steed toward the place where the two camps stood facing one another.

During the tense interval of al Abbas’s absence, the companions of the Imam ^[a.s] remained, admonishing the soldiers. Habib ibn Muzahir turned to Zuhayr ibn al Qayn and said,

“Speak to these people, or if you prefer, I shall speak to them.”

Zuhayr replied, “You were there at the beginning, so you speak to them.”

Habib ibn Muzahir then raised his voice so that it carried across the field and proclaimed, “By Allah ^[AZJ]! Who will be more wretched in the sight of Allah ^[AZJ] on the Day of Resurrection than those who stand before Him after having murdered the children, the progeny, and the family of His Messenger ^[saws], and the devout worshippers in this land who strive in prayer at dawn and remember Allah ^[AZJ] abundantly?”

From the enemy ranks came a sharp reply. It was Azrah ibn Qays, the treacherous man of Kufa who had once written letters inviting the Imam ^[a.s]. Azrah retorted with scorn,

“You have praised yourself as much as you could!”

Before Habib could respond, Zuhayr recognised the speaker and rebuked Azrah, saying,

“O Azrah! It is Allah ^[AZJ] Who has purified and guided that soul.

Be wary of Allah ^[AZJ], O Azrah, for I am a sincere adviser to you.

I beseech you before Allah ^[AZJ], O Azrah, do not participate in the killing of pure souls in order to aid those who have gone astray!”

Azrah ibn Qays smirked and answered with mockery,

“O Zuhayr! According to our information, you were not a partisan Shi'ah of this household. You used to be a partisan of Uthman!” ¹⁵⁵

Laughter and jeers rose from among the enemy ranks.

Zuhayr ibn al Qayn replied calmly, his words cutting through their derision,

“Does my present stance not make it clear that I am with them? By Allah ^[AZJ]! I never wrote to him, nor did I send him a messenger, nor did I promise him my help.

However, our paths brought us together. When I met him, I was reminded of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] and of al Hussein’s status in his eyes.

I became aware of what his enemies, and your people, intended for him.

I realised that I must help him, join his side, and place my life before his. I did this to restore the right of Allah ^[AZJ] and the right of His Messenger ^[saws], which you have forsaken!”

The sneers from the enemy ranks now ceased.

At that moment, al Abbas returned, his steed breaking through the stillness of the field. His arrival commanded silence in both camps, and all other voices fell quiet.

¹⁵⁵ This is the first occurrence in the Karbala narrative where the designation “Uthmani” is applied to Zuhayr ibn al Qayn. It also represents the earliest indication within the events of Karbala of an explicit division among Muslims regarding Uthman ibn Affan, specifically whether he was upon truth or falsehood. Those who upheld the view that Uthman was upon truth and had been wrongfully killed came to be identified as Uthmanis.

With composed authority, al Abbas proclaimed,

“O people! Indeed Aba Abdillah asks you to withdraw this evening so that he may reflect upon this matter, for it is a matter that has not yet been discussed between you and him. If morning comes, we shall meet, Allah ^[AZJ] willing. If we accept what you demand and seek, we shall comply; but if we dislike it, we shall reject it.”

It was a request for a final night of respite. Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] wished to turn them away for the evening so that he might order his affairs, prepare his household, and leave his final counsel and testament to his family.

Umar ibn Sa'd hesitated, not from conscience but from calculation.

Abdul Malik narrates from Imam al Sadiq ^[a.s] that Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and Umar ibn Sa'd were inwardly delighted at the strength and numbers of their army.

On this day, they considered Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and his companions to be helpless, and were convinced that no one would come to his aid and that the people of Iraq had abandoned him. Still, Umar ibn Sa'd turned to Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan and asked,

“O Shimr, what do you think?”

Muthir al Ahzan narrates that Shimr replied with his habitual rancour,

“If I were the commander, I would not grant them any respite.”

Ibn Sa'd responded curtly, “I wish it were not so.”

Then Umar ibn Sa'd turned his steed toward his cavalry and called out,

“What do you all think?”

Al Malhuf states that Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi shouted back,

“Glory be to Allah ^[AZJ]! By Allah ^[AZJ], even if these were Daylamis and had asked for this, we would have agreed. But these are the family of the Prophet ^[saws]; how can we deny them? Give them respite.”

Qays ibn al Ash'ath ¹⁵⁶ added, “Respond to what they have asked you, for by my life, they will come to you with battle tomorrow morning.”

From al Harith ibn Husayrah, from Abdullah ibn Shurayk al Amiri, it is reported that Umar ibn Sa'd muttered bitterly, “By Allah ^[AZJ], if I knew that they would act as they claim, I would not have delayed them until the evening.”

By this, Umar ibn Sa'd meant that had he believed their request was for anything other than preparation for battle, he would not have granted it.

Reluctantly, the delay was approved. Umar ibn Sa'd instructed his herald to announce, “We have granted respite for this day and night to al Hussein and his companions.”

Al Abbas and his twenty riders withdrew from the standoff and returned to the camp.

Behind them, the army of ibn Sa'd settled again into their tents, arranging their weapons and sharpening their blades, finalising their preparations for war on the following day.

¹⁵⁶ On the day of Ashura, Qays ibn al Ashath was placed in command over the contingents of Rabiah and Kindah. He was the brother of Muhammad ibn al Ashath, the killer of Muslim ibn Aqil, and the brother of Jadah, the woman responsible for the murder of Imam al Hasan ^[a.s].

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Harith ibn Husayrah, from Abdullah ibn Shurayk al Amiri, who reports from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^[a.s]:

“A messenger from Umar ibn Sa'd came to us. He stood so that his voice could be heard and announced, ‘We give you respite until tomorrow. If you surrender, we will take you to our governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad; but if you refuse, we shall not leave you alone!’”

With that, the herald turned and departed.

Similarly, in al Kamil al Ziyarat, a narration is attributed to Imam al Sadiq ^[a.s]:

“The ninth (Tasua) is the day when al Hussein and his companions, may Allah ^[AZJ] be pleased with them, were besieged in Karbala by the soldiers of al Sham, who surrounded al Hussein and stationed themselves near him.

Ibn Marjanah and Umar ibn Sa'd rejoiced at the strength and numbers of their army.

On this day, they considered al Hussein and his companions, may Allah ^[AZJ] be pleased with them, to be helpless, and were convinced that no one could come to his aid and that the people of Iraq had abandoned al Hussein.

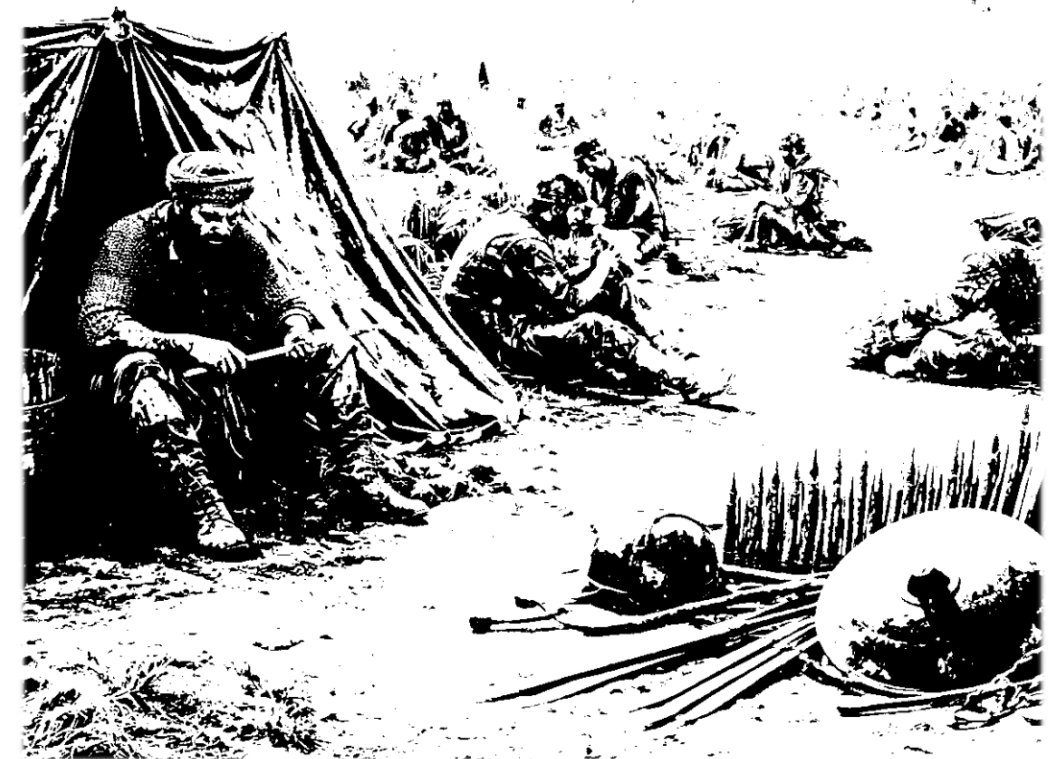
May my father be a ransom for the stranger who was deemed helpless!”

The plain of Karbala exhaled once more as bloodshed was deferred for that day.

Beyond the flickering fires of the enemy camp, metal was readied and blades were honed, while within the tents of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], the murmur of prayers rose softly into the night sky, as stars glittered above on this clear night, for the most tragic of days was now imminent.

Thus descended the heavy and ominous night of Ashura.

The approaching dawn would bring with it events that will resonate for eternity.



THE NIGHT BEFORE ASHURA

THE CALL OF DESTINY; AL DAHHAK IBN ABDULLAH

It was the evening before Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Dusk settled heavily over the plains of Karbala as the light of day withdrew swiftly.

In the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the call to prayer rose, and the Maghrib prayer was offered in congregation. When the prayer ended, the companions dispersed quietly to their tents, each man preparing himself for the trial that awaited him with the coming dawn.

It was during this fragile stillness that the camp sensed movement beyond its perimeter. Two solitary riders approached from the darkness, beyond the enemy lines.

Against all odds, they had evaded the siege and arrived in disguise, slipping through the cordon that encircled the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abdullah ibn Asim al Faishi that these riders were Malik ibn al Nadr al Arhabi and al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi.

Al Dahhak was a man of the tribe of Hamadan, and he would come to be present in the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} on the night of Ashura.

The two men dismounted hastily. After identifying themselves to the companions assigned to guard the camp, they were escorted inward, moving quickly through the rows of tents toward the dwelling of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

As they passed the tents of those who had chosen to remain loyal to their Imam ^{a.s} on this ominous and decisive night, the air was alive with supplication, remembrance, and the quiet calm of men who knew they would not see another sunset.

Before long, Malik ibn al Nadr and al Dahhak stood at the entrance of the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. From within, emanated the most soulful sound of Qur'anic recitation.

The Imam ^{a.s} sensed their presence and lifted his gaze toward the entrance, his attention settling upon the two weary riders who had arrived under cover of night.

They greeted the Imam ^{a.s} and sought permission to enter. The Imam ^{a.s} returned their greeting with warmth and welcomed them graciously into his presence.

After a brief exchange, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} asked them of their purpose in coming to his camp on such a night. By this time, the isolation of the Imam ^{a.s} was evident.

An army numbering more than twenty thousand had surrounded the Imam ^{a.s}, its banners filling the horizon. The water of the Euphrates had been cut off, children cried from thirst, and the declaration of war had already been made. The situation was dire, and any man who approached the Imam ^{a.s} did so knowing that imminent death was lurking near.

Malik ibn al Nadr and al Dahhak replied,

“We have come to greet you, to ask Allah ^{AZJ} to grant you well-being, to renew our pledge to you, and to inform you of the condition of the people. They have united against you with firm resolution to fight, so consider what you deem fitting.”

Their words were sincere, though they carried news the Imam ^{a.s} already knew too well. The betrayal of the people, the gathering of swords against the Imam ^{a.s}, and the narrowing of all paths had long been clear.

With a heart anchored in trust, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied simply,

“Allah ^{AZJ} is sufficient for me, and He is the best disposer of affairs.”

The two men understood the gravity of his words. They knew the desperation of the camp, the cruelty of the siege, and the hatred pressing in from every direction.

Believing they had fulfilled their duty, they rose to depart.

Once more, they greeted the Imam ^{a.s} and supplicated to Allah ^{AZJ} on his behalf.

But before they could leave, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} addressed them again. His voice was gentle, yet it carried a question that cut through:

“What is it that prevents you both from standing with me?”

Malik ibn al Nadr answered first. “I am burdened by debt and I have dependents.”

Al Dahhak followed, “I am indebted as well, though I have no children.”

Then, as though compelled by the sight of the Imam ^{a.s} so abandoned, al Dahhak added, “But if you release me from obligation, then if I do not find the means to fight, I will fight for you for as long as my presence remains of benefit to you.”

The Imam ^{a.s} looked upon al Dahhak, his gaze steady. In an hour when the world had turned its back upon the Imam ^{a.s}, even conditional loyalty carried meaning, and even a hesitant soul could still find its place upon the Ark of Salvation. With generosity and understanding, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied, “In that case, you are free to do so.”

And so al Dahhak ibn Abdullah remained in the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. From that night onward, he became a witness to the final hours of the Imam ^{a.s} and his companions.

Al Dahhak would later recount what he saw, preserving for history the atmosphere of that solemn night and the unfolding of events on the fateful day of Ashura.

It is also narrated through another chain, as recorded by Shaykh al Saduq in Thawab al Amal, that earlier in the journey at Qasr Bani Muqatil, a similar exchange took place with Amr ibn Qays al Mashraqi and his cousin, who came before the Imam ^{a.s} and were received with honour. During their meeting, one of them remarked upon the Imam’s ^{a.s} beard, asking whether its darkness was natural or dyed.

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, “It is dye; we of the Banu Hashim age early.”

Then the Imam ^{a.s} asked them directly, “Have you two come to support me?”

They responded with hesitation, citing debts, dependants, and entrusted property, fearing they would be unable to fulfil their obligations.

The Imam ^{a.s} did not compel them. Instead, he said, “Then depart, so that you may not hear my cry for help nor witness the distress of my caravan. For whoever hears our call and sees our state, yet does not aid us, it befits Allah ^{AZJ} to cast him into the Fire.”

Thus they turned away, leaving behind them the Imam ^{a.s} as he continued upon the path of his destined stand.

THE SERMON ON THE NIGHT OF ASHURA

It was after dusk on the night before Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Darkness settled over the land. The night grew steadily colder as it deepened.

The sky stretched vast and unbroken above them, the moon suspended in radiant brilliance over the open wilderness. The heavens appeared serene, untouched by the turmoil gathering below, yet beneath that deceptive calm the night bore an unmistakable sense of foreboding. Within sight of the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the enemy encampment spread across the plain like a sea of firelit tents. Their canvases extended far into the distance, illuminated by flickering flames whose smoke curled upward into the cold night air.

From among their ranks arose bursts of laughter, coarse jeering, and scattered cries. Men ate and drank loudly, immersed in revelry, arrogance, and false confidence. To them, the matter was already settled; this night was but the prelude to an assured triumph.

Yet another sound carried from the enemy camp, sharper and more relentless than their laughter: the harsh grinding of metal against stone. Swords were being honed, spearheads sharpened, arrows repaired and tightly bound. The scrape and clang of preparation rolled across the darkness without pause, a grim counterpoint to their celebration.

Beneath the tranquil face of the moon, the plain of Karbala had become a place suspended between stillness and slaughter; one camp occupied by men intoxicated with the certainty of worldly victory, the other by the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, awaiting the decree of Allah with steadfast hearts.

The enemy rejoiced openly, for as Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} narrated in al Kamil, Ibn Marjanah and Umar ibn Sa'd exulted in the size and strength of their army.

On this night, they believed Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions to be utterly helpless. They were convinced that no aid would reach him and that the people of Iraq had abandoned him entirely. It is reported that across the plain, however, the atmosphere in the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} stood in stark contrast. There was an eerie quiet.

Only a few fires burned low at the entrances of the tents.

Some of the companions sat repairing their weapons in silence, their movements deliberate and restrained. Others stood or sat immersed in prayer.

From the tents of the women came subdued grief, at times pierced by the cries of children.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Harith ibn Husayrah, who narrates from Abdullah ibn Shurayk al Amiri, who narrated from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that when night had fully set in, and after Umar ibn Sa'd had withdrawn his cavalry for the day, a caller passed through the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The Imam ^{a.s} wished to summon his companions.

At that call, everything in the camp came to a halt. Whatever occupied them, prayer or task, was immediately set aside. The summons of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} superseded all else.

The people of the camp moved toward the blessed presence of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood at the entrance of his tent. Beside the Imam ^{a.s} stood his brother al Abbas, and on his other side were the men of Banu Hashim.

Among those who drew near was Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, who, despite his illness, wished to hear the sacred words of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

When all had gathered, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} addressed them:

“I glorify Allah ^{AZJ}, Blessed and Exalted, with the most felicitous glorification, and I praise Him in prosperity and adversity.

O Allah ^{AZJ}, I praise You for honouring us with prophethood, for teaching us the Qur'an, for granting us understanding of the religion, for giving us hearing, sight, and hearts, and for not making us among the polytheists.

O Allah ^{AZJ}! You know that I do not know of companions more loyal and more virtuous than my companions, nor of a family more righteous or more devoted to kinship than my family. May Allah ^{AZJ}, on my behalf, grant you all the best of rewards.”

Then his voice grew more solemn.

“Behold, I believe that tomorrow is the day of reckoning between us and these enemies.

I have reflected upon your situation and your fate.

You all see what my situation has come to. Thus, I permit you all to leave freely.

You are absolved from any obligation to me.

This night has afforded you cover, so take it as a camel and ride away in its darkness.”

Tarikh al Tabari records an additional passage from al Dahhak ibn Abdullah:

“Let each of you take the hand of a member of my family and disperse into the desert and to your villages until Allah ^{AZJ} grants you salvation.

These people seek none but me, and if they kill me, they will not pursue anyone else. Night has fallen, so under the cover of its darkness, scatter into the desert and save yourselves.”

Thus spoke the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, his voice steady, resolute, and filled with mercy.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} offered every soul present a clear path to safety, without diminishing the reward of those who chose to remain in support of their Imam ^{a.s}.

Their presence beside the Imam ^{a.s} until that moment was itself a testimony of loyalty.

With complete openness, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} granted them permission to depart freely, releasing them from all obligation and assuring them that their departure would carry no consequence in the Hereafter.

A heavy silence followed. Eyes remained fixed upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, filled with devotion yet burdened by the fate the Imam ^{a.s} had laid bare before them.

Tarikh al Tabari records that it was al Abbas ibn Ali, the standard-bearer of the Imam ^{a.s}, who first broke the silence.

With firm determination and a voice shaped by unwavering allegiance, al Abbas declared, “And why would we do this?! So that we may remain after you?

May Allah ^{AZJ} never show us such a day!”

His words were not his alone. They echoed through the hearts of the Banu Hashim.

The brothers of al Abbas, the sons of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the sons of his brother Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}, and the two sons of Abdullah ibn Jafar, Muhammad and Abdullah, all spoke with similar words.

Each rejected the very notion of survival without their Imam ^{a.s}, expressing the same tenacity and the same abhorrence of life divorced from loyalty.

Maqatil al Talibiyyin relates from Utbah ibn Sim'an that they replied,

“Allah ^{AZJ} forbid! By this sacred month of Muharram, what will we say to the people when we return to them?!

That we deserted our leader, the son of our leader and our pillar, and left him exposed to arrows and as a target for spears, to be slaughtered by brutes, all so that we could live longer? Allah ^{AZJ} forbid! Indeed, we live only for your life, and we shall die with you.”

Then Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, bearing the burden of impending sacrifice with compassion and care, turned to the sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

“O sons of Aqil,” the Imam ^{a.s} said, “your family has sacrificed enough with the martyrdom of Muslim. Leave, for I give you permission.”

But the valiant sons of Aqil, bound by faith and honour, answered with defiance.

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq narrates from Abdullah ibn al Mansur, who narrates from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, who narrates that Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil stood and said,

“O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, what would people say of us if we abandoned our leader, our elder, the son of our foremost uncle, and the grandson of our Prophet ^{saws}?

What would they say if we did not strike with our swords beside him and did not fight with our spears?

No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, we will not do so. We wish to share your fate. We will give our lives before your life, and our blood before your blood. Only then will we have fulfilled our duty and discharged our responsibility!”

Muqatil al Talibiyyin, quoting Uqbah ibn Sim'an, records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wept upon hearing these words, and they wept with him. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lifted his hands toward the heavens and prayed for their reward. The Imam ^{a.s} then sat at the entrance of his tent, while the eyes of his companions remained fixed upon him in reverent devotion.

These declarations of loyalty are also recorded in Muqatil al Talibiyyin of Abu al Faraj, al Irshad of Shaykh al Mufid, and Tadhkirat al Khawass, bearing enduring witness to the devotion of the Hashemites.

There was no hesitation among them. There was only certainty, a willingness to surrender everything for the one they knew to be the inheritor of the Prophetic trust and the living standard of divine truth, their only master and leader; Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Thus, on that night beneath the cold and silent sky of Karbala, the banner of loyalty stood unshaken within the ranks of the Banu Hashim, steadfast until the coming dawn.

THE STANCE OF THE COMPANIONS

The cloak of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} swept with the wind as he stood, heartened by the unwavering determination of the Hashemites.

“Peace be upon those who were left far from their homeland.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Though their numbers were few, their courage towered immeasurably, and their devotion encircled the Imam ^{a.s} like an unbreachable fortress of faith. The Imam ^{a.s} concluded his sermon by saying,

“Indeed, I do not see death except as a blessing, and I do not see life with the oppressors except as an affliction.”

Tarikh al Tabari narrates, through al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi, that the first among the companions to rise was Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi.

The historical chronicles remain silent regarding the course by which Muslim ibn Awsajah came to stand upon the plains of Karbala; this marks the earliest explicit report of his presence among the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at that fateful encampment.

An aged warrior of steadfast faith and proven courage, Muslim ibn Awsajah rose from among the loyal companions. Grasping his spear with firm and unwavering hands, Muslim stood before the Imam ^{a.s} with a resolve unshaken by the multitude gathered against them. The flickering firelight cast its glow upon faces worn by hardship and devotion as silence settled over the camp, and Muslim ibn Awsajah declared:

“Should we abandon you?!

What excuse will we present to Allah ^{AZJ} for falling short in fulfilling your right over us? No, by Allah ^{AZJ}! I will never leave you, not until I break my spear in their chests and strike them with my sword so long as its handle remains in my hand.

Even if I had no weapon with which to fight them, I would hurl stones at them in your defence until I die alongside you! By Allah ^{AZJ}!

We shall not withdraw our support from you until it is made manifest before Allah ^{AZJ} that we have honoured the regard of the Prophet ^{saws} concerning you! By Allah ^{AZJ}!”

His words had not yet faded into the night air when Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi stepped forward. Sa'id ibn Abdullah bore the same certainty that shone within that sacred circle.

With a firm voice, Sa'id ibn Abdullah proclaimed:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! We will never abandon you until Allah ^{AZJ} sees that through you we have honoured the memory of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

By Allah ^{AZJ}! If I knew that I would be killed, then brought back to life, then burned alive, then my ashes scattered in the wind, and that this would happen to me seventy times, even then I would not leave you until I gave my life to protect you!

So why should I not do so, when I know that I will be killed but once, after which lies eternal and abiding honour?!”

Then Zuhayr ibn al Qayn rose. His voice carried across the camp with rising intensity:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! I would gladly be killed, then brought back to life, and then killed in this manner a thousand times, so that through these repeated lives of mine, Allah ^{AZJ} should protect your life and the lives of these young men from your household!”

Tarikh al Tabari records that one after another, the companions rose, each echoing the same covenant, until their voices merged into a single oath of sacrifice:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! We will not leave you. May our lives be sacrificed for you.

We will protect you with our chests, our heads, and our hands. And when we are killed, we will have been loyal to our oath and fulfilled our duty.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} responded to Zuhayr ibn al Qayn, and to them all, with words that carried both prayer and affirmation:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} reward you with goodness. You have indeed supported and assisted me.”

Narrated by Abdullah ibn Asim al Fa'ishi from al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi al Hamdani, and similarly reported by Abu al Faraj, and Tarikh al Ya'qubi, that more groups of companions rose and spoke in a unified voice, each pledge resonating with the same unbroken allegiance to their Imam ^{a.s} and Master. Among those who spoke was Nafi ibn Hilal,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, we are not reluctant to meet our Lord ^{AZJ}! We are steadfast in our intentions and unwavering in our dedication.

We will befriend those who show you friendship and oppose those who show you enmity!”

In a time when the world beyond Karbala had withered, the conviction of the companions of Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} endured with awe-inspiring brilliance.

As Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned toward his tents, he spoke words that sealed their station in history and eternity:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} reward the youth who have borne patiently, they being unmatched anywhere in the world. They were embodiments of excellent character, not like bowls of milk mixed with water that later turn to waste.”

Al Amali quotes Abdullah ibn al Mansur, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that after every pledge of faith, the Imam ^{a.s} would pray for his companions, “May you be rewarded with goodness.”

The declaration he had made moments earlier in his sermon now stood fully vindicated:

‘I do not know of companions more loyal or better than my companions.’

At that very moment, al Tabaqat al Kubra quotes from Aswad ibn al Qays al Abdi that sudden movement rippled through the encampment. Dust rose in hurried swirls as a messenger arrived, bearing news of immediate urgency, seeking a companion called Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami. When the messenger reached Bashir ibn Amr, he delivered a grave message:

“Your son has been taken prisoner at the borderlands of al Rayy.”

The news struck deep. To be taken without ransom meant imprisonment, or worse, death. Bashir ibn Amr replied with quiet submission,

“I place him and myself in the hands of Allah ^{AZJ}. I did not wish for him to be imprisoned, nor do I wish to live after him.”

Sayyid Ibn Tawus relates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} heard his words and said,

“May Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy upon you. I release you from your pledge of allegiance.

You may go and attempt the release of your son.”

The loyalty of Bashir ibn Amr required no proof. It was mercy that had compelled the Imam ^{a.s}, and a desire to grant Bashir the opportunity to save his child.

Yet Bashir ibn Amr replied with unshaken faith,

“May wild beasts devour me alive if I ever leave your side!”

For Bashir ibn Amr, loyalty to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rose above even the fate of his own son. The Imam ^{a.s}, beholding such devotion, responded with the tenderness of a father:

“Then send these Yemeni garments with your other son, so that he may secure his brother's freedom with them as ransom.”

Al Tabaqat al Kubra records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} handed over five Yemeni garments, their value amounting to a thousand gold dinars, an extraordinary sum, to Bashir ibn Amr's other son, so that they might be offered as ransom for his captive brother.

Thus, even as the night tightened its grip upon Karbala, the loyalty of the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} remained unbroken.



THE STATIONS IN PARADISE

It was later that night before Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The final exchanges between Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his followers drew to a close, and a solemn stillness descended upon the camp beneath the darkening sky.

The desert settled into silence, disturbed only by the low murmur of devotion rising from the tents of the faithful; the recitation of Qur'an, whispered supplications, and quiet prayers carried softly through the night air.

By this hour, the Imam ^{a.s} had witnessed beyond all doubt the unwavering faith of his companions and the unshakeable loyalty of the youth of Banu Hashim. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had heard their pledges, tested the firmness of their resolve, and seen hearts that neither the nearness of death nor the certainty of suffering could cause to falter.

Satisfied with what had become manifest from their devotion, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} prepared to withdraw to his tent. Before the Imam ^{a.s} lay the weighty affairs of the coming day, matters bound not only to the struggle soon to unfold upon the plains of Karbala, but to realities that stretched far beyond the confines of this world. The night of preparation had not yet ended, and the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} now turned to attend to duties whose echoes would endure through the ages.

Before departing, Muqatil al Talibiyyin records, through Uqbah ibn Sim'an al Kalbi, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood once more before those who had chosen to stand with him, invoking Allah ^{AZJ} as his witness for a final time. His voice carried the weight of farewell and the tenderness of gratitude as the Imam ^{a.s} addressed them:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}, You know well that I have never known companions more faithful than mine, nor a household more noble than my own. May Allah ^{AZJ} grant you the best of rewards.

You have upheld the truth and stood firm beside me.”

The words had scarcely settled among them when, as recorded in al Khara'ij wa al Jara'ih through Abu Hamzah al Thumali, narrating from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, another voice rose from the ranks, firm and unhesitating:

“Never! By Allah ^{AZJ}! We will not abandon you! That will never come to pass!”

The Imam ^{a.s} did not respond with softened assurances. Instead, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} chose once more to unveil the full certainty of what awaited those who stayed.

The Imam ^{a.s} said, “Tomorrow you will also be killed; none of you will survive.”

A moment of stillness followed as the truth of his words descended upon their hearts.

Yet the silence did not linger. Even the certainty of brutal death would sway these men.

From among the companions came a reply, soon echoed by approving voices, united in purpose and conviction. Facing the certainty of brutal death, they declared together:

“All praise is due to Allah ^{AZJ}, who has honoured us with martyrdom at your side!”

Zuhayr ibn al Qayn again declared loudly:

“That can never happen! By Allah ^{AZJ}!”

More approving voices urged the valiant Zuhayr ibn Qayn to continue speaking.

“Should I leave the son of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} in the clutches of the enemy and save myself? May Allah ^{AZJ} never show me such a day!”

This devotion had risen beyond deliberation and mere allegiance. History bears no chapter that records companions bound by loyalty in such absolute measure as was in Karbala.

Their sincerity stirred within the Imam ^{a.s} a profound honour, for these were indeed the ‘finest of companions’. Yet what followed would surpass reassurance itself, for the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} bestowed upon them a moment unlike any other.

Al Khara'ij wa al Jara'ih, quoting Abu Hamzah al Thumali from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his gaze toward the heavens in supplication, then turned back to his companions and said: “Raise your heads and observe.”

The narration describes a moment in which the ordinary boundaries of the visible world dissolved. The heavens began to unfold above the companions in layers.

Each man beheld the place prepared for him beyond death.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would call them forwards, one by one, by their names, and with his blessed hands directed them to the bounty and palaces destined for them in Paradise, showing them their ranks, their dwellings, and the eternal abodes prepared for them by Allah ^{AZJ}.

Ilal al Shara'i and Bihar al Anwar similarly relate from Muhammad ibn al Umarah that Imam Jafar al Sadiq ^{a.s} later explained this moment with clarity, saying:

“The veils were lifted from before their eyes, so that they could see their stations in Paradise. Each one of them advanced towards martyrdom, eager to meet the heavenly maidens and hasten to reach the stations prepared for them in Paradise.”

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah quotes al Harith ibn al Ka'b and Abu al Dahhak, from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that the companions did not pass that night in sleep or heedlessness. They spent its hours in prayer and remembrance, seeking forgiveness from Allah ^{AZJ}, supplicating to Allah ^{AZJ}, and beseeching Allah ^{AZJ} with tears that flowed freely.

From every corner of the camp came the sound of whispered Qur'an, of humbled voices rising and falling in the stillness.

Beyond the encampment, the enemy had stationed horsemen as sentries, patrolling behind the tents under the command of a Kufan called Azrah ibn al Qays al Ahmasi.

As they circled in the darkness, those men heard Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} repeating the verses of Allah ^{AZJ} in the depth of the night:

“And let not the disbelievers imagine that the respite We give them is better for their souls; We only grant them respite so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment.

Allah ^{AZJ} would not leave the believers in the state you are in until He separates the impure from the pure; nor would Allah ^{AZJ} reveal to you the unseen.

But Allah ^{AZJ} chooses from His messengers whom He wills, so believe in Allah ^{AZJ} and His messengers. And if you believe and are mindful, then for you is a great reward.” (Q3:178-179)

THE IMAM ^{a.s} ON THE NIGHT OF ASHURA

It was approaching midnight on the night before Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Darkness deepened upon that fateful night, and from the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rose the low murmur of prayer and the steady recitation of the Qur'an.

The stillness of the desert was pierced only by whispered supplications and trembling voices, each verse carried softly upon the night air. It was in these hours that another sign of the wisdom and foresight of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} became manifest. He had asked for this night of respite, and before the coming of dawn, it would bear witness to its purpose.

Al Malhuf relates that from within the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd there were men whose hearts could no longer bear the weight of what lay before them. Fully aware that their army stood at the threshold of the gravest tyranny, poised to raise the sword against the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, they reached a decision that would define their eternity.

They turned away from the illusion of worldly victory and from the temptation of fleeting triumph. Casting aside safety and life itself, they crossed the darkness toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

They stepped forward with full knowledge that what awaited them was certain and brutal death, yet they did so with hearts unshaken, secure in the promise of everlasting salvation.

On that night, thirty-two men from the army of Umar ibn Sa'd crossed over and joined the Imam ^{a.s}. Sayyid Ibn Tawus, however, records that the number was twenty-two.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon them all.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Harith ibn al Ka'b, while Abu al Dahhak further relates the events of that same night through the testimony of Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} narrates that his aunt, Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a}, was seated beside him, tending to him in his illness. Meanwhile, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had withdrawn from his companions and entered his tent, alone with the night and alone with his thoughts.

Only Huwayy, also known as 'Jawn', the freedman of Abu Dharr al Ghifari, remained with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, attending to his sword, polishing its blade and aligning its edge.

Al Malhuf states that it was then, in the stillness of the night, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} began to recite verses heavy with foreboding:

"O time, how wretched a companion you are!
How many a dawn and sunset you have witnessed,
Wherein companions and seekers have fallen slain.
Time is not content with any substitute,
For the command rests with the Majestic One,
And every living being must traverse this path.
How near is the appointed journey,
Toward the Gardens and the place of eternal rest."

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} recited the verses once, then again, and again, two or three times.

Nearby, Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} lay listening intently, absorbing every word, every inflection, every sorrow concealed within their cadence. He understood fully the meaning they bore and the reality toward which they pointed.

Tears welled within his eyes and tightened his throat, yet Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} restrained them and remained silent. He knew that the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} now stood upon the brink of a tremendous trial, one from which there would be no turning back.

The decree of Karbala had descended. The hour of tribulation had drawn near.

Beneath the darkness of that sacred night, the household of the Prophet ^{saws} stood at the threshold of a calamity that would shake the heavens and the earth alike.

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} continues that Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} too heard those verses, and their meaning did not escape her discerning heart. As a loving and tender-hearted sister, the weight of their words pierced deeply into her soul. She recognised within them the unmistakable hint of farewell and the proximity of the calamity that now overshadowed them.

Unable to restrain the anguish that surged within her, Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} rose abruptly from beside Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}. Hastening toward the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, she moved with grief and urgency, her garment trailing across the earth behind her, her head uncovered in the intensity of her distress.

Until at last Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} reached the presence of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and with a heart overcome by sorrow, she cried out,

"O brother! These are the words of one who is certain he is soon to die!"

Al Malhuf states that the Imam ^{a.s} replied solemnly, "Yes, O my dear sister."

Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} was aghast, "O woe! Al Hussein informs me of his own death!"

Overwhelmed by grief, Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} cried out again,

"O woe to me! I wish death would release me from life. Today it is as though my mother Fatimah, my father Ali, and my brother al Hasan have all died.

O successor of those who have passed, and refuge of those who remain!"

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon his anguished sister, sorrow dignified upon his face,

"O my sister, may your forbearance never be taken from you."

Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} answered again, her voice breaking beneath the weight of grief:

"May my father and mother be your ransom,

O Aba Abdillah! You are preparing for death? May I be sacrificed for you!"

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} restrained his own grief, yet when the Imam ^{a.s} saw the depth of his sister's anguish, his noble eyes filled with tears.

With sorrow held yet immeasurable, the Imam ^{a.s} uttered a phrase heavy with foretelling:

"If the sandgrouse are left free at night, they will sleep."

By this proverb, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} meant that some natures cannot be altered, even when they lead to destruction. The Imam ^{a.s} knew that the enemy would persist in seeking his blood, even if it brought upon them the wrath of Allah ^{AZJ}.

Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} understood at once, and her lament grew yet more sorrowful:

“Woe to me! They will take your life by force?

That breaks my heart and grieves me even more!”

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} recounts that Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} struck her face in devastation, tore at her garment, and, overcome by the surge of grief, collapsed unconscious.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rose at once and hastened to her side.

Kneeling beside his beloved sister, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} sprinkled water upon her noble face and spoke to Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} softly, his voice steady yet laden with sorrow:

“O sister, be mindful of Allah ^{AZJ}, and take comfort in His assurance.

Know that the inhabitants of the earth shall die, and the inhabitants of the heavens will not remain forever. Everything shall perish except the countenance of Allah ^{AZJ}, Who created the earth with His power and Who shall resurrect creation so that they return for accounting.

For Allah ^{AZJ} is One, Unique.”

The words of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} gently eased the anguish of Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a}, calming the storm that had seized her heart. The Imam ^{a.s} continued in the same tender tone, drawing her thoughts away from present pain toward eternal truth:

“My father was better than me, my mother was better than me, my brother was better than me; and for me, for them, and for every Muslim, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} is an exemplar.”

With these words and more, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} sought to steady her spirit. The Imam ^{a.s} reminded Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} of the trials she had endured at the passing of her father, her mother and her grandfather, of the patience she had borne in moments no less devastating.

Then the Imam ^{a.s} placed before her a final request, one that carried the weight of farewell:

“O sister, I adjure you, and I ask you to honour my oath: after I am killed, do not tear your garment for me, nor scratch your face, nor cry out aloud in grief and distress over me.”

The crushing sorrow pressed heavily upon the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, yet his tenacity remained immovable, firm as the decree the Imam ^{a.s} had accepted.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} helped his sister to her feet, and with tenderness touched by the unspoken signs of parting, the Imam ^{a.s} walked Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} back through the hushed camp. He led her to the side of Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} and gently seated her beside him before withdrawing.

Al Malhuf similarly relates that grief overcame the women of the Household. The weight of the impending calamity pressed heavily upon their hearts.

They wept bitterly, struck their cheeks, and tore at their collars, as sorrow spread through the camp of the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. The night of Karbala had deepened, and the signs of separation had begun to reveal themselves with undeniable clarity..

Sayyidah Umm Kulthum ^{s.a} cried out in anguish:

“O Muhammad! O Ali! O mother! O Fatimah! O Hasan! O Hussein!

Woe upon us for our desolation after you, O Aba Abdillah!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} approached the women folk, his presence calm amidst the rising cries, his voice lowered in compassion:

“Indeed, the inhabitants of the heavens shall die, and the inhabitants of the earth will not remain forever; every living creature shall one day perish.”

Yet their cries of grief surged once more, heavier and more piercing than before, as the certainty of imminent separation settled irrevocably upon their hearts.

It is narrated from Harith ibn al Ka'b and Abu al Dahhak, who narrates from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then went out to his companions and ordered that the tents be drawn close together, their ropes interlaced with one another.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} instructed the men to remain between the tents, except at the front, the side from which the enemy would advance.

Abdullah ibn Asim, reporting from al Dahhak, adds that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} commanded bundles of reeds and wood to be gathered and placed behind the tents, where the land dipped like ‘a shallow canal’.

The companions of the Imam ^{a.s} laboured through the night, digging that low ground and shaping it into a trench, piling the reeds and wood within it.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} explained:

“If they attack us and fight us, we will set it on fire, so that we are not attacked from behind, and we will fight the people from one direction only.”

The Imam ^{a.s} then drew a deep sigh and cast his gaze across the camp, still alive with movement, with hushed voices and the soft rustling of tents beneath the night sky.

Among the many encounters of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the fateful night of Ashura, one is related by Nafas al Mahmoom and al Luhuf, from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} narrates that a small figure emerged from the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The blessed fragrance of heaven emanated from the young boy, as he stood at the entrance of the tent of Imam ^{a.s} in reverent stillness, composed and obedient.

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lifted his gaze, he recognised the figure at once.

It was al Qasim ibn al Hasan.

The youth bore the luminous countenance and resolute spirit of his noble father, Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. Al Qasim stepped forward, his heart filled with sincerity far beyond his tender years, and spoke with firmness:

“O my dear uncle, am I also included among the martyrs?”

The question struck the heart of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with piercing force. The eyes of the Imam ^{a.s} welled with tears, burdened by the knowledge of what was to come. The Imam ^{a.s} observed the radiant moon of al Hasan ^{a.s} and replied sorrowfully:

“O my dear son, how do you regard death and martyrdom in the way of Allah ^{AZJ}?”

Without pause, al Qasim answered, his voice steady and radiant with certainty:

“It is sweeter than honey.”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] drew the brave young Hashemite into his embrace. In that moment, the memories of his elder brother flooded his heart. The Imam ^[a.s] said:

“By Allah ^[AZJ], may your uncle be your ransom. You are indeed one of them.

You shall be martyred with me after enduring a severe trial, and so too shall my infant son, Abdullah Ali al Asghar, be martyred.”

The weight of this prophecy did not shake al Qasim. Instead, it stirred within al Qasim a deeper concern, a tender anguish not for himself, but for the innocent child:

“O my uncle, will the enemies reach the women so as to kill the suckling child Abdullah?”

Al Luhuf records that the reply of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was heavy with prophecy, ominous in its sorrow, exposing the depths of his isolation, the merciless extremity to which his enemies would descend, and the complete abandonment that now encircled the Imam ^[a.s]. ¹⁵⁷

As Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] disclosed this to al Qasim, his blessed lips trembled, and tears streamed freely down his cheeks. At that moment, the sound of lamentation rose again from the tents of the Progeny of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], filling the night of Ashura with grief that would echo through the ages.



¹⁵⁷ al Luhuf narrates the prophetic reply of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], “Abdullah will be killed at that time when I, absorbed in intense thirst, will come back to the tent and ask for water or honey and nothing will be available. Then I will request my child to be brought to me so that I may kiss his lips and thereby find relief. The child will be brought and placed in my hands, and a lewd man from among the enemies will shoot an arrow upon his neck and the child shall raise a cry. Then his blood will get filled in my palms and I shall raise my hands to the heavens and say: ‘O Allah ^[AZJ]! I forebear and leave the accountability to You’. The lances of the enemies will then be hurriedly thrown at me, while the fire in the trench dug behind the tents shall be roaring. Then I will attack them, the moment being the most bitter of my life. Then whatever Allah ^[AZJ] wills shall come forth.”

THE NIGHT OF REMEMBRANCE

It was after midnight on the night before Ashura, 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and his companions stood through the night in prayer.

They sought forgiveness, supplicated with trembling hearts, and humbled themselves before Allah ^[AZJ]. Ansab al Ashraf records that their camp upon the plain of Karbala glowed with whispered invocations: glorifying Allah ^[AZJ], seeking His forgiveness, supplicating to Him, and seeking His help. Each companion fixed his heart upon the boundless mercy of Allah ^[AZJ], which he hoped soon to encounter.

Muthir al Ahzan later described the scene, saying that the murmur of prayers and the recitation of the Qur'an rose from the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] like the ‘buzzing of bees’, a living murmur of faith woven through the darkness.

They moved between standing and sitting, bowing in prayer, lowering their foreheads in prostration, and raising their hands in supplication, consumed by remembrance of Allah ^[AZJ].

Al Futuh narrates that beyond the camp, movement stirred within the depths of the night. From the shadows emerged Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan, the accursed enemy of Allah ^[AZJ], advancing with a group of men toward the tents of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s]. They halted at a distance, concealed by darkness, yet drawn irresistibly toward what they heard.

From within the camp, the fervent cadence of the Qur'an resonated through the stillness. Rising above all voices was the most eloquent and prophetic of them all.

It was Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] himself, reciting the blessed Surah Ale Imran.

The accursed contingent of Shimr and his ilk stood listening, arrested by the recitation. The Imam ^[a.s] continued until he reached the verse:

“Those who disbelieve should not think that living longer is good for them. They are only given more time to increase in sin, and they will suffer a humiliating punishment.

Allah ^[AZJ] would not leave the believers in the condition you were in, until He distinguished the good from the evil among you” (Q3:178–179)

At this, one of the accursed companions of Shimr cried out in arrogance:

“By the Lord ^[AZJ] of the Ka'bah! We are the good, and it is you who are the evildoers!

It is we who are separate from you!”

Laughter and jeers erupted from the men around Shimr, their mockery cutting through the stillness. From within the camp, Burayr ibn Khudayr al Hamdani ¹⁵⁸ stood listening, his heart ignited with fury at what he had heard.

Unable to remain silent, Burayr ibn Khudayr broke from his prayer and went towards this mob, compelled by indignation at the words and conduct rising from them.

¹⁵⁸ Burayr ibn Khudayr was a master Qur'an reciter in Kufa, a devout and pious worshipper. He was the first to stand for single combat at the beginning of the battle, but the Imam ^[a.s] sat him down again. Burayr ibn Khudayr used to say: “Uthman ibn Affan was excessive against himself, and Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan was misguided and misleading. And the Imam of guidance and truth is Ali ibn Abi Talib.”

Burayr ibn Khudayr shouted at them with a loud voice,
 “O depraved one! O immoral one! O enemy of Allah ^{AZJ}!

Can someone like you be of the good? You are nothing but an animal and a fool, destined for the fire of hell and a painful chastisement on the Day of Judgement!”

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan heard the rebuke, and the words stung him deeply.

Shimr shouted back in rage: “O speaker! Allah ^{AZJ} will soon kill you and your leader!”

Burayr ibn Khudayr retorted without hesitation:

“O enemy of Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you seek to frighten me with death?!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, death is more desirable to me than living with the likes of you!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, the one who spills the blood of the offspring and the honourable household of the Prophet ^{saws} shall never receive his intercession!”

Al Futuh relates that the voices grew louder, near enough that physical confrontation could take place, until a companion of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} approached Burayr and said gently:

“May your Lord ^{AZJ} have mercy on you, O Burayr ibn Khudayr.

Aba Abdillah ^{a.s} has sent a message for you:

‘Return to your position, and do not speak to them. I swear by my life, if the believer from the people of Pharaoh had succeeded when he advised his community, then perhaps you too might have advised and admonished with success.’”

At this, Burayr withdrew, and the accursed contingent turned back toward their camp, retreating once more into the darkness from which they had emerged.

Al Futuh narrates that as the hours of the night passed, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} drifted into a brief rest. Upon awakening, the Imam ^{a.s} turned to those around him and said:

“Do you know what I have just seen in my dream?”

They replied with concern: “What did you see, O son of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws}?”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} revealed to them his dream:

“I saw dogs attacking me ferociously, and among them was a mottled dog that attacked me more viciously than the rest. I think that the one who will be responsible for killing me is a man from among them who has white patches on his skin.”



Among those present, none resembled this description more than the accursed Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan, for Shimr bore white patches upon his skin.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued to narrate his dream:

“After that, I saw my grandfather ^{saws} with a group of his companions. He ^{saws} said to me, ‘My dear son, you are the martyr of my family, the shaheed of Ale Muhammad.

The inhabitants of the heavens and those of the high assembly are waiting for you eagerly. You shall break your fast with me tonight, so hurry and do not delay. Here is the angel, holding a green vessel, who has descended from the heavens to receive your blood.’”

Those gathered around the Imam ^{a.s} stood in silence, absorbing the weight of his words. Before rising, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} spoke once more:

“This is what I saw, and the matter has been decreed. Indeed, the journey from this world has drawn near. There can be no doubt about it.”

His voice bore the calm certainty of one who had glimpsed the divine decree and accepted it fully. The night pressed on, heavy with destiny, as Karbala waited for the dawn that would divide history forever.



THE FAJR OF ASHURA

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq narrates that as the final veil of night lingered over the vast and silent plains of Karbala, the horizon began to pale with the first signs of dawn.

The darkness had not yet fully withdrawn, and the stars still clung faintly to the sky.

In those moments, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned his heart and his camp toward their final preparation for the events that awaited them that day. Before all else stood prayer, for in the face of annihilation, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had always anchored his camp in devotion.

The Imam ^{a.s} dispatched his son, Ali al Akbar, accompanied by thirty horsemen and twenty foot soldiers, to seek water despite the danger that surrounded them.

The paths were watched, the enemy alert, and death lay in wait beyond the darkness.

Yet the contingent pressed forward, and by the mercy of Allah ^{AZJ}, they returned to the camp bearing a small supply of water.

Al Amali transmits, from Abdullah ibn al Mansur, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, from his father Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then gathered his companions and addressed them:

“Arise and drink some water, for it shall be your last refreshment.

Make ablution, take the ritual bath, and purify your clothes, for they shall be your shrouds.” Soon after, the Adhan of Fajr rose from the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Its call pierced the stillness of the desert dawn, breaking the silence of Karbala and echoing across the silent sands. “Allah Hu Akbar”, the takbir rang out on the silent plains.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then stood before his companions and led them in the morning prayer. Their faces were calm, their hearts firm, and their submission complete.

Tarikh al Tabari preserves another scene from the earliest hours of that morning, narrated through the servant of Abdul Rahman ibn Abd Rabbih al Ansari.

As the enemy ranks gathered and ordered themselves for their advance upon the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the Imam ^{a.s} gave a quiet instruction.

A tent was to be erected, and a vessel filled with musk prepared and mixed until its fragrance spread richly through the air.

Thereafter, the Imam ^{a.s} entered the tent alone, anointing himself in preparation for the journey to the hereafter and the meeting with his Lord.

Outside the tent stood Abdul Rahman and Burayr ibn Khudayr, awaiting their turn to follow the example of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Both were eager to prepare themselves for the sacrifice that lay before them. Standing shoulder to shoulder at the entrance of the tent, each hoped to enter first once the Imam ^{a.s} emerged, their hearts filled not with hesitation, but with longing for the honour of martyrdom and readiness for the encounter that awaited them beyond this world.

In that moment, Burayr ibn Khudayr uttered a light remark to Abdul Rahman.

Abdul Rahman replied with gravity:

“O Burayr, do you laugh? This is not a time for laughter or frivolity.”

Tarikh al Tabari records that Burayr ibn Khudayr responded with conviction and joy:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, my people know that I have never loved frivolity, neither in my youth nor in my old age. I speak in this way because I rejoice in what we are soon to encounter.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, nothing remains but that we meet these men with our swords and fight them for a short while, and thereafter we shall be in the embrace of the maidens of Paradise.”

Indeed, nothing now separated them from the eternal gardens except the descending blades of their enemies.

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} emerged, having completed his preparations, a few more companions entered the tent in turn, taking from the same musk and perfuming themselves for the audience they were about to face. ¹⁵⁹

Al Rijal of al Kashshi preserves a variant of this exchange, attributing it not to Burayr but to Habib ibn Muzahir.

In this account, Habib makes a light remark, prompting Yazid ibn Hudayr al Hamdani, renowned as one of the foremost reciters of the Qur'an of his time, to say:

“O my brother, this is not a time for jest or laughter.”

Al Rijal of al Kashshi records that Habib replied with serene certainty:

“And what time could be more fitting for happiness than this?

By Allah ^{AZJ}, nothing remains except that these wretches attack us with their swords, and thereafter we shall embrace the maidens of Paradise.”

Now the light of morning climbed steadily across the horizon.

The sun rose over Karbala, and its first light fell upon the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, touching the tents, the standards, and the faces of those who had passed the night in prayer, remembrance, and preparation.

The Day of Ashura had arrived. A day unlike any other.

The day upon which it would be said: ‘La yawmaka yawmak, ya Aba Abdillah.’

Then Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} issued his final command of strategy. The dry wood within the trench was to be made ready, soon to be set alight, so that the enemy might be forced to approach from one direction alone. For the morning had come, and with it the appointed Hour that the plains of Karbala had long awaited.

¹⁵⁹ Some historians have questioned the report that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and certain companions applied musk and depilatory substances on the eve of Ashura, arguing that such acts would have required water, which the camp lacked. This objection, however, is not decisive. Depilatory compounds of the period could function with minimal moisture and did not necessarily require water. Moreover, while the camp was deprived of drinkable water, sources do not indicate the total absence of all water, and some narrations suggest limited availability, including the report that Ali al Akbar was sent to bring water. Finally, the narration does not describe widespread use, but rather an act limited to the Imam ^{a.s} and a few companions, thus requiring only a small amount of water, if any at all.

THE MORAL SEPARATION IN KARBALA

It was the sunrise of Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Dawn broke clear over the plain of Karbala. Before the sun had fully risen, the desert lay hushed beneath a pale sky, its stillness heavy. Only the soft whisper of the morning wind stirred the sands as the first light spread across the barren land.

Within the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, movement began.

According to al Irshad, the Imam ^{a.s} set about arranging his companions for battle.

With the Imam ^{a.s} stood thirty-two horsemen and forty foot soldiers, seventy-two men.

Across the open plain, the armies of Iraq assembled in vast ranks, spreading outward like a dark tide. Spears caught the early light as they were raised into formation.

The drums of war thundered, slow and deliberate, their deep echoes rolling across the desert.

The army, numbering more than thirty thousand, advanced in disciplined tribal groups, and with every measured step the distance between the two camps narrowed.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} gathered his companions before him. Al Irshad relates that the noble Imam ^{a.s} arranged his small band with care and clarity of purpose.

Zuhayr ibn al Qayn was placed on the right flank, and Habib ibn Muzahir on the left.

The banner was entrusted to his brother, al Abbas ibn Ali.

They took their positions before the tents, their backs turned toward them, standing as a living shield between the tents of the women and children and the approaching army.

Then Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} issued his final instruction. The firewood that had been gathered behind the tents was cast into the trench dug during the night and set alight, so that the enemy would not be able to attack from the rear. Flames leapt upward, and thick smoke curled into the morning sky, forming a wall of fire behind the camp.

As the armies of Iraq came fully into view, the blessed eyes of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} surveyed the vast multitude drawn up before him. Rank upon rank of mounted and foot soldiers stretched across the plain, poised to unleash their cruelty upon the Imam ^{a.s}, his companions, and the women and children entrusted to his care. The sight before him was immense, yet the heart of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} remained unwavering. Raising his gaze from the gathered hosts, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked toward the open sky above Karbala.

Al Irshad quotes, through Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to Allah ^{AZJ}, the Most High, raised his hands toward the heavens, and prayed aloud:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! You ^{AZJ} are my trustee in the face of every anguish, and my hope in the face of every calamity. You ^{AZJ} are my trustee and support in every matter that befalls me.

How many afflictions, that would weaken the heart, reduce the options, cause a friend to desert, and the enemy to rejoice, have I entrusted to You ^{AZJ} and complained of to You ^{AZJ}, in my desire for You ^{AZJ} and none other than You ^{AZJ}.

And You ^{AZJ} have always comforted me and delivered me from the affliction. For You ^{AZJ} are the guardian of all bounties, the possessor of all goodness, and the object of all longing!”

In the moments before the clash, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood among his companions.

Dust drifted softly upon the morning wind, while the low murmur of marching soldiers swelled steadily across the plain as the enemy drew nearer, and then nearer still.

The sound of hooves, armour, and advancing ranks gathered into a heavy rumble that filled the air. Beneath the sheer weight of their approach, the earth itself seemed to tremble.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates, through Abdullah ibn Asim from al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi, that Umar ibn Sa'd had also performed the morning prayer and then marched forth with his forces fully assembled. Ibn Sa'd arranged his command structure as follows:

Abdullah ibn Zuhayr al Azdi, over the quarter of the people of Medinah;

Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Sabrah al Ju'fi ¹⁶⁰, over the quarter of Madhhij and Asad;

Qays ibn al Ash'ath ibn Qays al Kindi, over the quarter of Rabi'ah and Kindah;

Al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi, over the quarter of Tamim and Hamadan.

Furthermore, Umar ibn Sa'd appointed over his army:

Over his right wing: Amr ibn al Hajjaj;

Over his left wing: Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan;

Over the cavalry: Azrah ibn Qays;

Over the infantry: Shabath ibn Rib'i;

And Umar ibn Sa'd gave the standard to Dhuwayd, his freedman.

The army of Umar ibn Sa'd advanced in ordered ranks, and by mid-morning the cavalry reached the outer edge of Imam al Hussein's ^{a.s} camp.

Al Dahhak narrates that when they saw the fire blazing fiercely among the wood and reeds behind the tents, they realized that no attack could be launched from the rear.

Abu Mikhnaf quotes from Abdullah ibn Asim, from al Dahhak ibn Abdullah, that at that moment a heavily armoured horseman broke from their ranks and charged forward.

The rider rode past the tents without addressing anyone, the clinking of his armour echoing sharply as his horse thundered by.

Turning his head, the rider strained to see into the camp, but the flames and smoke obscured his view.

The rider wheeled his horse around and mockingly shouted at the top of his voice:

“O Hussein!” The rider shouted towards the gather companions and the Imam ^{a.s},

“Do you hasten to seek the Fire in this world even before the Day of Resurrection?!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} heard the taunt and asked the companions around him,

“Who is this? It sounds as though it is Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan.”

The companions strained to see, “Yes, may Allah ^{AZJ} set you aright. It is Shimr.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rebuked Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan, saying,

“O son of the goat-herding woman! You are more worthy of being burned therein.”

¹⁶⁰ Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Sabrah al Ju'fi was among those whose testimony was written against Hujr ibn Adi al Kindi in the year 51 AH. He was over the foot soldiers from Madhhij and Asad, and Shimr would later incite him to slaughter Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, but he refused and cursed Shimr.

The solitary figure of Shimr lingered near the camp of the Imam ^[a.s.], prowling along its edge like a predatory shadow. Shimr surveyed the arrangement of the tents and studied the fragile lines of the Imam's ^[a.s.] small band of companions, measuring them with contempt.

The foul presence of Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan hung heavily over the camp.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates further that at this moment Muslim ibn Awsajah stepped forward toward Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. His hand rested upon his bow, his eyes fixed upon Shimr, who stood well within his shooting range. With determination, Muslim ibn Awsajah requested:

"O son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], may I be your ransom, shall I not shoot him with an arrow? For Shimr is within my range, and never has an arrow of mine missed.

That immoral one is among the most arrogant tyrants!"

But Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], calm amid the rising tension, gently placed his hand upon the shoulder of Muslim ibn Awsajah. His voice was gracious as the Imam ^[a.s.] replied:

"Do not shoot him, for I dislike to be the one who initiates them into war."



THE STILLNESS BEFORE WAR

The army of Umar ibn Sa'd came to a halt, its ranks settling opposite the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Dust hovered in the air, stirred by the movement of thousands who now stood arrayed in ordered lines before a small cluster of tents.

Behind those tents rested the household of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], surrounded by silence, their fate hanging upon the moments to come.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] called for his mount. Tarikh al Tabari relates, on the authority of al Dahhak al Mashriqi, that the Imam ^[a.s.] possessed a horse named Lahiq, which the Imam ^[a.s.] had given to his son Ali al Akbar. When the foot soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd advanced and the moment demanded address rather than battle, the Imam ^[a.s.] called for his mount.

"Peace be upon the one against whom people came together and made lawful the shedding of his blood. You safeguarded the right path and supported it." ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] spurred his steed and rode forward alone, leaving behind his companions and his family, advancing until the Imam ^[a.s.] stood before the massed army.

Upon the open plain of Karbala, the grandson of the Prophet ^[saws] halted, facing the multitude. Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] raised his voice, projecting it with such force and clarity that no one present could later claim ignorance of the verses the Imam ^[a.s.] recited:

"O people! Hear my words, and do not make haste against me until I counsel you about your duty towards me and explain the reason why I have come to you.

If you accept my explanation, believe my words, and give me justice, then you will be more blessed as a result, and you will have no need to be concerned about me.

But if you reject my explanation, and I do not receive justice from you, then:

'So gather your plan and your partners, and you do not have to be secretive about your plot, then carry it out against me without delay'. ^(Q10:71)

And, *'Indeed, my Protector is Allah ^[AZJ] Who has revealed this Book. For He, alone, protects the righteous.'* ^(Q7:196)

The plains of Karbala lay still before the eloquence of the grandson of the Prophet ^[saws]. No voice dared to rise in reply to his words.

Yet the words of the Imam ^[a.s.] did not fall only upon the assembled army. They carried back to the tents, reaching the ears of the women of his household. When they heard his voice, laden with warning and foretelling, his sisters cried out, joined by the sobs of the women.

Grief rippled through the camp like a rising tide, and anguished cries emerged from behind the canvas walls. The Imam ^[a.s.] turned to al Abbas and his son Ali al Akbar and said softly,

"Quieten them, for by my life, they will have much to mourn in the future."

The cries subsided, though their sorrow had only begun. Once more, a solemn hush settled upon the gathering. Sibt ibn Jawzi relates in his Tadhkirah, narrating from Hisham ibn Muhammad al Kalbi, that when the Imam ^[a.s.] saw the people persist in their determination to kill him, the Imam ^[a.s.] took the Qur'an, opened it, and placed it upon his head.

The Imam ^{a.s} praised Allah ^{AZJ}, glorified Him ^{AZJ}, and remembered Him ^{AZJ} as He ^{AZJ} deserves to be remembered. Then, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} sent blessings upon his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, upon the angels, and upon the prophets.

Then the Imam ^{a.s} declared, “The Qur'an and my grandfather, the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, are the judge between yourselves and me. O people!”

Al Dahhak, who witnessed the scene, later said, “By Allah ^{AZJ}! I never heard a speaker before him or after him more eloquent in speech than al Hussein!”

Al Amali relates from Abdullah ibn al Mansur, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that the valorous Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} called out to the enemy in his loudest voice:

“As for what follows, examine my lineage and reflect upon who I am, and then examine yourselves critically. Ask yourselves whether it is permissible for you to kill me and violate my sanctity! I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you recognize me?!”

Some voices replied, “You are of the family of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws}, and his grandson.” Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied to them,

“I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you accept that my grandfather is Allah’s Messenger ^{saws}? ”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

The Imam ^{a.s} asked, “Am I not the son of the daughter of your Prophet ^{saws}, and the son of his vicegerent and cousin, who was the first to believe in Allah ^{AZJ} and what His noble Messenger ^{saws} had brought from his Lord ^{AZJ}? ”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} asked them again,

“Am I not the son of his executor and cousin, the first of the believers in Allah ^{AZJ}, and the one who confirmed His Messenger ^{saws} in what he brought from his Lord ^{AZJ}? ”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

The Imam ^{a.s} continued, “I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you know that my grandmother is Lady Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, the first woman from this nation to become a Muslim?”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued with the questions, “I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you know that the Doyen of Martyrs, Hamzah, is my father’s paternal uncle?”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied to them, “I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you know that Jafar, who flies on two wings in paradise, is my paternal uncle?”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then reminded them, “I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you know that this is the sword of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} that I hold?”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

The Imam ^{a.s} pointed towards himself, “I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you know that this is the turban of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} that I wear?”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then asked, “I ask you by Allah ^{AZJ}! Do you know that Ali was the first of the Muslims to accept Islam, the most knowledgeable amongst them, the greatest of them in forbearance, and the authority for every Muslim man and woman?”

They replied, “Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} paused, allowing the weight of their admissions to settle upon them.

“Have you not heard the oft-repeated narration of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} about myself and my brother, that ‘these two are the leaders of the youths of paradise’? So if you believe my words, then act upon them, it is the truth, for by Allah ^{AZJ}, I have never told a lie since I understood that Allah ^{AZJ} despises those who lie and causes them to fail.

Why then do you consider it lawful to shed my blood, while you know that my father is the guardian at the pond of the hereafter, from which people will be driven away just as excessively thirsty camels are prevented from water, and that the banner of praise (liwa' al hamd) will be in my grandfather’s hands on the Day of Judgement?”

A silence lingered amongst the enemy. Until, a voice answered back, stripped of mercy,

“We know all this, but we will not spare you until you taste death while thirsty!”

The Imam ^{a.s} ignored the taunt, and raised his voice again, addressing the army of enemies:

“If you do not believe me, then there are people amongst you who will inform you, if you ask them. Ask Jabir ibn Abdullah al Ansari ¹⁶¹, or Abu Sa'id al Khudri ¹⁶², or Sahl ibn Sa'd al Sa'idi ¹⁶³, or Zayd ibn Arqam ¹⁶⁴, or Anas ibn Malik ¹⁶⁵; they will inform you.”

¹⁶¹ Jabir ibn Abdullah al Ansari refused to pledge allegiance to Muawiyah at the hands of Busr ibn Artah in the year 40 AH, prior to the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful. He declared, “This is a pledge of misguidance,” and was only compelled to submit under threat to his life. In the year 50 AH, when Muawiyah performed Hajj and sought to transfer the pulpit and staff of the Prophet ^{saws} from Medinah to Sham, Jabir prevented him and was forcibly restrained. In the year 74 AH, when al Hajjaj entered Medinah under the authority of Abdul Malik, he humiliated the companions of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} by branding their necks; Jabir ibn Abdullah al Ansari was among them.

¹⁶² Abu Said al Khudri was turned back by the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} when he inspected his companions prior to the battle of Uhud, due to his young age. He later narrated numerous traditions concerning the virtues of Imam Ali ^{a.s}. However, following the killing of Uthman, he refused to pledge allegiance to Imam Ali ^{a.s} and aligned himself with the Uthmaniyya, as a supporter of Uthman.

¹⁶³ Sahl ibn Sa'd al Saidi narrated traditions from the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} regarding the virtues of Imam Ali ^{a.s}. He also reported that Aisha ordered the killing of Uthman ibn Hunayf, after which he was imprisoned. In the year 74 AH, when al Hajjaj entered Medinah under the authority of Abdul Malik, he branded the necks of several companions of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, including Sahl ibn Sa'd, accusing them of betraying Uthman.

¹⁶⁴ Zayd ibn Arqam narrated numerous traditions concerning the virtues of Imam Ali ^{a.s}. He was the one who informed the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} of the statement of Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the hypocrite. He was also the one who rebuked Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad for striking the lips of Aba Abdillah. Zayd ibn Arqam died in the year 68 AH, as recorded in al A'lam.

¹⁶⁵ When the second Caliph Umar appointed Abu Musa al Ashari over Basra in the year 17 AH, he sought the assistance of Anas ibn Malik. Anas participated in the conquest of Tustar and later incited the people of Basra in the year 35 AH to support Uthman. He was among those summoned by Ziyad ibn Abihi in Basra in the year 45 AH. On the day of Ashura, Anas was in Basra. In the year 64 AH, following the killing of Ibn Ziyad, Abdullah ibn al Zubayr appointed him governor of Basra, where he led the people in prayer for forty days. When al Hajjaj was appointed over Medinah in the same year by Abdul Malik, he branded the necks of the companions of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, including Anas, humiliating him in retaliation for his allegiance to Ibn al Zubayr.

Blank faces stared back at the Imam ^{a.s}. Yet, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} remonstrated to them, “They will attest that they have heard these words from Allah’s Messenger ^{saws} about myself and my brother al Hasan. Is this not sufficient to prevent you from shedding my blood?!”

The questions of the Imam ^{a.s} lingered in the still air, each one striking at the remnants of conscience within the assembled ranks, unanswered and unheeded.

The eloquence of the Imam ^{a.s} was extraordinary. The vast army stood frozen in place. Hands clenched their weapons, yet their faith was empty, their hearts hollow, their faith long extinguished. No voice in the enemy ranks dared to rise against the Imam ^{a.s}, until the silence was finally torn apart by the most wretched beast among them.

Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan sneered with a verse, “He is one *‘who worship Allah on the verge of faith’* ^(Q22:11), as if he even knows what he is saying!”

The words were uttered as a deliberate taunt, intended to undermine the Imam’s ^{a.s} faith. Sibt ibn Jawzi remarks that worshipping ‘upon the edge’ signifies worship built upon doubt, lacking firmness and conviction.

The words ignited the anger of Habib ibn Muzahir. Habib answered without hesitation, “By Allah ^{AZJ}! I see that you worship Allah ^{AZJ} upon seventy edges, and I bear witness that you are truthful, indeed, you do not know what al Hussein is saying!

O Shimr, Allah ^{AZJ} has sealed your heart!”

Jeers erupted from the enemy. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} responded with composed authority, his voice rising calmly above the stillness of the plain:

“If you are in doubt about my words, then do any of you doubt that I am the son of the daughter of your Prophet? For by Allah ^{AZJ}, there is no son of the daughter of a Prophet other than me, in the east or the west, amongst you or others.

I am the only surviving son of the daughter of your Prophet!”

The commotion in the enemy circles was rising, as they hesitated to listen to the Imam ^{a.s}.

“Woe be to you! Tell me, do you seek from me retribution for any of your slain whom I have killed, or for any property of yours that I have stolen, or for an injury that I have caused?!”

They did not answer Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. They could not.

It is quoted in al Tadhkirah of Sibt ibn al Jawzi that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then called them by name, one after another, exposing them before all. His voice was clear and unyielding, ringing across the field with accusation:

“O Shabath ibn Rib'i. O Hajjaj ibn Abjar. O Qays ibn al Ash'ath. O Yazid ibn al Harith. Did you not write to me, ‘The fruit has ripened, the valleys have become green, and the waters have overflowed!’ and that ‘You will find an army ready and prepared, so come?’”

When they heard their names, these notorious liars who had earlier written explicitly to the Imam ^{a.s} now cowered and shrank back from their own words and denied them.

Sibt ibn al Jawzi reports that they responded one after the other,

“We did not do this! We do not know what you are talking about.”

Tarikh al Ya'qubi likewise records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued to address group after group, person after person, yet each time the Imam ^{a.s} was met with the same shameless denial: “We do not know about that which you are saying!”

Astonished by the audacity of their lies, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} answered,

“Glory be to Allah ^{AZJ}! Yes, you had written letters, by Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Then, as a final mercy, the Imam ^{a.s} extended to them the last path away from bloodshed:

“O people! Since you dislike my presence, then permit me to leave you and leave to take sanctuary elsewhere.”

Again a brief silence lingered, but the insolence from the enemy camp was ramping up.

From one side of the enemy ranks came a voice sharpened with arrogance.

It was Qays ibn al Ash'ath, who called out, “We do not know what you say. Will you not accept the authority of your cousins, Banu Umayyah?! For they will not treat you except in the manner that you would like, and no evil will come to you from them.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied, his words restrained yet burning, “You are indeed the brother of your brother Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath! Do you want the Banu Hashim to seek more from you than the blood of Muslim ibn Aqil?! No, by Allah ^{AZJ}! I will not give them my hand like one who has been humiliated, nor will I flee like a slave!” ¹⁶⁶

By this, the Imam ^{a.s} alluded to Muhammad ibn al Ash'ath, whose betrayal had played a decisive role in the killing of Muslim ibn Aqil in Kufa.

Then Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} recited to them a verse from the Qur'an:

“O servants of Allah ^{AZJ}! *‘And indeed, I seek refuge with my Lord ^{AZJ} and your Lord ^{AZJ} so you do not stone me to death.’* ^(Q44:20),

Their faces stared back at the Imam ^{a.s}, vacant and uncomprehending, devoid of faith.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} recited another verse:

“*I seek refuge in my Lord ^{AZJ} and your Lord ^{AZJ} from every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning.*” ^(Q40:27)

Tadhkirat al Khawass relates that Shimr mocked the Imam ^{a.s} once more, shouting,

“Soon you will enter the abyss of hell!”

Such insolence was hurled at the Imam ^{a.s} from these bunch of faithless creatures.

At this taunt, without hesitation, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rebuked Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan:

“Allah ^{AZJ} is Great! My grandfather, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, informed me,

‘It is as if I see a dog lapping the blood of my offspring,’ and I am in no doubt that he was speaking of you!”

¹⁶⁶ The phrase “nor will I submit like a slave” has been transmitted with variant wording. Al Mufid recorded it in al Irshad, followed by Ibn Nima in Muthir al Ahzan, as: “Nor will I flee like the fleeing of slaves.” This version was favored by al Muqarram. However, in the narration concerning the response to Ibn al Ashath, the term used is iqrar (submission), not firar (flight), as Ibn al Ashath was urging submission rather than escape. Al Muqarram supports this distinction by citing the statement of Imam Ali ^{a.s} regarding Musqalah ibn Hubayrah: “And he fled like the flight of a slave.” The conduct of Musqalah, however, bears no resemblance to the position of Imam ^{a.s} in this context, as is evident.

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan retorted with scorn,
“I have worshipped Allah ^{AZJ} only upon an edge, if I am to understand what you are saying.”

The ranks before the Imam ^{a.s} remained unmoved. They could not answer the truth the Imam ^{a.s} spoke. Their hearts had hardened beyond admonition, fixed upon a single objective: the shedding of the blood of the household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Observing their unbothered stares, Al Amali records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} grasped his greying beard in his hand and invoked the curse of Allah ^{AZJ} upon the enemies, saying:
“The Jews earned Allah’s ^{AZJ} wrath when they claimed that Uzayr was the son of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Christians earned Allah’s ^{AZJ} wrath when they claimed that Isa' was the son of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Magians earned Allah’s ^{AZJ} wrath when they chose to worship fire instead of Allah ^{AZJ}, and a community earned Allah’s ^{AZJ} wrath when they killed their prophet; and Allah’s ^{AZJ} wrath shall descend upon this group who desire to kill the son of their Prophet ^{saws}!”

Misbah al Mutahajjid, quoting Abu Abdullah al Hussein ibn Ali ibn Sufyan al Bazufari, states that still the enemy remained unmoved in their desire to shed his blood.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} saw the blood lust in their eyes, and raised his gaze toward the heavens once more and poured forth his supplication to his Lord ^{AZJ}:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! You ^{AZJ} are most high in status, all-great in power, severe in retribution, needless of the creation, abounding in grandeur, capable over whatever You ^{AZJ} desire.

You ^{AZJ} are quick to mercy, true to Your ^{AZJ} promise, facilitator of bounties, the best of testers, close when You ^{AZJ} are called, encompassing of Your ^{AZJ} creation.

You ^{AZJ} are the accepter of the repentance of those who turn back to You ^{AZJ}, capable over what You ^{AZJ} intend, successful in what You ^{AZJ} seek, grateful when You ^{AZJ} are thanked, mindful when You ^{AZJ} are remembered.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} continued to grasp his beard, and raised his arms to the heavens,
“In great need I beseech You ^{AZJ}; in poverty I cleave to You ^{AZJ}; in fear I flee to You ^{AZJ}; in distress I weep to You ^{AZJ}; in weakness I seek Your ^{AZJ} help, and to suffice me I rely on You.”

The Imam ^{a.s} pointed towards the masses gathered before him, and then raised both hands to the skies, “Judge between us and our people, for they have deceived us and cheated us!

They have betrayed us, and killed us, while we are the family of Your Prophet ^{saws}, and the offspring of Your ^{AZJ} beloved Muhammad ibn Abdullah ^{saws}, the one You ^{AZJ} selected for the message and entrusted with Your ^{AZJ} revelation!

So grant us relief and salvation in our predicament, by Your ^{AZJ} mercy, O Most Merciful.”

From the reports, Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Dahhak al Mashriqi that being disappointed in the recklessness of his enemy, the Imam ^{a.s} finished his supplication and turned to his mount, caused it to kneel, and ordered Uqbah ibn Sim'an to guide it back to the camp and tether it. A final hush settled over the battlefield as Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} voice withdrew, leaving behind a profound silence.

“Peace be upon the one against whom people came together and made lawful the shedding of his blood. But, they confronted you with injustice and aggression.” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

THE SERMON OF ZUHAYR IBN AL QAYN

As Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned to the small band of his companions, one of the men stepped forward and sought permission to address the opposing army.

It was Zuhayr ibn al Qayn. Ali ibn Hanzalah ibn Asad al Shabami relates from a tribesman present on the day of Ashura, Kathir ibn Abdullah al Shabi, that he said,

“When we advanced toward al Hussein, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn came out to us.”

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Kathir ibn Abdullah al Shabi, records that Zuhayr ibn al Qayn emerged from the ranks of Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} camp clad in full armour, mounted upon a horse marked by its thick, flowing tail.

As Zuhayr ibn al Qayn urged his mount forward, the faint clatter of metal echoed across the plain, carried by the dry wind of Karbala. All eyes turned toward Zuhayr as he advanced alone, a solitary figure standing before the amassed legions of falsehood.

Zuhayr faced the hordes assembled before him and raised his voice, calling out:

“O people of Kufa! I present to you a warning of Allah’s ^{AZJ} punishment, a warning!

It is the duty of a Muslim to advise his Muslim brother. Even at this point, we are still brothers, upon one religion and one creed, so long as swords have not yet been drawn between us. You are deserving of our admonition, but once swords are raised, this amnesty will be at an end; you will be one community, and we shall be another.

Indeed, Allah ^{AZJ} has tested us and you through the hounourable progeny of His noble Prophet, Muhammad ^{saws}, so that He ^{AZJ} may see what we do and what you do.

We urge you to come to their aid and abandon the tyrant, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad!

You will never attain anything throughout the reign of those two, Yazid ibn Muawiyah and Ibn Ziyad, except evil. They will gouge out your eyes, cut off your hands and feet, torture you, and hang you upon the branches of date palms.

They will kill the best of you and the Qur'an memorizers (qurra') amongst you, just as they did Hujr ibn Adi ¹⁶⁷ and his companions, and Hani ibn Urwah, and others like him!”

¹⁶⁷ Hujr ibn Adi was among the reinforcements who came from the people of Yemen to the Battle of al Qadisiyyah in the year 16 AH. He was among the earliest to respond from Kufa to Imam Ali ^{a.s} in support during the Battle of Basrah, and before that he was counted among those who rose in opposition to Uthman. Hujr ibn Adi was placed in command of the forces of Madhhij and the Asharis from among the people of Yemen residing in Kufa. Hujr ibn Adi fought alongside Imam Ali ^{a.s} at Siffin and was known to be constantly present on the battlefield. Hujr ibn Adi was among those who witnessed and signed the document of reconciliation for arbitration at Siffin, and Hujr ibn Adi stood on the right flank of the commander of the faithful Imam Ali ^{a.s} at the Battle of Nahrawan against the Kharijites. In the year 39 AH, Imam Ali ^{a.s} dispatched him from Kufa at the head of four thousand men to confront the raid of al Dahhak ibn Qays, who commanded three thousand troops. Hujr overtook him at Tadmur near the borders of al Sham, killed twenty of his men, but night fell and al Dahhak escaped, after which Hujr returned to Kufa. When Muawiyah later entered Kufa during the Year of Unity and appointed al Mughirah ibn Shuba as governor, al Mughirah openly cursed Imam Ali ^{a.s}, and Hujr would respond to him with sharp rebuke until al Mughirah died. Thereafter, Muawiyah appointed Ziyad ibn Abihi as governor over Kufa, and Hujr resumed his opposition. Ziyad seized Hujr ibn Adi and sent him in chains to Muawiyah, who ordered his execution and killed Hujr ibn Adi.

Zuhayr’s words rang across the battlefield, heavy with warning and truth. But the men before him, hardened by fear, bribery, and obedience, answered not with reflection but with curses. They mocked and abused Zuhayr ibn al Qayn and praised Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

They raised their hands in supplication, openly praying for the triumph of the tyrant,
“By Allah ^{AZJ}! We shall not rest until we either kill your leader and those with him, or dispatch him and his companions in submission to the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad!”
Undeterred, Zuhayr continued his address. He called out to them once more:

“O servants of Allah ^{AZJ}! The son of Fatimah, may Allah ^{AZJ} be pleased with her, is more deserving of devotion and assistance than the illegitimate son of Sumayyah!

If you will not aid al Hussein, then I seek refuge in Allah ^{AZJ} lest you kill him!
Do not stand between this man and his cousin, Yazid ibn Muawiyah. I swear by my life, Yazid will be satisfied with your obedience even without the killing of al Hussein!”

The words ‘son of Sumayyah’ carried a weight understood by every listener, a condemnation so sharp that it required no explanation.¹⁶⁸ For a brief moment, the clamour subsided. Then the silence was broken again by the most vicious enemy of Allah ^{AZJ}.

Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan stepped forward and loosed an arrow toward Zuhayr, shouting,
“Be quiet! May Allah ^{AZJ} silence your voice! You have wearied us with your excessive speech.”
Zuhayr ibn al Qayn replied without hesitation, his voice firm and unshaken:

“O son of one who defecated upon his own heels!
I am not addressing you. You are no more than an animal, a beast!
By Allah ^{AZJ}, I do not think you understand even two verses from the Book of Allah ^{AZJ}!
So receive glad tidings of disgrace on the Day of Resurrection and of painful punishment!”
Enraged, Shimr retorted, “Allah ^{AZJ} will kill you and your companion within the hour!”

Al Tabari records that Zuhayr answered, “Do you threaten me with death?! By Allah ^{AZJ}, to die with al Hussein is more beloved to me than to live eternally with you in Hell!”

Then Zuhayr turned away from Shimr and faced the massed soldiers once more.
Zuhayr ibn al Qayn raised his voice and proclaimed:

“O servants of Allah ^{AZJ}, do not let this coarse, harsh man and those like him deceive you in your religion. By Allah ^{AZJ}, the intercession of Muhammad ^{saws} will never reach a people who have shed the blood of his progeny and family, and who have killed those who supported them and defended their sanctity.”

But the sermon of Zuhayr fell upon deaf ears. Seeing no trace of repentance among them, Zuhayr turned away and returned to the ranks of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions.

¹⁶⁸ Sumayyah was the adulterous mother of Ziyad, notorious among the flag women of the Jahiliyyah, the pre Islamic era. Six men from Quraysh committed fornication with her, and she bore a child whose paternity was disputed among them and never established. Because of this uncertainty, Ziyad was referred to as Ziyad ibn Abihi, meaning the son of his father, as well as Ziyad ibn Ubayd and Ziyad ibn Sumayyah. It was only later that Muawiyah attributed him to his own father, Abu Sufyan, after which he became known as Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan.

THE SERMON OF BURAYR IBN KHUDAYR

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} commanded that his horse be brought to him. The Imam ^{a.s} mounted it and advanced toward the army of Iraq, accompanied by a small group of his companions, among them Burayr ibn Khudayr al Hamdani. The desert lay hushed beneath the weight of the moment, as Zuhayr ibn al Qayn returned to the fold after delivering his sermon.

Al Amali quotes Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} that the thirst of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions had grown intense. Burayr approached the Imam ^{a.s} and requested,
“O son of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws}, do you permit me to go to the enemy and address them?”

In Bihar al Anwar, Muhammad ibn Abi Talib narrates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} granted Burayr permission, saying, “Speak to the people.”

Burayr ibn Khudayr stepped forward and stood before the ranks of the Kufans. Raising his voice so that it carried across the battlefield, Burayr cried out,

“O people, fear Allah ^{AZJ}! Indeed, the sacred trust of Muhammad ^{saws} is now before you. Here are his descendants, his progeny, his daughters, and his household. Tell us, what do you intend to do with them?!”

They answered without hesitation or shame, “We wish to hand them over to the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, so that he may decide what to do with them!”

Burayr responded with anguish and reproach: “Will you not allow them to return to where they came from? Woe to you, O people of Kufa! Have you forgotten your letters and pledges, the oaths you made and called Allah ^{AZJ} to witness? Woe to you! You invited the family of your Prophet ^{saws} and claimed that you would sacrifice yourselves for them. But when they came to you, you handed them over to Ibn Ziyad and denied them access to the water of the Euphrates. What a terrible way you have treated the descendants of your Prophet ^{saws}! May Allah ^{AZJ} not quench your thirst on the Day of Judgment. What an evil people you are!”

Shaykh al Saduq, in his Amali, quoting Abdullah ibn al Mansur who reported from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, relates that Burayr ibn Khudayr continued, saying:

“O people! Allah ^{AZJ}, the Almighty, commissioned Muhammad ^{saws} in truth as a bearer of glad tidings, a warner, a caller towards Allah ^{AZJ} by His permission, and an illuminating light. Yet this is the water of the Euphrates, from which even the pigs and the dogs of the desert drink, while you deny his son access to it!”

At this, a group among the enemy feigned ignorance and replied in a mocking tone,
“O Burayr, we do not know what you are speaking of.”

Aghast at their denial, Burayr said, “Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}, who has increased my insight regarding you. O Allah ^{AZJ}, I dissociate myself from the deeds of these people. O Allah ^{AZJ}, cast discord among them until they meet You, so that You may be wrathful towards them!”

By now, the enemy had grown weary of admonition. They responded with scorn,
“O Burayr, you have spoken long enough, so stop now!
By Allah ^{AZJ}, al Hussein shall suffer thirst as those before him did!”

From behind Burayr, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} called out to him, “Leave them, O Burayr.”

At that moment, arrows were loosed in his direction. Burayr withdrew and returned to the Imam ^{a.s}, having delivered his testimony and fulfilled his duty before Allah ^{AZJ}.

Bihar al Anwar narrates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then advanced further, halting before the enemy lines. The Imam ^{a.s} gazed upon their ranks, calm and composed, as the enemy ranks surged before him, appearing ‘like a flood’.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} now spoke aloud his sermon, reciting with it the verses of the Qur'an:

“Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}, who created this world and made it an abode of transience and disappearance, altering its conditions for its inhabitants from one state to another.

The one who is deceived is he whom the world deceives, and the wretched is he whom the world misguides. Let not this world deceive you, for it cuts off the hope of those who rely on it and disappoints the ambitions of those who desire it.

I see that you have gathered upon a matter that has angered Allah ^{AZJ} against you, turning His ^{AZJ} noble face away from you, bringing upon you His ^{AZJ} punishment, and distancing you from His ^{AZJ} mercy. How excellent is our Lord ^{AZJ}, and how wretched are you as servants!

You acknowledged obedience and believed in the Messenger Muhammad ^{saws}, yet you turned against his progeny and household, seeking to kill them.

Surely, Satan has taken hold of you and caused you to forget the remembrance of the Almighty Allah ^{AZJ}, the glorious. Woe to you and to what you intend!”

The Imam ^{a.s} pointed at the hordes before him, “*Indeed we belong to Allah ^{AZJ}, and indeed to Him we return*’. ^(Q2:156) Verily, these are people ‘*who disbelieve after having believed*’, ^(Q3:90)

Thus, ‘*So away with the wrongdoing people!*’” ^(Q23:41)

The eloquence of Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} words was overwhelming. Fearing that his unrelenting speech might penetrate hearts and sway some among the ranks, Umar ibn Sa'd sought to interrupt the flow of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Unwilling to confront the Imam ^{a.s} directly, Ibn Sa'd turned to those around him and said,

“Woe to you! Speak with him, for he is his father’s son. If al Hussein were to stand before you like this for an entire day, speaking plainly, his speech would not end, nor would he falter. Speak with al Hussein!”

Thereupon, the haughty Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan stepped forward and said,

“O Hussein, what is this that you are saying? Explain it so that we may understand.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied to his nonsense,

“I say: Fear Allah ^{AZJ}, your Lord ^{AZJ}, and do not kill me, for it is not lawful for you to kill me nor to violate my sanctity. I am the son of your Prophet’s ^{saws} daughter, and my grandmother is Lady Khadijah, the wife of your Prophet ^{saws}. Perhaps you have heard the saying of your Prophet ^{saws}: al Hasan and al Hussein are the masters of the youth of Paradise?”

This was the second sermon of the Imam ^{a.s} before the assembled armies. The men shifted their feet upon the scorching ground, the sun searing their backs, their restlessness growing as the words of warning continued to fall upon them.

THE COMMAND TO WAR

Wearied by repeated admonitions and unmoved by every appeal to conscience, Umar ibn Sa'd at last settled to bring the matter to its grim conclusion. Umar ibn Sa'd withdrew from the front lines and began arranging his army with deliberate precision.

Standards were raised and fixed in their appointed places. Commanders were set over the right and left wings, orders passed swiftly through the ranks, and the men were instructed to hold firm. The intent of these movements was unmistakable: the noose was now going to be drawn tight around the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

At once, movement rippled through the ranks. Soldiers advanced beneath the banners of their tribes, tightening their formation from every side.

Spears bristled, swords were drawn, and the circle closed around the small band that stood with the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

Al Malhuf relates that at that moment, before the legions had fully settled into their ranks, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} once more rode forward. The Imam ^{a.s} advanced toward the enemy, seeking desperately to guide them one final time. This sermon was harsher than those before,

Halting before the assembled ranks, the Imam ^{a.s} raised his voice and addressed them: “O people! May you receive nothing but destruction and sorrow! When you cried out to us in desperation and confusion, we came to you as responders and helpers.

Yet you have turned against us the very swords that were meant to defend us, and you have kindled against us the very flames that were meant for our mutual enemy!

You have become a force for your enemies against your own allies, without having suffered any injustice from us, nor having any hope to gain from them.

They have enticed you with the unlawful gains of this world, and you have inclined towards a base and despicable life, without any new wrongdoing having come from us, nor any weakness in our stance. You have betrayed us without cause!”

The angst within Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was rising, for this baying hoard of merciless men were beyond any reproach or advise, “Woe be unto you!” the Imam ^{a.s} shouted,

“You have deserted us even while swords remain sheathed, hearts are still, and no final decision for battle has yet been taken!

Yet you rush toward it like swarming locusts, and you fall upon it like moths to a flame!”

This enemy was utterly shameless. The Imam ^{a.s} then rebuked them with condemnation:

“Away with you! O slaves of the nation, O deviants and fragmenters of the Book!

O breath of Satan, O parties of sinners!

O distorters of the Qur'an and extinguishers of the Sunnah!

O killers of the offspring of the Prophets and abandoners of the family of the successors!

Do you seek to aid Yazid ibn Muawiyah and Ibn Ziyad, and abandon us?!

By Allah ^{AZJ}! Treachery is deeply rooted within you, it flows through your veins, inherited from your forefathers and carried by your descendants!”

The enemy were truly shameless. They would not yield to the plea of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The Imam ^{a.s} sought to rebuke them more, revealing to them their true natures.

“Your hearts are sealed upon treachery, and your chests are filled with it!

You are the most wretched of trees, bitter in root, yet bearing fruit pleasing only to the usurpers like Yazid ibn Muawiyah and Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad!”

The Imam ^{a.s} saw some of the enemy looking towards one another, and spoke to them,

“Indeed, the illegitimate son of an illegitimate one, Ibn Ziyad, has placed me between two choices: the sword or humiliation of submitting to him. And far from us is humiliation!

Allah ^{AZJ} refuses humiliation for us, as does His Messenger ^{saws} and the believers.

Those nurtured by chaste mothers, born of noble-minded fathers, and possessors of lofty souls would never choose submission to the depraved over death with honour.

We will never prefer obedience to the vile over a death of dignity!

Know that I will proceed with this family of mine, despite the scarcity of supporters and the abandonment of companions.”

Then the Imam ^{a.s} declared in resolute defiance, his finger now pointed to the skies:

“If we are defeated, then defeat has long been the fate of those before us, but we are not defeated in truth. Our path is not of cowardice! Death is ours, and dominion is for others.”

A murmur spread through the ranks. The words of the Imam ^{a.s} struck with piercing truth, exposing what they sought to conceal even from themselves. They began to chatter and drown out the advise of the Imam ^{a.s}. Even after Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} motioned for silence, they refused. Their hearts had hardened, and their ears had turned away. Their faith was dead.

The Imam ^{a.s} was incensed, and sought to jolt awaken any flicker of faith within the enemy,

“Woe to you! What has befallen you that you will not remain silent and listen?!

I call you to the path of guidance!

Whoever obeys me shall attain wisdom, and whoever disobeys me shall be ruined!

Yet all of you oppose me, and none heed my words, because your bellies have been filled with the unlawful, and your hearts have been sealed.”

Incredibly, the enemy still dismissively ignored the words of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Now, the voice of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was thunderous in anger,

“Woe to you! Do you not possess any justice? Are you incapable of listening?!”

At this, the enemy cowered and began to reproach one another until silence finally fell.

The Imam ^{a.s} now delivered his final address, foretelling their fate with verses of the Qur'an:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! You shall not remain after this except for the brief span it takes a mounted rider to circle a millstone before it crushes its grain.

This is a covenant taught to me by my father from my grandfather, Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}:

‘So gather your plan and your partners, and you do not have to be secretive about your plot, then carry it out against me without delay’. (Q10:71)

And *‘I have put my trust in Allah ^{AZJ}, my Lord ^{AZJ} and your Lord ^{AZJ}. There is no living creature that is not completely under His control. Surely my Lord’s ^{AZJ} Way is perfect justice.’*” (Q11:56)

There was no admonition that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not utilise to awaken the moral decay of the enemy before him. The Imam ^{a.s} now prayed against his enemies,

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! Withhold from them the rain of the sky, send upon them years of drought like the years of Prophet Yusuf!

O Allah ^{AZJ}! Appoint over them a youth from Thaqif who will make them taste a cup of bitter torment, who will not leave any of them without striking him in retribution, a killing for a killing!

For they have lied against us, betrayed us, and then abandoned us!

O Allah ^{AZJ}, You ^{AZJ} are our Lord ^{AZJ}, upon You ^{AZJ} we rely.

O Allah ^{AZJ}, to You ^{AZJ} we turn, to You ^{AZJ} is our return.”

The call to righteousness had been delivered with unmistakable clarity, yet the enemy still remained unmoved, resolute only in their thirst for his blood.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was aghast at the heedlessness of those before him.

No admonition, no reminder of Allah ^{AZJ}, no appeal to conscience stirred their hearts.

The Imam ^{a.s} then turned his attention to Umar ibn Sa'd, their commander, hoping perhaps that Ibn Sa'd might emerge from behind his ranks and face him directly.

Al Khawarizmi records from Abdullah ibn al Hasan that the Imam ^{a.s} called out,

“Where is Umar ibn Sa'd? Call him to me.”

A messenger was sent, and eventually Umar ibn Sa'd came reluctantly, unwilling to meet the Imam’s ^{a.s} gaze. After a time, Ibn Sa'd rode forward and halted among the nobles of Kufa.

The Imam ^{a.s} addressed Umar ibn Sa'd directly, his voice firm and unyielding:

“O Umar! Do you intend to kill me so that the illegitimate Ibn Ziyad, son of an illegitimate father, may bestow upon you the governorship of Rayy and Jurjan?!

By Allah ^{AZJ}! Your desire shall never be fulfilled. This is an assured promise.”

Umar ibn Sa'd sneered sheepishly, as he fended off looks from the other wretches around him.

The Imam ^{a.s} addressed Ibn Sa'd again, “So do whatever you desire! You shall never find delight after killing me, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter.”

Umar ibn Sa'd stood stunned, struck silent by the certainty of the Imam’s ^{a.s} words and prophecy. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then gave Umar ibn Sa'd one final sign:

“And I foresee your head impaled upon a wooden spike in Kufa. Children will make it a target for themselves and pelt it with stones.”

Umar ibn Sa'd did not dare challenge the knowledge of the Imam ^{a.s}, but the words now enraged him. They exposed his motives before his own troops, unveiling his shame and the enormity of what Ibn Sa'd was doing to family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} for worldly gain.

Al Khawarizmi narrates that, seething with rage, Umar ibn Sa'd turned his steed away from Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} without replying. Incensed, Ibn Sa'd roared toward his army,

“What are you waiting for?! Prepare to attack! They are nothing but a single morsel!”

And indeed, the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was grievously small when set against the vast and suffocating armed ranks arrayed before it.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF WAR

THE REGRET OF AL HURR, THE GUILTY

The commanders of both camps withdrew from the open ground, for it had become evident that words could no longer restrain what was to come. Dialogue had exhausted itself; the matter would now be decided by bloodshed.

Umar ibn Sa'd turned back toward his command tent, resuming the formation of his ranks and preparing his army for the onset of battle. Across the field, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} likewise withdrew with his small band of loyal companions, arranging their positions in anticipation of the assault that was soon to fall upon them.

Among the ranks of the enemy stood one man commanding a large contingent drawn from the tribes of Tamim and Hamadan. His eyes remained fixed upon the scene before him, wide and unsettled, as though he were witnessing events from a great distance.

This was al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi.

As the final moments before battle unfolded, something long buried within al Hurr began to stir. A flicker of faith, long suppressed, struggled to the surface.

It had taken time, far too much time, but now the veil was lifting. What stood before al Hurr was no negotiation, no political standoff, no test of loyalty to authority.

This was a field prepared for slaughter. This was the killing of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Memories flashed before him. Al Hurr knew, with crushing clarity, his own role in delivering the Imam ^{a.s} to this fate. Al Hurr had been the first to block the path of Imam ^{a.s} and his companions. Al Hurr had been entrusted with preventing them from reaching Kufa, a trust that revealed how deeply the Umayyad regime had relied upon al Hurr.

That trust now pressed upon his conscience like a crushing weight.

Then the voice of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rose across the scorched plains of Karbala, clear and unwavering:

“Is there none who would hasten to assist us in the name of Allah ^{AZJ}?

Is there none who would defend the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}?!”

In that instant, the world of al Hurr collapsed. The loyalties al Hurr had once held with certainty lay in ruins. The weight of his past actions descended upon al Hurr, heavy with shame. Al Hurr saw his own complicity laid bare before him; his hands were no longer separate from those who stood ready to spill the blood of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari relates, through Adi ibn Harmalah, that al Hurr rode hastily toward Umar ibn Sa'd and called out in alarm, in visible distress:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} protect you, O Umar! Do you truly intend to fight this man, al Hussein?!” Umar ibn Sa'd replied callously:

“Yes, by Allah ^{AZJ}! A battle whose least outcome will be the severing of heads and the cutting of limbs!”

Alarmed, al Hurr pressed Umar ibn Sa'd further:

“Are you not prepared to accept any one of the three proposals he has put to you?!”

Umar ibn Sa'd answered dismissively, more interested in preparing for the first attack.

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, if the matter were in my hands, I would have yielded to his request. But your commander, Ibn Ziyad, will not accept it.”

At that, al Hurr seized the reins of his horse and turned away sharply from the ranks.

Al Hurr rode a short distance, then drew his mount to an abrupt halt.

Moments rushed upon al Hurr in a torrent: the road from Dhu Husam, the first confrontation, the choices he had made that had forced the Imam ^{a.s} to this cursed plain.

Al Hurr now stood upon the brink of an unforgivable crime, moments away from staining his hands with the blood of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

His transgression was not slight, and al Hurr felt its weight bearing down upon his soul. Before al Hurr lay two paths: the deceptive promise of worldly survival, leading only to eternal ruin, or defection to certain death, crowned with everlasting salvation.

Al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi stood suspended between Paradise and the Fire.

The thoughts of al Hurr were interrupted by a man from his tribe, Qurrah ibn Qays. ¹⁶⁹ Qurrah spoke to al Hurr, but he did not respond. Rather, almost absently, al Hurr asked:

“O Qurrah, have you watered your horse today?”

“No,” Qurrah replied.

Then al Hurr asked, as though continuing an unrelated thought:

“Do you not wish to quench its thirst?”

Qurrah understood immediately. This was no casual exchange. Al Hurr was urging Qurrah to withdraw, to remove himself from what was about to unfold.

Qurrah replied: “I have not watered it, but I am going now to do so,” and he rode away.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that after the events of Karbala, Qurrah ibn Qays would lament:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, I realised that al Hurr wished to leave so that he would not witness the battle, and he did not want me to see him al Hurr fearing that I would judge him.

So I said, ‘I have not watered it yet, but I am about to do so,’ and I left al Hurr.

By Allah ^{AZJ}! Had he told me what he intended, I would have gone with him to al Hussein.”

Yet herein lies the hypocrisy of Qurrah ibn Qays.

Even if Qurrah was unable to change his allegiance at that moment, he was later presented with a clear opportunity when al Hurr defected and openly took his stand against the enemies of Allah ^{AZJ}. That Qurrah did not follow only exposes the emptiness of his later regret, a feeble attempt to distance himself from a crime in which Qurrah remained complicit.

¹⁶⁹ Qurrah ibn Qays was mentioned at the beginning of the Imam’s ^{a.s} arrival in Karbala, for he was the messenger that Umar ibn Sa’d sent to Imam ^{a.s} to relay messages. Habib ibn Muzahir had invited him to support the Imam ^{a.s}, and Qurrah promised to consider it, but Qurrah did not return. It appears Qurrah ibn Qays is the one who reported and claimed this account.

As for al Hurr, he began to move forward, slowly and deliberately, edging toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

A man from his tribe, al Muhajir ibn al Aws, called out to al Hurr from behind:

“O son of Yazid! What do you intend? Do you mean to attack?!”

Al Hurr did not answer. His face was drained of colour, his eyes widened, and his hands grew slick with sweat. Tarikh al Tabari records that a visible trembling overtook al Hurr, like that of a man seized by a violent fever.

Muhajir ibn al Aws watched al Hurr closely and exclaimed:

“Ibn Yazid! Your state is most strange!

I have never seen you in any battle as I see you now. If I were asked who is the most valiant among the people of Kufa, I would not hesitate to name you!

What is this state I now witness in you?!”

At last, the blindness had lifted from the heart of al Hurr.

With a trembling voice, al Hurr replied:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! I find myself between Paradise and the Fire. And by Allah ^{AZJ}, I will not choose anything over Paradise, even if I am cut to pieces and burned!”

Al Malhuf relates that at this, al Hurr struck his horse and galloped toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Overwhelmed by remorse, Al Hurr placed his hands upon his head like a prisoner bound by guilt. Before al Hurr approached the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}, he cried out in shame:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! I turn back to You ^{AZJ}, so accept my repentance, for I have caused fear and distress to the hearts of Your ^{AZJ} devoted servants and the children of the daughter of Your Prophet ^{saws}. ”

The redemption of al Hurr was now drawing toward its fulfilment. His sincere remorse and decisive break from the enemies of Allah ^{AZJ} had already begun to atone for his past, yet al Hurr now sought something greater still: the mercy and blessing of his Lord ^{AZJ}.

With a resolution born of repentance, al Hurr now approached the camp of the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Al Irshad states that, as a sign of surrender and humility, al Hurr now overturned his shield and advanced, greeting the companions of Imam ^{a.s}, who stepped forward to meet this man who had defected from the enemy ranks.

It is reported in Tazkirah of Sibti ibn al Jawzi that after some conversation, al Hurr declared:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! We wrote to you, and we are the ones who brought you here.

May Allah ^{AZJ} distance falsehood and its people. By Allah ^{AZJ}, I will not prefer this world over the Hereafter.”

Al Hurr was then led toward the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his head bowed and his eyes closed with shame and anticipation. As al Hurr drew near, the companions halted.

The very air seemed to change, filled with the presence of the Imam ^{a.s}.

In that moment, al Hurr found himself standing before Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Shaykh al Saduq in his book Al Amali, narrates from Abdullah ibn al Mansur, who relays from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that al Hurr now sought to appeal directly to the renowned mercy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

Ashamed, al Hurr spoke in a lowered tone:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} allow me to be sacrificed for you, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

I am the one who prevented you from turning back, troubled you on your journey, and forced you to stop at this place.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, other than Whom there is no deity, I did not think that the people would reject what you offered them, nor did I imagine they would take such a stance against you.

I had assured myself, ‘It does not matter if I obey them in some of their commands, so that they do not think I have abandoned their authority. They will surely accept from al Hussein what he proposes to them.’”

Al Hurr paused, then continued, his voice trembling:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, had I known that they would not accept it from you, I would never have joined them against you.

I have come to you repentant before Allah ^{AZJ} for what I have done, offering you my life as compensation, so that I may be killed in your defence.”

A moment of silence passed.

Al Hurr, the guilty, pleaded again:

“Will you accept my repentance?”

The weight of his remorse bore heavily upon al Hurr. His head remained lowered, bent beneath the burden of shame. He stood before Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with such humility that he was scarcely recognisable, even though al Hurr had once been a famed commander who had escorted Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the road to forcibly halt in Karbala.

It was no small matter. To comprehend, this was the very man who had driven the honourable household of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his companions, his women, and his children, onto the desolate plains of Karbala. Yet the mercy of the Imam ^{a.s} was vast and majestic, befitting the noble stature of the son of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

The Imam ^{a.s} replied with calm:

“Yes. Allah ^{AZJ} will accept your repentance and forgive you. What is your name?”

Al Hurr’s head remained lowered, so overwhelmed by shame that he dared not raise his gaze. In a subdued voice, al Hurr replied:

“I am al Hurr ibn Yazid.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon the broken yet sincere figure before him. Though sorrow weighed upon the heart of Imam ^{a.s}, his mercy was far greater. Seeking to ease the shame that enveloped al Hurr, the Imam ^{a.s} placed his blessed hand upon the reins of his steed, and a gentle smile appeared upon the radiant face of the son of Sayyidah Fatimah ^{s.a}.

Al Malhuf relates that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] said with tenderness:

“You are al Hurr, the free one, as your mother named you.

You shall indeed be al Hurr, if Allah ^[AZJ] wills, in this world and in the Hereafter.

May Allah ^[AZJ] accept your repentance. Now dismount from your horse.”

Faith surged anew through the veins of al Hurr. The grace of the Imam ^[a.s] lifted the crushing weight of guilt from his soul. Al Hurr, the free, slowly raised his face.

At last, his eyes beheld the blessed countenance of the Imam ^[a.s]. The tears of fear and regret turned into tears of relief and freedom as they streamed down his cheeks.

Al Hurr composed himself and replied:

“It is better for me to remain on horseback than on foot. I will fight them on my horse for a time, and when the end draws near, I will then dismount.”

The Imam ^[a.s] replied: “Do as you see fit, O Hurr. May Allah ^[AZJ] have mercy upon you.”

The companions came forward to welcome their new brother in martyrdom, embracing him with love and acceptance. After a brief moment, al Hurr once more approached the noble Imam ^[a.s], now with honour and courage upon his face, his spirit transformed.

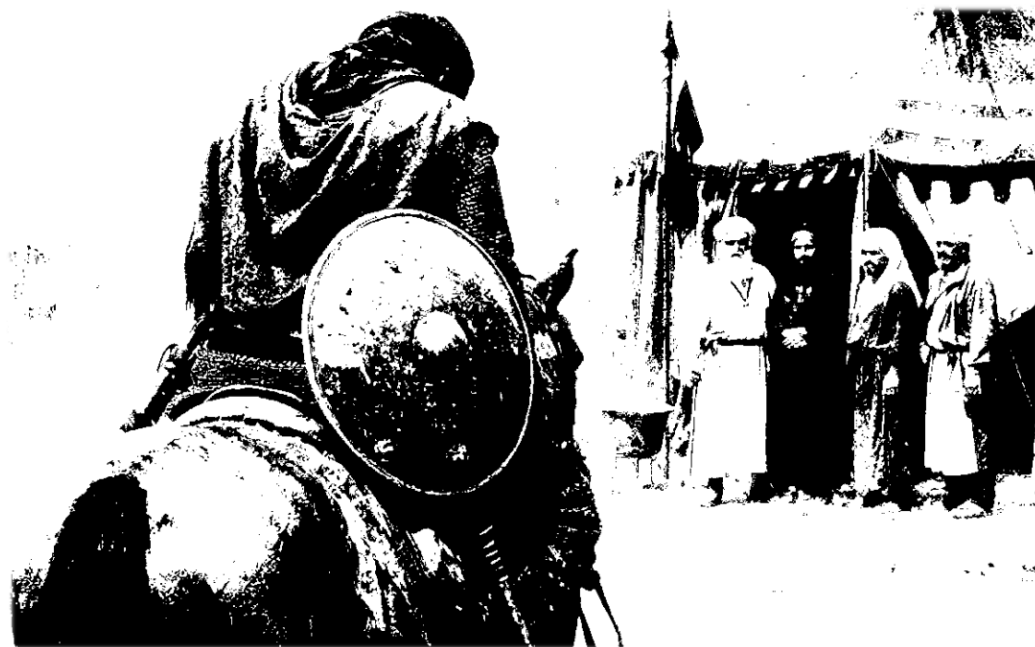
Muthir al Ahzan further narrates that al Hurr revealed to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s]:

“When Ubayd Allah sent me toward you, as I was leaving the governor’s palace, I heard a voice behind me saying, ‘O Hurr! Receive glad tidings of goodness.’ I turned, but saw no one. I said to myself, ‘What glad tidings can there be when I am being sent to apprehend al Hussein?’ I never imagined that I would become your follower.”

Bihar al Anwar notes that the Imam ^[a.s] reassured him, placing his hand upon his shoulder:

“Now you have attained great reward and goodness.”

Revived, al Hurr rode forward, this time ahead of his former comrades, those who still marched willingly toward ruin and the Fire, having crossed, at last, from darkness into light.



THE SERMON OF AL HURR, THE FREE

The steed of al Hurr advanced toward the very army he had commanded only moments earlier. Across the wide plain stood ranks upon ranks of soldiers, thousands gathered in hostile formation, watching a lone rider approach from the direction of Imam al Hussein’s ^[a.s] camp. At first, they did not recognise al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi.

Then, as the distance closed, recognition spread through the lines like a sudden unease.

A restless stir moved through the masses. Voices rose, overlapped, and sharpened into open shouts. Accusations of treachery rang out. Cries of defection followed.

The name of al Hurr echoed across the battlefield, laden with disbelief and seething anger.

Al Hurr halted his horse before the armies of Umar ibn Sa'd.

The murmurs subsided. An expectant silence gripped the battlefield as both camps strained to hear what this former commander would say.

With a heart now awakened by faith and conscience, al Hurr raised his voice so that it might carry across every rank and banner. He called out:

“O people! Will you not accept from al Hussein even one of the proposals he has presented to you, so that Allah ^[AZJ] may save you from waging war against him and fighting him?!”

No one answered al Hurr directly. Confusion rippled through the hostile lines.

Men glanced at one another, uncertain. At last, a voice called out from among them:

“This is the commander, Umar ibn Sa'd, speak with him!”

Al Hurr pressed his horse forward until he stood before Umar ibn Sa'd, who looked upon him in stunned disbelief, still struggling to comprehend the defection of the very man who had once commanded Banu Tamim and Hamadan beneath his banner.

Undeterred, al Hurr repeated the same plea he had proclaimed before the assembled ranks. Yet Umar ibn Sa'd answered with weary candour, his tone colder now, stripped of hesitation and coloured by dismissal:

“I was inclined toward that as well. Had I found a way to do so, I would have done it.”

Tarikh al Tabari relates from Adi ibn Harmalah that such insolence stirred al Hurr to anger. The brazenness of the response ignited fury within al Hurr, and the restraint with which he had spoken began to give way before the callousness of what he had witnessed.

Al Hurr turned back toward the Kufan ranks, his voice now thundering with indignation:

“O people of Kufa! May your mothers mourn for you and weep over you!

You invited al Hussein, and when he came to you, you abandoned him!”

The words of al Hurr were stinging, especially as he was one of them just moments ago.

“You claimed that you would lay down your lives for al Hussein, yet you have gathered to kill him. You threaten his life and have seized him by the throat!

You have surrounded al Hussein from every side and prevented him from departing with his family to safety in the vast earth of Allah ^[AZJ]!”

Al Hurr pointed back toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. His voice burned with anger as he bore witness to what he had just witnessed,

“Al Hussein is now a prisoner in your hands, neither able to benefit himself nor avert harm. You have restrained him, along with his women, his children, his family, and his companions, from the flowing waters of the Euphrates; water from which the Jews, the Magians, and the Christians drink, and in which the pigs and dogs of the desert roam, while they are being overcome by thirst!”

Then, turning to the sea of armed men before him, al Hurr rebuked them:

“How wretchedly you have treated Muhammad ^[saws] through his progeny!

May Allah ^[AZJ] not quench your thirst on the Day of extreme thirst, Qiyamah, if you do not turn back in remorse and abandon what you are determined to do at this very moment!”

Al Irshad and al Tadhkirah likewise preserve these searing rebukes delivered by al Hurr, words that struck the heedless army that had once followed his command.

Enraged, foot soldiers surged forward, loosing a volley of arrows toward al Hurr.

Their response was unmistakable: al Hurr was now marked as their enemy.

Fully aware of the cruelty and blindness that governed the ranks before him, al Hurr withdrew from their lines and returned to the camp of the Imam ^[a.s.]. There, al Hurr took his place before Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], openly severed from the army he had led only moments earlier.

Fudayl ibn Khudayj al Kindi narrates that al Hurr’s sermon was not without effect.

Some reports state that among those who defected from the army of Umar ibn Sa’d to that of the Imam ^[a.s.] was Yazid ibn Ziyad ibn al Muhasir of Banu Bahdala.

These reports specify that Yazid ibn Ziyad had marched out with Umar ibn Sa’d to confront the Imam ^[a.s.], but when the terms were rejected and the intent to shed his blood became clear, Yazid ibn Ziyad turned away from falsehood and defected toward salvation.

Thus, Yazid ibn Ziyad stands among those guided on the Day of Ashura by the sermon of al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi.



THE BATTLE OF KARBALA BEGINS

It was past the early morning of Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

In these hours, after the sermons of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] and his companions had come to an end, the time for words and negotiation passed away.

The army of Umar ibn Sa’d stood unmoved, deaf to admonition and blind to warning.

No counsel would turn them back from bloodshed.

They were already drawn up in disciplined ranks, their lines advancing until the encampment of the Imam ^[a.s.] lay fully within the reach of their arrows. Their eyes swept the plain, searching for movement, for battalions emerging from the horizon, or for an army gathered from distant tribes to answer the call of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

But no army came. Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] stood alone.

With the Imam ^[a.s.] were thirty-two horsemen and forty foot soldiers, a small band of devoted companions. Behind them stood the tents, sheltering women and children, fragile against the vast hostility that surrounded them.

Al Irshad relates that Umar ibn Sa’d advanced his forces toward the small encampment of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Raising his voice so that all could hear, Umar ibn Sa’d called out:

“O Dhuwayd! Bring forth the standard.”

Dhuwayd obeyed, and the banner of war was raised, its shadow falling across the plain.

Tarikh al Tabari reports, through al Saqqab ibn Zuhayr and Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that Umar ibn Sa’d then placed an arrow upon his bow, drew it back, and loosed it toward the tents. As Ibn Sa’d released it, he cried out:

“Be witnesses before the governor that I was the first to shoot!”

With that arrow, the Battle of Karbala had begun.

That first arrow, which struck the camp of the Imam ^[a.s.], though released by the hand of Umar ibn Sa’d, carried within it the weight of many arrows drawn from the long and tragic history of Islam. Fifty years had passed since the death of the Prophet ^[saws] in 11 AH, and now the unseen arrows returned: the arrows of Saqifah; the arrows from the burnt door of Sayyidah Fatimah ^[s.a.]; the arrows taken from Fadak; the arrows loosed at Jamal; the arrows of Siffin; the arrows that pierced the bier of Imam al Hasan ^[a.s.]. Each had struck its mark in its own time, and now they returned together to seek the flesh of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Umar ibn Sa’d advanced again and released another arrow. After it came a storm. A rain of shafts darkened the air, blotting out the sky.

Nafasul Mahmoom writes that the enemy ‘started shooting arrows in such large number that they appeared like birds.’ Al Malhuf describes them as falling upon the camp of Imam ^[a.s.] ‘like drops of rain.’ The early foundational accounts of Shaykh al Mufid and Tarikh al Tabari do not record any fatalities from this initial volley, while later narrators attribute injuries and even deaths to the opening assault.

“They angered the Lord ^[AZJ] and your grandfather, and initiated battle against you.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Yet whether the arrows claimed lives or merely announced what was to come, their message was unmistakable: the covenant of Karbala had been sealed. As the arrows fell, al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to his companions and addressed them with calm certainty:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} bestow His blessings upon you. Arise to face the inevitable death!

The arrows of these people are their messengers to you.”

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, who relates from Imam al Baqir ^{a.s}, that when Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} faced the forces of Umar ibn Sa'd and the battle was set in motion, the heavens themselves stirred. Above the head of the Imam ^{a.s}, multitudes of angels descended, and the sky darkened with the beating of their wings.

They encircled the blessed Imam ^{a.s}, conveying their salutations and offering him a choice: that they would strike his enemies and grant the Imam ^{a.s} victory in this world, or, if the Imam ^{a.s} so willed, the ultimate grace of the audience of Allah ^{AZJ}.

For a moment, the dust of Karbala seemed to hang suspended. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his gaze toward the heavens, for his choice was never marked by hesitation. Worldly triumph held no allure for him. The audience of Allah ^{AZJ} was his eternal aim, and he chose it without regret, turning away from victory in this world for everlasting nearness to his Lord ^{AZJ}.

Beyond the limits of human sight, another presence gathered. Nafasul Mahmoom narrates from Sayyid Abdullah ibn Shubbar al Hasani al Kazmi in his work Jila al Uyun that a company from among the jinn approached at this hour. They too sought permission to fight, to stand between the Imam ^{a.s} and the swords that had already been unsheathed against him.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood in stillness. His refusal was deliberate and final. At his command, the jinn withdrew. The Imam ^{a.s} surveyed the amassed enemy, and now that the first barrage of arrows had been unleashed, the destiny of Karbala was to be sealed in blood.

Ithbat al Wasiyyah states that the Imam ^{a.s} then turned to his companions standing behind him. His face was serious and resolute. He praised and glorified Allah ^{AZJ}, then said:

“Indeed, Allah ^{AZJ}, the Almighty, has permitted your death and mine to occur today.

Your duty is to persevere and fight in His ^{AZJ} way.” ¹⁷⁰

As the arrows thudded into the earth around the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the enemy lines stirred once more. Having declared the battle open, the commanders of the army of Umar ibn Sa'd now sought to provoke individual combat and test the commitment of the Imam's ^{a.s} defenders.

“Peace be upon the one whose rights and dignity were violated.” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

¹⁷⁰ The statement of Imam ^{a.s}, when he spoke of Allah ^{AZJ} permitting his death and that of his companions, he was not referring to moral or legal sanction. In Islamic theology, divine permission is understood in two senses: legislative command and existential allowance. The killing of the Imam ^{a.s} and his companions was among the gravest violations of divine law and stood in direct opposition to Allah's ^{AZJ} command. The Imam's ^{a.s} statement instead refers to existential permission, meaning that events unfold within creation only by Allah's ^{AZJ} allowance, not His approval. By this, the Imam ^{a.s} prepared his companions for an inevitable martyrdom, affirming that their sacrifice, though inflicted by injustice, remained within Allah's ^{AZJ} dominion and led to eternal nearness rather than loss.

THE FIRST ASSAULT ON ASHURA

It was the mid-morning of Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

As the first light of Ashura spread across the desert, the two armies stood facing one another in ordered ranks. The stillness of the early morning soon gave way to movement.

From the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd came the command to advance. The sermons, warnings, and isolated duels that had marked the opening hours of the day were now set aside, replaced by the massed motion of men and horses preparing for open combat.

The words spoken earlier by Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and the signs that had accompanied them, had already unsettled many within the opposing ranks, and the tension of what was to come hung heavily over the field.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Abu Janab, that the first command was directed to the cavalry of the right wing of the Kufan army, which had been placed under the leadership of Amr ibn al Hajjaj. At once, the horsemen were driven forward in a coordinated charge toward the right side of the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

As the thunder of hooves closed in upon them, the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} moved with discipline. Tarikh al Tabari records, as do al Irshad and al Kamil, that when they saw the full weight of the cavalry bearing down upon them, the defenders dismounted and dropped to their knees, lowering their spears into the earth and angling their points outward.

In moments, a bristling wall of spearheads rose before the advancing force.

The cavalry pressed forward, only to halt abruptly before the hedge of spears.

Unable to break the tightly knit line, and finding no opening through which to force their mounts, they wheeled their horses and withdrew in disorder.

In that instant of retreat, another contingent from among the companions released a concentrated volley of arrows. The shafts flew with precision, striking several of the attackers, unhorsing some and wounding others, and driving the cavalry further back from the line.

The first momentum of the enemy assault broke apart, and for a brief moment the battlefield sank into a tense and uneasy stillness as both sides weighed what had just unfolded.

The respite did not endure. The forces of Kufa swiftly regrouped and surged forward once more, and the conflict expanded beyond the violence of the opening exchange.

In the course of this renewed assault, blood was shed, and a number of the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} were struck down.

Their deaths came not amidst proclamation or spectacle, but within the chaos and urgency of combat, as the battle began to demand its first quiet toll.

These were the earliest sacrifices of Ashura, taken swiftly, without ceremony, and drawn silently into the unfolding tragedy of the day. Though many of their names are scarcely spoken and their stories seldom recounted, their blood was spilled upon the very same ground and in the very same stand as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon all the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Among those who stood firm in the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} was Zahir, the devoted bondsman of Amr ibn Humaq al Khuzai. Nafasul Mahmoom records that his loyalty had been forged over many years, when Zahir remained with Amr ibn Humaq after the martyrdom of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, accompanying Amr as Umayyad forces pursued them. When Amr sensed his own end approaching, after being bitten by a venomous snake in a remote valley, he instructed Zahir to hide and survive, foretelling that his killing would involve both ‘men and jinn.’ Zahir obeyed against his own wish to die beside Amr, burying Amr alone after his martyrdom and living on in steadfast fidelity.

That fidelity now carried Zahir to Karbala, where he stood beside the Imam ^{a.s} and was struck down in the earliest assaults of Ashura. Zahir fell as many of the companions fell that day: quietly, faithfully, and unseen by all but Allah ^{AZJ}. Their martyrdoms were not marked by manifest signs or public acclaim and are counted among the first sacrifices of the day.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Zahir, the bondsman of Amr ibn Humaq.

The opening of Ashura did not unfold as a sudden annihilation. ¹⁷¹ There were more battles and skirmishes that advanced in measured stages, each attack answered in kind.

The companions of Imam ^{a.s} held their lines, and what followed bore witness to their endurance. One after another, they met the opposing army in single combat, prevailing with such consistency that the army of Kufa was compelled to abandon duelling altogether.

This shift in tactics was itself an admission of failure, an unspoken acknowledgment that the strength of the Imam’s ^{a.s} companions could not be broken by individual challenges.

It is evidence that had the defence of the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} been shattered in the opening moments of the day, the battle could not have taken the form it ultimately assumed. Their resistance endured, and the lines held, allowing the struggle to extend into the long hours that followed. The reports state that the heavy losses suffered by the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} were not the result of a single charge or a sudden volley, but of sustained combat and relentless pressure applied gradually as the day of Ashura advanced.

For now, though the first assault had been repelled, the frustration of the enemy only deepened. Their failure to break the Imam’s ^{a.s} line at the outset exposed the cohesion of those who stood beside him, men who had already resolved their fate before the battle began.

From among the companions, one after another would soon step forward to meet martyrdom, as the field of Karbala bore witness to their remarkable sacrifices.

“But, the enemy confronted you with injustice and aggression. they violated your divine rights and oath.” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}

¹⁷¹ Some later accounts claim that a large number of the companions of the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, in certain narrations as many as forty or fifty, were martyred in the opening assault, particularly during the first exchange of arrows. This is not supported by the earliest sources. Neither al Tabari nor Shaykh al Mufid record any mass martyrdom at this stage, describing instead a limited initial engagement followed by extended phases of single combat in which the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} repeatedly prevailed. The figure of fifty appears in ibn Atham’s al Futuh, but his wording indicates cumulative losses over a prolonged period of fighting rather than deaths by the opening volley alone.

THE FIELD OF MANY DUELS

THE DUELS OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAYR AL KALBI

Ansab al Ashraf relates that the first formal challenge from the army of Umar ibn Sa'd came when two men advanced deliberately from their ranks onto the battlefield.

The early light of Ashura had fully broken, and the sharp air of Karbala lingered over the plains as the sun rose steadily above the horizon.

They were Yasar, the arrogant freedman of Ziyad, and Salim, the bondsman of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Stepping forward with arrogance, the slaves called out loudly toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, calling for single combat:

“Who will duel? Let one of you come out to us!”

From among the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Habib ibn Muzahir and Burayr ibn Khudayr immediately rose, eager to answer the call.

But the Imam ^{a.s} restrained them with calm authority, saying, “Sit down.”

At that moment, Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi rose from among the companions. He was a tall man, powerfully built, with broad shoulders and heavily muscled forearms, bearing the unmistakable presence of one accustomed to battle. Turning toward the Imam ^{a.s}, he said,

“O Aba Abdillah, may Allah ^{AZJ} have mercy upon you.

Grant me permission to go out to them.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon Abdullah ibn Umayr and replied,

“In my opinion, he is a fatal match; you may go out if you desire to meet his challenge.”

Delighted at having been granted permission, Abdullah ibn Umayr prepared himself and hastened forward toward the challengers.

Previously, Tarikh al Tabari narrates from al Azdi that Abu Janab al Kalbi recalls that Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi, from the clan of Bani Aleem, had settled in Kufa and owned a house at the head of the well of Bani Jaad, from the tribe of Hamadan.

One day, Abdullah ibn Umayr saw the people gathering at al Nukhayla, preparing to be dispatched. Abdullah ibn Umayr asked about them and was told,

“They are being prepared and will then be sent to fight al Hussein, son of Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.”

Upon hearing this, Abdullah ibn Umayr said, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, I used to be eager for jihad against the polytheists. I hope that striving against those who attack the son of the daughter of their Prophet is no less in reward before Allah ^{AZJ} than striving against the polytheists.”

Abdullah ibn Umayr returned home and informed his wife, Lady Umm Wahab, of what he had seen and of his intention to depart. Umm Wahab was from the clan of Amr bin Qasit, and the daughter of Abd. She replied without hesitation,

“You are right. May Allah ^{AZJ} grant you success and guide your affair.

Do so, and take me with you.”

That very night, Abdullah ibn Umayr set out with her until they both reached the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and from that time onward he remained among his companions.

Now, standing between the two armies on the morning of Ashura, Abdullah ibn Umayr faced the challengers, and walked towards the slaves of the house of Ziyad.

Yasar and Salim called out to Abdullah ibn Umayr, “Who are you?”

Abdullah ibn Umayr identified himself plainly. The slaves scoffed, and Yasar replied,

“We do not recognise you. Let Zuhayr ibn al Qayn, or Habib ibn Muzahir, or Burayr ibn Khudayr come out to us!”

Yasar stood poised with a naked sword beside Salim, eager to strike first. Abdullah ibn Umayr fixed his gaze upon Yasar and thundered,

“O son of a fornicatress! Are you reluctant to duel with anyone among the people?

Whoever comes to fight you shall surely be better than you!”

With that, Abdullah charged. Yasar rushed to meet Abdullah ibn Umayr, and the two blades met beneath the brightening sky. Abdullah ibn Umayr soon struck Yasar with a powerful blow, and Yasar fell to the ground, mortally wounded.

Thus, under the watchful gaze of the Imam ^{a.s}, the first single combat of Ashura came to its end. But before the dust had settled, the other slave, Salim seized his opportunity.

While Abdullah ibn Umayr was still engaged with Yasar, Salim charged at him from behind. Cries rang out from the companions of Imam ^{a.s}, warning Abdullah ibn Umayr,

“This slave is behind you!”

Consumed by the momentum of battle, Abdullah ibn Umayr did not turn. By then, Salim had closed the distance and seized the moment to strike as Abdullah finished off Yasar.

Catching sight of the descending blade, Abdullah instinctively raised his left hand in defence. Salim’s sword came down with force, severing his fingers. Blood poured forth, yet Abdullah neither faltered nor withdrew.

In the same motion, Abdullah ibn Umayr wheeled around to face his assailant. His sword flashed through the air and struck Salim with a decisive blow.

The slave of Ibn Ziyad collapsed lifeless upon the earth.

From the camp of Imam ^{a.s}, cries of Takbir erupted: “Allah ^{AZJ} is the Greatest!”

Wounded but victorious, Abdullah ibn Umayr turned away from the battlefield, having slain both adversaries.

Raising his sword toward the massed enemy, his voice rang out as Abdullah recited:

“If you do not know me, I am from Bani Kalb!

It is sufficient for me that my family is from Bani Ulaym!

I am a warrior, a man of firm faith, not one who shrieks in the face of fear.

O Umm Wahab! I answer you with the sword and spear of one who believes in Allah ^{AZJ}!”

Nafasul Mahmoom states that when his wife witnessed his left hand injured and the blood pouring, she seized a tent peg and rushed toward Abdullah ibn Umayr, crying out,

“May my parents be your ransom! Fight in the way of the pure progeny of Prophet ^{saws}.”

Abdullah ibn Umayr moved toward his wife, intending to lead her back to the tents, but she clutched firmly to his garment and refused to leave him,

“I shall not return until I am killed alongside you,” she declared.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, witnessing her determination, addressed her with compassion:

“May you be rewarded on account of the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Return! May the mercy of Allah ^{AZJ} be upon you.

Go back to the women, for jihad is not obligatory upon women.”

The deaths of Yasar and Salim cast humiliation upon the enemy ranks and sowed unease among their lines. Among the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, there was a sense of triumph, while the commanders of the opposing army felt the sting of this bitter loss.

According to the custom of the morning’s battle, the enemy now moved to recover their standing upon the field, sending forth another warrior to answer the ritual of single combat.

THE MARTYRDOM OF UMAYR IBN ABDULLAH AL MAZHAJI

The enemy had imagined that the weight of their numbers would sow fear within the hearts of the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Instead, they witnessed from those gathered around the Imam ^{a.s} only greater courage and unyielding defiance. Al Manaqib narrates that Umayr ibn Abdullah al Mazhaji then stepped forward, advancing onto the battlefield with defiance burning in his eyes.

The winds of Karbala stirred about him as Umayr ibn Abdullah raised his head high. With unwavering resolve, he gave voice to bold verses of war, proclaiming his lineage, his valour, and the purpose for which he had come,

“The Bani Sa'ad and Mazhaj know that in battle I am a ferocious lion.

I strike my sword upon the head of a well-equipped man,

And cast the warrior to the ground,

Making him a morsel for the wolf and the lame hyena.”

With that roaring declaration, Umayr ibn Abdullah surged into the battle. His sword cut through steel and flesh, his movements swift and deliberate, each blow bearing witness to the depth of his resolve.

He fought without restraint, unafraid of death and driven by devotion to his Master.

The enemy ranks drew back before his assault, shaken by the force of his courage and the certainty of his advance.

Yet amid the clash of blades and the cries of battle, Muslim al Dhahabi and Abdullah al Bajali finally closed in upon Umayr and struck him down. Umayr ibn Abdullah fell upon the sacred earth, his blood mingling with the dust of Karbala.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Umayr ibn Abdullah al Mazhaji.

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE FOUR RIDERS

Among the sacrifices recorded on the morning of Ashura was the stand of four men who had come from Kufa in the company of al Tirmimah ibn Adi.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Fudayl ibn Khudayj al Kindi, that these men had joined the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} after a difficult and perilous journey from Kufa. They worked through the snares of Ibn Ziyad, despite being fully aware of the fate that awaited them.

They were Jabir ibn al Harith al Salmani, Mujamma ibn Abdullah al Aidhi, Amr ibn Khalid al Saydawi, and Amr’s freedman and companion, Sa’ad.

When these men had initially arrived at the camp of Imam ^{a.s}, Mujamma ibn Abdullah was the one who spoke openly to the Imam ^{a.s}, warning him of the treachery of Kufa.

Mujamma warned that Kufa and its nobles had been bought with wealth and promises, their bellies filled and their loyalties secured, and that they now stood united against him.

As for the common people, Mujamma ibn Abdullah said,

“Their hearts incline toward you, yet their swords will be drawn against you on the morrow.”

It was a warning that now proved true, with thousands of them stood as enemies on Ashura.

As the rhythm of single combat continued, Tarikh al Tabari states that at the very beginning of the fighting on the day of Ashura, four men rushed forth together with swords drawn, plunging into the enemy ranks with ferocity.

They pressed forward with determination, cutting their way deep into the opposing lines, until the enemy closed in behind them and severed their path of return. Within moments, they had advanced beyond the reach of immediate support, becoming temporarily separated from the main defensive line of the Imam ^{a.s}. Surrounded and pressed from multiple sides, they stood in grave danger.

At that critical moment, al Abbas ibn Ali surged forward in a powerful counterattack. With fearless strength, he carved his way through the enemy ranks, broke their encirclement, and opened a path back to the companions.

Through this intervention of al Abbas, the four men were rescued and brought back from certain capture and certain death. Yet respite did not temper their commitment.

No sooner had they been rescued than these valiant warriors returned once more to the battlefield, their purpose renewed, charging again into the enemy lines with staunch courage.

One after another, they fought with great courage and honour until they were struck down, and all but one attained martyrdom.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Jabir ibn al Harith al Salmani, Mujamma ibn Abdullah al Aidhi, and Sa’ad, the freedman of Amr ibn Khalid.

Only Amr ibn Khalid survived this assault, wounded but still standing, Amr now bore witness to the sacrifice of his companions. Thus ended the stand of four men whose loyalty had been tested, and whose courage was proven in action.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ANIS IBN MA'QIL AL ASBAHI

The companions stood firm in their numbers. As the duels progressed, Al Manaqib records that Anis ibn Ma'qil al Asbahi emerged from the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, a warrior accomplished in the skill of the sword and trained in battle. Before Anis ibn Ma'qil lay an army swollen with numbers, and behind him stood the household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

When Anis ibn Ma'qil entered the field, he proclaimed himself so that the enemy would know the name of the one who challenged them:

“I am Anis, the son of Ma'qil.

My right hand wields a sharp sword, which I raise upon heads in the heat of battle,

In defence of al Hussein, the noble and distinguished,

He is the son of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, the best of all Prophets.”

Anis ibn Ma'qil fought with ferocity, striking the enemy with precision and defending Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with all that Anis possessed.

Al Manaqib relates that Anis ibn Ma'qil slew more than twenty of the enemy before he himself was struck. He remained steadfast until the weight of his injuries overcame him, and Anis fell upon the plains of Karbala, another luminous sacrifice in defence of the best of men.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Anis ibn Ma'qil al Asbahi.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDUL RAHMAN AL YAZNI

Then there stepped forth Abdul Rahman al Yazni, his eyes alight with purpose and his stance firm as the sun blazed relentlessly over the plains of Karbala. Shaykh Muhammad relates in his book al Manaqib that Abdul Rahman al Yazni possessed the strength and bearing of a seasoned warrior, one hardened by determination rather than years alone.

Abdul Rahman lifted his voice above the tumult and proclaimed his verses:

“I am the son of Abdullah from the progeny of Yazin.

I am upon the religion of al Hussein and al Hasan.

I strike you with the sword of a Yemeni youth,

through which I seek the audience of the Giver of Refuge.”

Abdul Rahman al Yazni rode into the battlefield. Every strike of his sword bore witness to his devotion to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, and every movement reflected his yearning for nearness to his Lord ^{AZJ}. His very breath became an offering for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Abdul Rahman fought with the spirit of Yemen coursing through his veins, and with the love of Imam al Hasan ^{a.s} and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rooted in his heart, until at last Abdul Rahman was embraced by martyrdom.

His sacrifice joined those of the righteous, sealing his faith with his final breath.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdul Rahman al Yazni.

THE MARTYRDOM OF YAHYA IBN SALIM AL MAZANI

The dust had not yet settled from the martyrdom of Abdul Rahman al Yazni when another figure emerged from the camp. Shaykh Muhammad narrates in al Manaqib that Yahya ibn Salim al Mazani came forth from the camp of Imam ^{a.s}.

His presence carried a quiet intensity, and Yahya ibn Salim raised his voice in verse:

“I will strike the army with a decisive sword, a swift blade that hastens toward the enemy. I am neither weak nor fearful, nor do I dread the approach of death.”

Yahya ibn Salim was consumed by the love of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his longing for martyrdom, as though the gates of eternity had already been opened before him.

Yahya ibn Salim advanced onto the battlefield, his sword swift and certain, striking at the enemy with purpose.

His steps remained steady and his blade relentless until, at last, death embraced Yahya ibn Salim just as he had welcomed it. Yahya joined the ranks of the martyrs, his blood mingling with that of the other companions.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Yahya ibn Salim al Mazani.

THE MARTYRDOM OF QURRAH IBN ABI QURRAH

The sun was now well above the horizon. The heat had begun to settle across the field, and thirst pressed against their throats. Several companions had fallen, yet the line endured.

From among the companions came Qurrah ibn Abi Qurrah al Ghifari, a warrior whose very presence stirred the dust of Karbala.

Al Manaqib, as well as Nafasul Mahmoom, relate that Qurrah strode onto the battlefield with the calm certainty of faith and the pride of noble lineage. Lifting his voice, Qurrah proclaimed his verses so that they thundered across the plain, declaring:

“The entire progeny of Ghifar rightly knows,

As do the Bani Khandaf after the progeny of Nizar,

That I am indeed a lion in the heat of battle.

I strike and pound against the band of the adulterers with the sword,

In defence of the progeny of the righteous.”

Qurrah ibn Abi Qurrah launched himself upon the enemy. Qurrah was no ordinary fighter. His sword cut through their ranks as they advanced against him in successive waves. Each charge was met with force, each blow delivered in defence of truth and righteousness.

Ibn Shahr Ashub, in his Al Manaqib, states that Qurrah did not fall until he had dispatched sixty-eight of the enemy, his stand becoming a testament to unwavering fidelity and fearless commitment. Wounded, Qurrah ibn Abi Qurrah at last met martyrdom with the serenity of one who had fulfilled his covenant.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Qurrah ibn Abi Qurrah al Ghifari.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ANAS IBN KAHIL AL ASADI

Al Manaqib, by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shahr Ashub, relates that Anas ibn Kahil al Asadi stepped onto the land of Karbala with a heart ignited by faith and a soul anchored in loyalty to the Household of Revelation. In a field consumed by terror and death, Anas composed himself against the forces before him.

Nafasul Mahmoom records that Anas was known as ‘al Kahili’ by virtue of his descent from the noble ancestor Kahil, a lineage he bore with honour and pride.

The enemy advanced in quick succession. Muthir al Ahzan states that Anas ibn Kahil entered the battlefield reciting:

“Our clan of Kahil, along with Dawdan, knows, as do Khandaf and Qays Aylan, that my people are in distress.

O people, become a ferocious lion and confront the enemy with a swift sword.

The Progeny of Ali are the followers of the Beneficent Lord ^{AZJ}, while the progeny of Harb are the followers of Shaytan.”

With this declaration of faith, Anas ibn Kahil leapt into the battlefield. Ibn Shahr Ashub states that fourteen enemies fell beneath his righteous blade, while some narrations elevate his stand further, attributing to Anas ibn Kahil the slaying of eighteen.

Exhaustion eventually overtook him as the enemy attacked Anas ibn Kahil from multiple sides. Overwhelmed by their sheer numbers, Anas fell upon the soil of Karbala, sealing the covenant he had made with Allah ^{AZJ} and His Proof.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Anas ibn Kahil al Asadi.

Nafasul Mahmoom further clarifies that the individual named in some Muqatil as Malik ibn Anas al Kahili is, in fact, Anas ibn Kahil al Asadi himself, the very companion of the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}. A man who once stood beside the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} in Madinah, and who now stood also in Karbala. This is what it meant to be a ‘Shi’ah’ of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, steadfast across generations and faithful through trials.

Ibn al Athir al Jazari records in Asad al Ghabah that Anas ibn Kahil al Asadi was a man of Kufa. From the early generation of traditionists, Ashath ibn Salim narrates from his father that the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws} declared:

“This son of mine, al Hussein, will be killed at a place in Iraq. Whoever is present at that time should assist him.”

This prophetic warning was directed to those who would one day find themselves living upon that land.

In conscious response to this forewarning, and years before the events of Ashura unfolded, Anas ibn Kahil settled deliberately in that region of Iraq. Anas lived in quiet anticipation of the moment when the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} would arrive, so that he would not be absent when truth demanded allegiance.

This intention is corroborated by the account preserved in *Tabaqat al Kubra*, transmitted from Urban ibn al Haytham. He relates:

“My father would go to the desert and camp in an area where later the battle of al Hussein took place. Whenever we came to that land, we would see a man from the tribe of Asad who lived there.

My father asked him, ‘I see that you have settled here.’

He replied, ‘I have received news that al Hussein will be killed in this land. I have come so that I may be at his side and be killed along with him.’”

When the tragedy of Karbala finally came to pass and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was martyred, Urban ibn al Haytham continues:

“My father said, ‘Let us see whether that man from the Asadi tribe is among those who were killed.’ We came by wagon, searched among the martyrs, and found that he was indeed among those killed on Ashura.”

Thus, the presence of Anas ibn Kahil al Asadi in Karbala was shaped by prophetic words and sustained by conviction. Anas lived in anticipation of martyrdom and met it in fulfilment, standing precisely where he had envisaged to attain martyrdom beside the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

THE MARTYRDOM OF YAZID IBN ZIYAD IBN AL MUHASIR

The number of companions had now somewhat diminished, yet they remained steadfast. Yazid ibn Ziyad, also known as Abul Sha'tha, had first arrived beneath the banner of Umar ibn Sa'd, counted among those who had come to confront Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

At the outset, Abul Sha'tha stood aligned with the army of Umar ibn Sa'd, observing as the standoff deepened and the dust of inevitability began to rise from the desert plain.

Tarikh al Tabari also relates that Abul Sha'tha had indeed entered Karbala as part of Umar ibn Sa'd's ranks. Yet when the Imam's ^[a.s.] calls for peace were rejected and the avenues of reconciliation were deliberately closed, a tremor passed through his conscience.

The path before him was no longer obscured by confusion or command; it was illuminated by truth. As the tide turned irrevocably toward bloodshed, Abul Sha'tha made a choice that severed him from his former allegiance.

Abul Sha'tha crossed the battlefield, just as al Hurr had done, leaving behind the camp of coercion and joining the resolute company of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].¹⁷²

¹⁷² There exists another report preserved in *Tarikh al Tabari* through Abdul Rahman ibn Jundub, which places Abul Sha'tha at odds with the Umayyads even earlier than the Day of Ashura. It is from when Malik ibn al Nusayr al Baddi al Kindi arrived during the path to Karbala, bearing the ultimatum of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, commanding Al Hurr to halt Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] and force him into submission. It was there that Abul Sha'tha would confront this messenger with searing rebuke: ‘May your mother be bereaved of you. What have you come here for’. His words cut sharply through the pretence of authority, revealing a man whose heart had already recoiled from tyranny of the Umayyads.

Abul Sha'tha was renowned for his mastery with the bow. Kneeling upon one knee before the Imam ^[a.s.], he took aim with deliberate composure. Abul Sha'tha loosed eight arrows, and five men fell by his hand. With each arrow released, he proclaimed:

“I am the son of Bahdala, a horseman of Arjalah!”

His voice rose rhythmically with the flight of each shaft.

Tarikh al Tabari records that as he shot, the Imam ^[a.s.] raised his hands and prayed for him:

“O Allah ^[AZJ]! Make firm his archery and grant him Paradise as his reward.”

Nafasul Mahmoom states that when Abul Sha'tha had exhausted his arrows, he cast aside his bow and said:

“Only five of my arrows have gone to waste, while I know that I have killed five men.”

Abul Sha'tha then grasped his sword and sought permission to advance toward the enemy. Fudayl ibn Khudayj al Kindi narrates that, in the charged stillness before his final assault, Abul Sha'tha proclaimed his prosody, which rang across the plain:

“I am Yazid, and my father is al Muhasir. I am more valorous than a lion of the thicket, And I strike the rebels with the spear. O Lord ^[AZJ], I am a helper of al Hussein, And I dissociate myself from the son of Sa'd. My right hand wields a destructive sword.”

Pressed by multiple assailants, Abul Sha'tha continued to fight until he was overcome by the blows and struck down.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Abul Sha'tha Yazid ibn Ziyad.

Shaykh al Mufid counts Abul Sha'tha among those companions who journeyed with the Imam ^[a.s.] from the very beginning of his march toward martyrdom. Whether his transformation unfolded gradually or in a single decisive moment, all reports converge upon one truth: Yazid ibn Ziyad stood at Karbala as a devoted defender of the Imam ^[a.s.].



THE MARTYRDOM OF BURAYR IBN KHUDAYR

Throughout the morning of Ashura, Bihar al Anwar relates that Burayr ibn Khudayr engaged the enemy with relentless courage, at many times advancing alongside companions such as al Hurr and Zuhayr ibn Qayn.

Burayr ibn Khudayr moved toward the ranks of the opposing army, raising his verse:

“I am Burayr, and my father is Khudayr,
a lion who strikes terror into lions with his roar.
Goodness and its people are known through us.
I strike you without hesitation, and in this I see no harm,
for this is the deed of Burayr.”

By then, Burayr had launched repeated assaults and had slain thirty men. Whenever he charged and the enemy scattered before him, he would call out to them with fierce reproach:

“Come closer to me, O killers of the believers!
Come closer, O killers of the sons of those who stood at Badr!
Come closer, O killers of the children of the Prophet ^{saws} and his remaining progeny!”

From the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd, a man emerged into the open plain, riding forward with deliberate confidence. His name was Yazid ibn Ma'qal, of the tribe of Bani Umayyah bin Rabiah, a branch of Bani Salimah of Abdl Qays.

Abu Mikhnaf relates, through Yusuf ibn Yazid, from Afif ibn Zuhayr ibn Abi al Akhnas ¹⁷³, who bore witness to the Day of Ashura at Karbala, that Yazid ibn Ma'qal rode forward and called out across the field in mockery, seeking to draw out a man whose faith he despised.

“O Burayr ibn Khudayr,” he cried, “do you see what Allah ^{AZJ} has done to you?”
Burayr ibn Khudayr heard his name and stepped forward to answer the provocation.
“By Allah ^{AZJ},” Burayr replied,
“Allah ^{AZJ} has dealt fairly with me and has brought forth evil for you.”
The words struck Yazid ibn Ma'qal.

Stung by the reply and eager to shame Burayr ibn Khudayr before the assembled ranks, Yazid ibn Ma'qal raised his voice sharply so that both armies might hear:

“You speak a lie, and before today you were not a liar.
Do you remember when I was walking with you in Bani Lawdhan, and you said that Uthman ibn Affan had killed himself, that Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan was misguided and led others astray, and that the true and righteous Imam and guide is Ali ibn Abi Talib?”
What Yazid ibn Ma'qal intended as an insult became, in truth, a declaration of faith.

¹⁷³ Tarikh al Tabari records that Yusuf ibn Yazid states that he asked Afif ibn Zuhayr ibn Abi al Akhnas whether he had truly witnessed the events of Ashura with his own eyes. Afif replied, “I saw it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears.”

Burayr ibn Khudayr answered without hesitation:

“I bear witness that this is my belief, and these are my words.”
“Then I bear witness,” Yazid ibn Ma'qal cried aloud with anger,
“that you are among the misguided and the deviant.” ¹⁷⁴

Burayr ibn Khudayr, unmoved by the accusation, replied with composure:

“Let us enter into mutual imprecation. Let us both call upon Allah ^{AZJ} to curse the liar and to kill the one who is upon falsehood. Thereafter, come out to fight me.”

At this, Yazid ibn Ma'qal urged his horse forward, confident in himself and eager for the encounter. Burayr ibn Khudayr, for his part, sought permission from the Imam ^{a.s}, and it was granted. Burayr then proceeded to advance toward the enemy.

Al Malhuf states that the two men met in the open ground between the camps. Beneath the watching ranks of both armies, they raised their hands toward the sky and each called upon Allah ^{AZJ} to curse the liar and grant death to the oppressor.

When the supplication ended, they closed upon one another with swords drawn.

Yazid ibn Ma'qal struck first, delivering a blow that landed lightly and failed to wound Burayr in a meaningful way.

Burayr ibn Khudayr countered at once, his strike landing with crushing force. The sword split Yazid’s helmet, cleaved into his skull, and embedded into his brain.

Yazid ibn Ma'qal fell to the ground like a ball, lifeless, with the blade still lodged deep within his shattered head.

From the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}, chants of Takbir erupted as Burayr ibn Khudayr stood over the body of Yazid ibn Ma'qal, struggling to wrench his sword free from his skull.

Tarikh al Tabari states that, seeing this, another man from the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd rushed forward. It was Radhi ibn Munqidh al Abdi. He charged at Burayr while his sword was momentarily trapped. Burayr swerved aside from the attack and seized Radhi instead.

The two grappled fiercely, locked in close combat, struggling against one another until Burayr forced Radhi ibn Munqidh to the ground and sat upon his chest.

Overcome with terror, Radhi ibn Munqidh cried out:

“Where are those who will defend me?”

At that moment, Ka'b ibn Jabir ibn Amr al Azdi forced his way through the enemy ranks, advancing swiftly with a spear clenched in his hands.

The narration states that when Ka'b ibn Jabir reached the place where Burayr was overpowering Radhi, he drew back his spear and thrust it with full force into the back of Burayr.

¹⁷⁴ In that brief exchange, the creed that governed the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd was laid bare. They pledged loyalty to the usurpers of authority, mourned Uthman, and revered the vile Muawiyah, and thus followed his deviant son Yazid. In their belief, those who affirmed Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s} as the Imam of guidance were themselves misguided, and worse still, deemed to have strayed from Islam altogether. It is therefore of little surprise that they regarded the murder of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions as a religiously sanctioned act.

The spear tore through the body of Burayr ibn Khudayr and burst out from his chest, its iron point forcing its way through flesh and bone until it emerged from the front of his body. The force of the thrust drove Burayr forward, pressing him down upon Radhi ibn Munqidh, whom he still held pinned beneath him upon the ground.

Yet even with the spear lodged through him, and even as blood poured from the wound, Burayr did not release the man beneath his grip. His hands remained locked upon Radhi, restraining him with the last remnants of his strength. Then, in the agony of that final struggle, Burayr bent down over him and bit into his face with such force that he tore away part of his nose. Radhi ibn Munqidh screamed, as Burayr, wounded and bleeding, still held him down.

Ka'b ibn Jabir then drove the spear deeper still, pushing the weapon through Burayr's body until the wound widened and his strength began to fail. At last, Burayr could no longer hold himself upright. The force within his limbs collapsed, his grip loosened, and he was thrown from the body of Radhi ibn Munqidh, falling wounded upon the blood-soaked earth.

Seeing Burayr writhing upon the ground from the fatal wound that had pierced through his back, Ka'b ibn Jabir advanced upon Burayr and struck him repeatedly with his sword, until Burayr ibn Khudayr was slain.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Burayr ibn Khudayr.

Jeers arose from the army of Umar ibn Sa'd as word spread that Burayr ibn Khudayr had been killed. Murmurs passed through the ranks, and when the news reached those who knew him, they exclaimed in shock and recognition:

"This is Burayr ibn Khudayr, the Qur'an reciter! He taught us the Qur'an in the mosque."

Indeed, al Malhuf states that Burayr ibn Khudayr was among the foremost scholars of the Qur'an of his time. He lived in Kufa and was regarded as the finest Qur'an reciter of his era. Among his many distinctions were his insight into the path he had chosen, his piety, his eloquence, and his resolute defence of the sacred authority of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Burayr had a cheerful bearing on the morning of Ashura, even as the enemy advanced toward the camp of the faithful, revealed the loftiness and clarity of his soul.

Abu Mikhnaḥ further relates, through Yusuf ibn Yazid from Afif ibn Zuhayr ibn Abi al Akhnas, that Radhi ibn Munqidh lay writhing upon the ground, clutching his bloodied face where Burayr ibn Khudayr had torn away his nose.

After Ka'b ibn Jabir had struck Burayr down, Radhi finally rose, brushed the dust from his cloak, and spoke to his rescuer with palpable relief:

"O brother from the clan of Azd, you have favoured me, and I shall never forget it."

Ka'b ibn Jabir later justified his deed in verses affirming his obedience to the Umayyad authority, claiming responsibility for killing Burayr and boasting that he had saved Radhi ibn Munqidh when he cried for help.

Abu Mikhnaḥ also records verses from Radhi, in which he lamented the shame of crying out and being rescued by Ka'b, admitting that the disgrace would be remembered by later generations and wishing he had died before enduring such dishonour.

THE CURSE UPON ABDULLAH IBN HAWZAH

The martyrdom of Burayr ibn Khudayr had scarcely settled into silence when a new agitation stirred within the ranks of the enemy. The shock of what they had witnessed did not soften their hearts; rather, it hardened the enemy further, driving them to seek another moment of provocation against the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari states that from among them rode forward a man of Banu Tamim, Abdullah ibn Hawzah. He pressed his mount onward until he came within clear sight of the tents, his posture inflated with arrogance and his manner shameful.

Drawing himself upright in the saddle, he raised his voice and shouted across the plain,

"O Hussein! O Hussein!"

No voice answered Abdullah ibn Hawzah. Within the camp, sorrow still lay thick in the air.

The companions of the Imam ^{a.s} were gathered in grief, their hearts weighed down by the recent loss of Burayr ibn Khudayr. The silence unsettled the rider further.

Ibn Hawzah called out again, his horse shifting beneath him, disturbed by the tension of the moment. "Is Hussein among you?!"

Once more, no reply came from the camp. The quiet pressed upon him, yet arrogance drove him onward. For a third time, Abdullah ibn Hawzah shouted, louder than before,

"O Hussein! O Hussein!"

Now, the Imam ^{a.s} turned to his companions and said calmly,

"Say to him: Yes, this is Hussein. What is your need?!"

The words reached the rider. Abdullah ibn Hawzah sneered, his face twisted with derision, and shouted back, seeking to humiliate the Imam ^{a.s}.

"O Hussein! Take glad tidings of the fire of Hell!"

All this effort was to taunt Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Mocking laughter rippled through the ranks behind him, amused by his insolence.

Tarikh al Kamil narrates that the Imam ^{a.s} answered Ibn Hawzah, his voice firm:

"No, it is not as you have said. I am proceeding to the presence of the Merciful Lord ^{AZJ} and the intercessor who is obeyed."

For a moment, the audacity of Abdullah ibn Hawzah struck the Imam ^{a.s} with its brazenness. The Imam ^{a.s} observed the jeers and addressed the rider directly,

"Who are you?!"

The man replied, tugging at the reins as his horse grew restless, "I am Abdullah ibn Hawzah!"

At that, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his hands toward the sky, so high that even the whiteness beneath his sleeves could be seen.

The Imam ^{a.s} prayed, "O Lord ^{AZJ}, hasten him toward the fire of Hell."

Those who stood nearby would later recount that the words had scarcely left the blessed lips of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} when the decree of Allah ^{AZJ} began to unfold.

Al Tabari narrates, through a chain from Masruq ibn Wa'el, who stood that day among the foremost of the enemy cavalry, that Masruq ibn Wa'el would later bear witness to this event.

Masruq ibn Wa'el had ridden near the front of the army, driven by the hope of striking the head of the Imam ^{a.s} and earning favour with Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

From that vantage, Masruq ibn Wa'el watched as Abdullah ibn Hawzah recoiled in fury and spurred his horse forward, charging toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

But between them lay a moat. As the horse lunged, the foot of Abdullah ibn Hawzah slipped and became caught in the stirrup. Panic seized the animal as its rider lost control.

The horse veered violently and plunged into a ditch, dragging its master behind it.

Abdullah ibn Hawzah was hurled to the ground, his leg still bound, his body battered and pulled along as the horse bolted in terror. His head struck the earth, then stone, then stone again, blow after blow, until his skull was crushed and life fled from him. His foot, shin, and thigh were torn apart, and his side remained caught in the stirrup as the horse raced onward.

Masruq ibn Wa'el stood frozen, his heart shaken by what his eyes had witnessed. The noise of battle faded from his hearing as the weight of the moment pressed upon him.

Without a word, he turned his horse away from the field and withdrew from the ranks.

Later, Masruq ibn Wa'el would recount: "I saw such wonders from the people of this Household that I shall never fight them." And in this way ended the fate of Abdullah ibn Hawzah; his end was made manifest as a sign for those who witnessed it.



THE MARTYRDOM OF AMR IBN QURAZAH

The field of Karbala had narrowed under the pressure of the enemy ranks that surrounded Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his camp.

In the aftermath of the assaults on the Day of Ashura by the forces of Umar ibn Sa'd, many of the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} had already been martyred.

As the cavalry charge of Umar ibn Sa'd withdrew to regroup, the companions in the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} moved among the bodies scattered across the sands, searching for their brothers among the dead and the injured left behind by their onslaughts.

After seeking permission from the Imam ^{a.s}, Amr ibn Qurazah ibn Kab al Ansari stepped forward. ¹⁷⁵ Amr was already wounded by this point from the previous skirmishes.

Al Malhuf records that before this time, not a single arrow advanced toward the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} except that Amr ibn Qurazah intercepted it with his own hands, and not a sword was raised toward the Imam ^{a.s} except that Amr placed himself in its path.

As long as Amr ibn Qurazah remained alive, the Imam ^{a.s} did not sustain a single injury.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Abdul Rahman ibn Jundub that Amr ibn Qurazah rode forward before the army of Umar ibn Sa'd, raised his sword, and called out loudly to the enemy:

"The battalion of the Ansar knows that I am a protector of the land of promise.

I strike with a sharp-edged sword like a youth,

and my self and my household are humble before al Hussein." ¹⁷⁶

To answer Amr's challenge, a warrior emerged from the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd.

The two met in the open field, and fierce fighting ensued. Amr ibn Qurazah eventually overcame his opponent, but Amr himself sustained more deep and grievous wounds, and his strength began to ebb.

Having dispatched his enemy, the injured Amr ibn Qurazah turned back toward the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}. His body staggered from side to side, weakened by the many blows he had endured. After advancing some distance, Amr stopped, leaning heavily upon his sword.

From there, Amr ibn Qurazah looked toward the companions and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, who stood watching in anticipation of his return.

Amr ibn Qurazah realised that his wounds were too severe for him to reach the camp and then return again to the battlefield. Standing where he was, clutching his bleeding wounds with one hand while resting upon his sword with the other, Amr called out to the Imam ^{a.s},

"O son of the Prophet of Allah ^{AZJ}, have I fulfilled my duty of obedience?!"

¹⁷⁵ Amr ibn Qurazah was a distinguished companion, known for his loyalty and courage, and it was he whom the Imam ^{a.s} had previously sent to Umar ibn Sa'd with a message calling for a meeting between the two camps.

¹⁷⁶ The final line of this couplet stood in stark contrast to the words Umar ibn Sa'd had uttered to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in the nights before, when he had said, "My house shall be destroyed," should he withdraw from killing Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied immediately, fully aware of the gravity of Amr ibn Qurazah's condition and sensing that his end had come:

"Verily, yes. You shall be the one to go to Paradise before me. Then offer my salutations to the Prophet of Allah ^{saws} and tell him that I am on my way, following you."

Upon hearing these words from Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Amr ibn Qurazah knew that martyrdom was imminent. Amr turned once more toward the enemy, raised his sword as though inviting another duel, but his injuries had left him barely able to stand.

Seeing his weakened state, several of the enemy charged at him together.

True to his pledge, Amr ibn Qurazah continued to fight until he was finally struck down and fell upon the sands of Karbala.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Amr ibn Qurazah ibn Kab al Ansari.

Amr ibn Qurazah was the son of Qurazah ibn Kab, a distinguished companion of the Prophet ^{saws} who fought at the Battle of Uhud and remained present in the muslim ranks during all subsequent campaigns.

Qurazah ibn Kab later conquered al Rayy during the rule of the second Caliph, Umar, and was a constant companion of Imam Ali ^{a.s} during his caliphate.

On the Day of Ashura, fate divided itself between his two sons.

Tarikh al Kamil states that while Amr ibn Qurazah stood among the companions of the Imam ^{a.s}, his brother, Ali ibn Qurazah, stood within the army of Umar ibn Sa'd.

It was a striking contrast of destiny: two brothers from the same house, yet separated by allegiance on the plain of Karbala. What a striking contrast of destiny.

Ali ibn Qurazah then witnessed the soldiers of his own army rush upon his brother Amr ibn Qurazah and kill him. The grief of brotherhood mixed with the blindness of the side he had chosen. Tarikh al Tabari records that this sight filled Ali ibn Qurazah with seething rage as his brother fell. Overcome by anger, Ali ibn Qurazah rode hastily out toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and shouted insults towards the Imam ^{a.s},

"O Hussein! O liar, and son of a liar!

You have misguided my brother and deceived him until you sent him to his death!"

The battlefield of Karbala fell momentarily silent, for this was a rare and tragic moment: two brothers had stood on opposing sides, and one of them had just been slain by the very army in which the other remained.

In that charged and sorrowful instant, Ali ibn Qurazah again turned his anger toward the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The Imam ^{a.s} then answered Ali ibn Qurazah:

"Indeed, Allah ^{AZJ} did not misguide your brother. Rather, Amr ibn Qurazah was granted guidance, while it is you who are misguided."

Blinded by anger and devoid of restraint, Ali ibn Qurazah cried out,

"May Allah ^{AZJ} kill me if I do not kill you or die in the attempt!"

Ali ibn Qurazah then spurred his mount and charged toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his sword aimed at the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates from Thabit ibn Hubayrah that as Ali ibn Qurazah advanced, Nafi ibn Hilal al Muradi immediately spurred his horse forward, spear in hand, sensing the danger rushing toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The two closed the distance between them until they met, and Nafi ibn Hilal thrust his spear, casting Ali ibn Qurazah violently from his horse.

Ali ibn Qurazah struck the ground heavily. Seeing his wounded state, his companions rushed forward, dragged Ali ibn Qurazah from the field, and carried him back to their lines. Nafi ibn Hilal returned to the Imam ^{a.s} and his companions, victorious.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Yahya ibn Hani ibn Urwah that, upon witnessing these events, Amr ibn al Hajjaj al Zubaydi shouted from the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd,

"O foolish men! Do you know whom you are fighting?!

You are fighting against valiant men who are ready to sacrifice their lives! No one should go to fight them single-handedly, for they are only a few left and little time remains!

By Allah ^{AZJ}, even if you attack them with stones, they will perish!"

Umar ibn Sa'd, observing the mounting losses, approved of this counsel and declared,

"You have spoken truly. The right opinion is what you see."

Tarikh al Tabari states that Umar ibn Sa'd then issued orders to his commanders that none of the men were to engage in single combat with the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Likewise, al Bidayah wa al Nihayah narrates from Abu Janab that on the Day of Ashura, when the two sides engaged in single combat, most of the victories belonged to the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. This was because they were more skilled, they sought martyrdom, and they had no support to rely upon except their swords.

Seeing this, some of Umar ibn Sa'd's commanders advised that their soldiers be prevented from accepting individual challenges. Thus, though few in number, the valiant companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} fought with unwavering bravery and honour, while the enemy left the chivalry of the battlefield, retreating instead into the safety of numbers and distance.



THE NARROWING OF THE BATTLEFIELD

THE SECOND ASSAULT ON ASHURA

Shadows shortened beneath the hooves as the morning advanced. With each fallen warrior, the imbalance upon the field grew ever more stark. The commanders of Umar ibn Sa'd soon realised that single combat served only to fortify the commitment of men who longed for martyrdom, while steadily eroding the morale of their own ranks.

What had begun as a contest of arms had become a spectacle of humiliation. Orders were therefore issued to abandon individual duels altogether. Moments later, at the command of Umar ibn Sa'd, Amr ibn al Hajjaj advanced forward from the regrouped army.

Nafasul Mahmoom states that Amr ibn al Hajjaj, the commander of the right wing of Umar ibn Sa'd, rode forward and pulled hard at the reins to bring his steed to a halt.

Having already led the first assault earlier, Amr ibn al Hajjaj raised his hand while seated upon his horse and turned back toward the mass of soldiers behind him.

Amr addressed them concerning Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions:

“O people of Kufa! Remain firm in your obedience and unity, and do not hesitate in killing one who has deviated from the religion and opposed the Imam!” - meaning Yazid.

Such words could only issue from a heart stripped of all shame.

With astonishing audacity, Amr ibn al Hajjaj then pointed toward the noble grandson of the Prophet ^{saws} and accused Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} of deviation from the religion of his own grandfather, while proclaiming Yazid ibn Muawiyah to be the rightful Imam upon truth.

The moral collapse and brazenness displayed before Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was staggering, a depth of inversion that laid bare the ruin of conscience within that Kufan army.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was visibly angered by this insolence.

Turning toward Amr ibn al Hajjaj, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied,

“O Amr ibn al Hajjaj! Are you inciting the people against me?

Have we deviated while you have remained steadfast upon it?”

Then, raising his blessed hand toward the sky, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} proclaimed,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! You shall surely know, once your souls are seized and you die upon your deeds, which of us has deviated from the religion!

Verily, you will then know who is more deserving of the fire’s scorching!”

Tarikh Dimashq records, through Bishr ibn Tanihah, from a man of the tribe of Hamadan who was an eyewitness on the morning of Ashura, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then addressed the opposing army. The Imam ^{a.s} began by praising and glorifying Allah ^{AZJ}, and said:

“O servants of Allah ^{AZJ}!

Be mindful of Allah ^{AZJ} and beware of the world, for if the world would persist for anyone, and if anyone could remain in it forever, then the prophets would be the most deserving of it; they were the most content of Allah’s ^{AZJ} servants and most pleased with His decree ^{AZJ}!

However, Allah ^{AZJ}, the Almighty, created this world as a place of trial and created its inhabitants to perish. Its freshness fades, its bounties wane, and its pleasures are short-lived. It is a place to gather necessities, and its abodes are transient.

So take provisions for the journey to come, and indeed, the best provision is God-mindfulness (taqwa); be mindful of Allah ^{AZJ}, that you might be successful.”

Amr ibn al Hajjaj found no reply to these words of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Unwilling to endure the sermon of the Imam ^{a.s}, Amr turned his horse away and retreated back toward the cavalry under his command.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then turned his steed toward his own companions, for the Imam ^{a.s} foresaw that another cavalry assault was imminent.

Al Amali of Ibn al Shajari narrates, from al Hussein ibn Zayd ibn Ali, who transmitted from his forefathers, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} addressed his companions at that moment, fully aware of the overwhelming charge that was about to be unleashed upon them.

The Imam ^{a.s} rode back and forth before them, praising and glorifying Allah ^{AZJ}, and said,

“All praise belongs to Allah ^{AZJ}, Who made the hereafter for the God-wary, and the hellfire and its punishment for the disbelievers!

By Allah ^{AZJ}! We did not take this path to seek this world such that we would doubt the pleasure of the paradise of our Lord ^{AZJ}.

So persevere, for Allah ^{AZJ} is with those who have God-mindfulness (taqwa), and the abode of the hereafter is better for you!”

The companions replied in unison, “We will sacrifice our lives for you!”

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Muhammad ibn al Qays, records that when the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} saw the vast multitude of the enemy and realised that there would be no way to shield the Imam ^{a.s}, nor even themselves, from what was to come that day, they began to vie with one another to be the first to lay down their lives for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Al Hussein ibn Zayd ibn Ali narrates,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, they were resolved to precede him into battle so that they might be martyred before him, and so that he would witness their actions and pray for their forgiveness.”

No sooner had the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} begun to arrange their small formation than the ground beneath them began to tremble. The unmistakable roar of hooves filled the air as a mass of horses surged forward, charging directly toward the camp.

Nafasul Mahmoom states that Amr ibn al Hajjaj had ordered his right flank to advance in a full assault, driving upon the right flank of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions from the direction of the Euphrates.

The clash was fierce and unrelenting. Amid swirling dust, chaos, and the thunder of hooves, the two sides collided and fought for a time. In the violence of that assault, a number of companions fell in that surge, as the second great assault of Ashura descended.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon all the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

THE MARTYRDOM OF MUSLIM IBN AWSAJAH

The dust of the second assault was still swirling as the field revealed its grim truth. The enemy's numbers were overwhelming, their advance relentless, and with each surge forward the pressure upon the defenders of the Imam ^[a.s] grew heavier.

The plain of Karbala echoed with the thunder of hooves and the clash of steel, yet amid that encroaching storm stood men whose devotion did not waver. Among them was Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi, a veteran of faith whose years had neither weakened his determination nor dimmed the flame of loyalty within his heart.

Muslim ibn Awsajah had lived long enough to know the cost of such a stand, yet he did not hesitate. As the enemy pressed forward once more, Muslim stepped out from among the ranks of the faithful, seeking permission to be among the first to meet the renewed assault. His body carried the weight of age, but his spirit rose with clarity, courage, and purpose.

Before advancing, he raised his voice and recited his prosody:

"If you inquire about me, know that I am a male lion.

I am from the chiefs and notables of the branch of Bani Asad.

Thus, the one who oppresses us has deviated from the Right Path

and from the religion of the Self-Sufficient and Omnipotent Lord ^[AZJ]."

Muslim ibn Awsajah then plunged into the chaos of the general attack. He fought with valour and steadfastness, holding firm amid the fury of the assault and striking wherever the enemy ranks pressed closest to the Imam ^[a.s].

It is reported that Muslim was eventually struck down by two men from the contingent of Amr ibn al Hajjaj, Abdul Rahman al Bajali and Muslim ibn Abdullah al Dhahabi.

In a moment of cruel triumph, the men of Amr ibn al Hajjaj shouted aloud,

"We have killed Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi!"

Their ranks withdrew, and when the dust of their retreat settled upon the plain, Muslim ibn Awsajah lay upon the sand, grievously wounded, his body trembling as life slowly ebbed away. Al Malhuf states that the eyes of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] fell upon his wounded companion, and the Imam ^[a.s] hastened toward Muslim, with Habib ibn Muzahir at his side.

The sight was one of immense sorrow: a noble companion, aged in years yet firm in devotion, now lying beneath the weight of wounds earned in defence of truth.

Across the field, the remaining companions moved among the injured and the fallen, tending to those who still breathed and mourning those who had already departed.

A faint spark of life still lingered in the eyes of Muslim ibn Awsajah. The Imam ^[a.s] bent beside Muslim, and in a voice heavy with sorrow, honour, and farewell, recited the verse:

"May your Lord ^[AZJ] have mercy on you, O Muslim ibn Awsajah,

'Among the believers are men who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah ^[AZJ]. Some of them have fulfilled their pledge with their lives, and others are waiting for their turn. They have never changed their 'commitment' in the least.'" (Q33:23)

Al Manaqib states that then Habib ibn Muzahir knelt beside Muslim ibn Awsajah as well, his voice breaking as Habib whispered,

"It is very distressing for me to see you smeared in mud and blood, O Muslim.

Your death grieves me. May you receive the glad tidings of Paradise, O Muslim."

In a fading voice, Muslim replied, "May Allah ^[AZJ] give you glad tidings of Paradise also."

Habib said to Muslim ibn Awsajah, "Were it not that I know I will soon follow you, to join you in this very hour in martyrdom, I would have wished that you entrust me with all that concerns you, so that I could fulfil it for you as you deserve, in kinship and in religion."

Al Malhuf and Muthir al Ahzan relate that Muslim ibn Awsajah weakly gestured toward Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and said, "Rather, I entrust you with this Master, may Allah ^[AZJ] have mercy on you." Then, gathering the last reserves of his strength, Muslim instructed Habib, "That you die in his defense."

Habib ibn Muzahir replied without hesitation, "I will do so, by the Lord ^[AZJ] of the Ka'bah!"

Not long thereafter, Muslim ibn Awsajah breathed his last, his soul departing while resting in the blessed presence of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi.

Though Burayr and Amr ibn Qurazah had already attained martyrdom earlier that day, their deaths had come in single combat. With the cessation of individual duels and the onset of general assaults, Muslim ibn Awsajah thus became the first of the Imam's ^[a.s] companions to fall in this mass attack, the first to be slain amid the full fury of the second assault.

The shouts of the enemy, exalting over the death of Muslim ibn Awsajah, rose into the air and reached the tents of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

From within them came a cry that pierced the moment. The servant girl of Muslim ibn Awsajah wailed in anguish, "O son of Awsajah! O my master!"

Al Manaqib states that such was the stature of Muslim ibn Awsajah that even the enemy of Allah ^[AZJ], Shabath ibn Ribī al Tamimi, the commander of the infantry of Umar ibn Sa'd, turned to those around him and rebuked them, saying:

"May your mothers mourn over you! You are killing yourselves with your own hands and tearing yourselves apart for the sake of others!

Then you rejoice because you have killed Muslim ibn Awsajah?

By Him in whom I believe, I have seen Muslim ibn Awsajah in the battlefield, bringing honour to the Muslims. I saw him in the battle on the plain of Azerbaijan at a time when no Muslim had yet advanced from his position, and yet Muslim ibn Awsajah had already killed six polytheists. And when such a man dies, you rejoice over it?!"

The journey of faith for Muslim ibn Awsajah had now reached its end. According to al Manaqib, he had been aligned to the cause of the Imam ^[a.s] since Kufa, serving as the trusted agent of Muslim ibn Aqil, entrusted with collecting funds, procuring weapons, and receiving pledges of allegiance on behalf of the Imam ^[a.s]. That loyalty was sealed with his final breath beneath the gaze of the son of Sayyidah Fatimah ^[s.a].

THE MARTYRDOM OF AL HAJJAJ IBN MASRUQ AND ABDUL RAHMAN

The sun now stood higher in the sky, and the tents of the women and children were clearly within arrow range of the nearest enemy line. From within the tightening circle, al Hajjaj ibn Masruq al Jufi, the muezzin of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, advanced.

For days his adhan had risen above the tents of the faithful, summoning the small band of believers to prayer in the midst of encroaching darkness.

Al Hajjaj ibn Masruq stood before the Imam ^{a.s} with solemn composure. Much of the congregation for whom Al Hajjaj had called the adhan had already departed to their Lord ^{AZJ}.

One by one, they had answered a greater summons.

Al Hajjaj sought no exemption from that gathering. Just as he had once called them to stand behind the Imam ^{a.s} in prayer, Al Hajjaj now sought permission to follow them into martyrdom. With quiet dignity, Al Hajjaj requested leave, and the Imam ^{a.s} granted it.

Shaykh Muhammad relates in al Manaqib that upon receiving the approval of his master Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, al Hajjaj ibn Masruq raised his voice once more.

Advancing toward the battlefield, Al Hajjaj cried out:

“Proceed forward, O Hussein, who is a guide and rightly guided!

Today you shall meet your grandfather, the Prophet ^{saws},
and your father, Ali, the possessor of munificence,
whom we recognize through the Revelation.”

These words were a proclamation of faith from the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}.

With fierce devotion, al Hajjaj ibn Masruq threw himself into the fray. Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub states that each strike of his sword echoed like a takbir in defiance of oppression, and twenty-five enemies fell beneath his blade. Yet the decree of martyrdom awaited him.

Surrounded and struck, al Hajjaj ibn Masruq collapsed upon the sands, his body broken.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon al Hajjaj ibn Masruq al Jufi.

Also among those who fell was the companion Abdul Rahman ibn Abd Rabbih al Ansari, whose loyalty extended across the earliest generations of Islam and remained firmly bound to the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}. Abdul Rahman was counted among the companions of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and thereafter continued in faithful service alongside the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ^{a.s}, and later Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}.

It is related that Imam Ali ^{a.s} himself trained and instructed Abdul Rahman, teaching him the recitation of the Qur'an and nurturing him under the guidance of the Imamate, so that his understanding and faith were formed directly through the instruction of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Among his recognised merits is that when Imam Ali ^{a.s} gathered the companions in Kufa and called upon those who had personally heard the declaration of the Prophet ^{saws} at Ghadir Khumm to bear witness, Abdul Rahman ibn Abd Rabbih rose among those who stood openly and testified to what they had heard. Thus, his presence beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at Karbala was the culmination of a life lived in devotion to the truth.

It is narrated that even as the shadow of martyrdom drew near on the Day of Ashura, Abdul Rahman would engage in light-hearted banter with the companions, their spirits calm despite the encirclement closing upon them.

In this composure was revealed the serenity of those who had already detached themselves from the world and prepared to meet their Lord ^{AZJ} in sacrifice and loyalty.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdul Rahman ibn Abd Rabbih al Ansari.



THE ENCIRCLEMENT OF THE TENTS

It was the late morning of Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Al Irshad records that the enemy advanced once more, and Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan hurled his forces against the left flank of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Yet the companions of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] stood firm. They met this assault with courage, repelled the charge, and forced Shimr and his forces to retreat in humiliation. The companions of the Imam ^[a.s] fought with utter ferocity, their faith unshaken despite their small number.

Whenever the cavalry of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] entered the battle, their impact was devastating. Though they numbered only thirty-two horsemen, each charge scattered entire squadrons of Kufan cavalry before they regrouped and returned again to defend the Imam ^[a.s].

Sayyid Ibn Tawus narrates in al Malhuf, from Imam al Baqir ^[a.s], that the companions numbered forty-five horsemen and one hundred infantry, a force small in number yet immense in courage. Yet each charge that was repelled bought only moments of relief.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that one such charge fell upon the Kufan cavalry with crushing force. As the companions of the Imam ^[a.s] surged forward, cutting through their ranks from every side, fear seized Azrah ibn Qays al Tamimi, the commander of the Kufan cavalry.

Overwhelmed by the onslaught, Azrah ibn Qays hastily dispatched his messenger, Abdul Rahman ibn Haseen, to Umar ibn Sa'd, pleading for immediate reinforcements,

“Do you not see what my cavalry have been facing today from this small number?”

Abdul Rahman ibn Haseen pleaded. “Send out the foot-soldiers and archers against them!”

Umar ibn Sa'd perceived clearly that the cavalry of Azrah ibn Qays had faltered.

Turning to Shabath ibn Ribī al Tamimi, the commander of his infantry, Ibn Sa'd said,

“Will you not go forth to attack Hussein?”

Shabath ibn Ribī recoiled. “Glory be to Allah ^[AZJ]!” he replied.

“Do you intend sending the chief of the towns and the master of the Kufans with the archers? Could you not find someone else who would suffice in my place?”

Al Ansab al Ashraf relates that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] then mounted his horse and advanced toward the masses of Kufa, holding the Qur'an before him.

Yet the sight neither softened the hearts of the enemy nor halted their advance.

Instead, Umar ibn Sa'd now summoned Hussein ibn Tamim, the chief of police under Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, and placed him in command of an armoured division. These were the warriors that were clad in heavy protective armour.

With Hussein ibn Tamim, Umar ibn Sa'd dispatched a heavily armoured infantry and five hundred archers, using the infantry as a shield so that the archers might rain arrows upon the camp of the Imam ^[a.s].

Abu Mikhnaf records, through al Hussein ibn Uqbah al Muradi from al Zubaydi, that when Hussein ibn Tamim drew near to the Imam ^[a.s] and his companions, they unleashed a relentless storm of arrows.

Before long, many of the horses within the camp were wounded or slain, forcing the companions of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] to dismount and continue the battle on foot.

The battle intensified between the two sides without respite.

It is at this moment that the horse of al Hurr is mentioned in the narrations. Already wounded from earlier encounters, the mount was struck again by arrows.

It trembled, reared up, and collapsed. Al Hurr sprang from its back like a lion in the midst of battle, his sword drawn, and recited his prosody. ¹⁷⁷

Azdi preserves this account from Namir ibn Wahab, who narrates from Ayyub ibn Musarrih al Khiyawani, a man from the contingent of Hussein ibn Tamim. It was Ayyub who fired the arrow that finally brought down the horse of al Hurr ibn Yazid.

The arrow tore through the belly of the horse, which convulsed violently and cried out as its strength failed, collapsing upon the sands with its rider.

Dust rose as the wounded animal thrashed upon the ground.

Ayyub later stated that as al Hurr fell with his horse, he swiftly freed himself from the saddle as it collapsed. Al Hurr stood upright amid the chaos, cast aside the reins, gathered his sword from the earth, and charged forward toward the ranks of the archers.

Advancing on foot, al Hurr struck fiercely, reciting aloud to the enemy before him:

“Even if you have cut off the legs of my horse,

I am the son of al Hurr. I am more valiant than a male lion.”

Those who faced al Hurr recoiled in terror. Wherever he turned, more soldiers fled before al Hurr as he tore through their ranks relentlessly, opening their lines and driving them back.

Ayyub ibn Musarrih later swore by Allah ^[AZJ] that he had never witnessed the like of al Hurr, charging alone on foot and tearing through their ranks as al Hurr did in that hour.

Ibn Abi al Hadid narrates in Sharh Nahj al Balaghah another testimony to the overwhelming effectiveness of the small force of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Such was the courage noted in the companions of the Imam ^[a.s] that they reminisced about it. A man from the army of Umar ibn Sa'd would later be rebuked about his role in Karbala,

“Shame on you! Did you kill the offspring of Allah’s Messenger ^[saws]?”

This man would reply, “We were barely clinging on by our teeth. If you had seen what we saw, you would have done what we did. They attacked us with swords in their hands, fighting like enraged lions. They scattered our riders left and right and hurled themselves toward death. They sought no quarter and showed no interest in plunder.

They were determined either to overcome us or to die. Had we held back, they would have pierced the heart of our army. What else could we have done, you motherless one?”

¹⁷⁷ It is evident that the prosody says: I am the son of al Hurr. The narration is quoted from al Hurr himself, and neither Abu Mikhnaf, nor al Kalbi, nor al Tabari, nor others commented on it. It is possible that those who said that the son of al Hurr was present, repented, and was killed alongside Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], took it from here. Perhaps al Hurr was the name of his grandfather or one of his ancestors, or he intended its meaning. al Mufid also mentioned the prosody without any commentary.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAYR

A murmur of grim satisfaction spread through the ranks of the enemy with the martyrdoms of notable companions, such as Muslim ibn Awsajah. Their cries of triumph rippled across the battlefield, emboldening the soldiers of Kufa as they witnessed the steady thinning of the noble companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Among those who observed with cruel approval was Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan, commander of the left flank under Umar ibn Sa'd.

From his position, Shimr had earlier seen the cavalry of Amr ibn al Hajjaj pressing hard against the companions stationed before the camp. Not wishing to be absent from the assault, Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan again urged his own forces forward, launching a simultaneous attack from the left flank against the defenders before the tents of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Once again, the loyal companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood firm.

Though exhaustion weighed heavily upon them and their numbers had visibly diminished, their determination did not falter. They met the oncoming charge with resolute thrusts, holding their ground against the fury of the cavalry.

Among those defenders stood Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi ¹⁷⁸, also known in the narrations as Wahab al Kalbi. Some reports identify him as a resident of Kufa who, upon learning that the people were fixing to wage war against the son of Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, resolved to leave the city and hasten to Karbala. When Abdullah ibn Umayr informed his family of his decision, both his mother and his wife encouraged him, and they accompanied him under the cover of night until they reached the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Earlier, at the very outset of the battle, Abdullah ibn Umayr had stepped forward for single combat. In one of those encounters, the fingers of his left hand were severed.

Yet Abdullah ibn Umayr remained among the defenders of the tents, his wounded hand still bleeding at his side. Ibn Shahr Ashob, in his book Al Manaqib, states that the mother of Abdullah ibn Umayr urged her injured son to attack the enemy once more, saying,

“Arise, O son, and defend the grandsons of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}.”

Abdullah ibn Umayr replied, “Indeed, I shall not act miserly in this matter.”

Now, as the enemy launched a coordinated assault, Abdullah ibn Umayr stood in defence against them, striking down one opponent after another. He recited his prosody:

“If you do not know me, I am from Bani Kalb.

Soon you shall see me and my sword, and witness my assault in battle.

I shall seek vengeance after the vengeance of my companions,

And I will repel grief and affliction before my own, To face me in battle is no trivial matter.”

¹⁷⁸ Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi was a courageous companion of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at Karbala, accompanied by his mother, while his wife was also present and later martyred. Many reports about him closely resemble those of Wahab al Kalbi, leading scholars to conclude they are the same person, with differences due to name variation. Claims that Wahab was originally Christian conflict with reports placing Abdullah ibn Umayr among the companions of Imam Ali ^{a.s} and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. In al Malhuf and other Maqatal works, their accounts are merged, supporting this identification.

After Abdullah ibn Umayr had slain a number of them, Abdullah returned briefly to where his mother and wife stood. Facing them, he asked, “O mother, are you now pleased?”

The mother of Abdullah ibn Umayr replied,

“I shall not be pleased until you are slain in the presence of al Hussein.”

At this, his wife, newly wed and trembling with the fear of separation, pleaded with him,

“I beseech you in the name of Allah ^{AZJ} not to bereave me.”

But the mother of Abdullah ibn Umayr interjected firmly, saying,

“O dear son, do not heed her words. Go and fight in the way of the grandson of the Prophet, so that he may intercede for you on the Day of Qiyamah.”

Strengthened by her words, Abdullah ibn Umayr returned once more to the battlefield:

“I swear to you, O Umm Wahab, I shall strike them with spear and sword,

Like the strikes of a youth who believes in the Almighty.

I shall make this nation taste the bitterness of battle.

I am a valiant youth, bearer of a decisive blade.

I do not fear the battlefield, Allah ^{AZJ}, the Wise, is sufficient for me.”

It is reported that Abdullah ibn Umayr fought with relentless determination, throwing himself into the enemy ranks with courage. He struck fiercely amid the chaos of battle until he had slain nineteen horsemen and twelve foot soldiers.

Then, when another group of the enemy launched a coordinated attack, Abdullah ibn Umayr stood firm once more. Though surrounded and pressed from every side, he continued to fight with unwavering strength, killing two more men before the weight of numbers finally overcame Abdullah ibn Umayr.

In the midst of the assault, Hani ibn Thubayt al Hadrami and Bukayr ibn Hayy Tamimi charged him together and struck him down. Thus, Abdullah ibn Umayr attained martyrdom.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that the wife of Abdullah ibn Umayr rushed onto the battlefield and sat at the head of her martyred husband.

Gently brushing the dust and blood from the face of Abdullah ibn Umayr, she sobbed,

“May Paradise be pleasant for you.” ¹⁷⁹

Shimr saw her grieving and turned to his servant Rustam, commanding him,

“Strike her upon the head.”

Rustam approached the grief-stricken widow and delivered a brutal blow that split her head open. She fell upon the body of her husband and attained martyrdom at that very spot.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Lady Umm Wahab.

¹⁷⁹ Rawzat al Waizin and the Amali of Shaykh al Saduq narrate from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} that Wahab al Kalbi and his mother were Christians who embraced Islam through Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and accompanied him to Karbala. On Ashura, Wahab fought bravely with a tent peg before being captured and executed on the order of Umar ibn Sa'd. This differs from reports identifying Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi as a long standing companion of Imam Ali ^{a.s}. Due to strong overlap in events, family presence, and martyrdom, many scholars regard them as the same individual under different names.

Allamah al Majlisi records another narration, stating that Wahab al Kalbi had originally been a Christian who embraced Islam together with his mother through the Imam ^{a.s}.

When Wahab al Kalbi entered the battlefield, he displayed extraordinary courage, killing twenty-four foot soldiers and twelve horsemen. He was eventually captured and brought before Umar ibn Sa'd, who remarked, "What remarkable valour you possess," before ordering his execution. ¹⁸⁰

It is also related in other narrations that Wahab al Kalbi had embraced Islam together with his mother shortly before the Battle of Ashura, pledging their loyalty to the Imam ^{a.s}.

Whether long devoted or newly illumined by faith, his faith on the Day of Ashura remained unwavering. With his fall, the defenders before the tents were forced to step inward, closing their ranks to prevent the enemy cavalry from breaking through.

THE MARTYRDOM OF AL HURR IBN YAZID AL RIYAH

Having earlier crossed from the camp of damnation to the path of eternal salvation beneath the banner of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the repentance of al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi was complete. Yet his heart now yearned only to seal that repentance with his martyrdom, to stand before Allah ^{AZJ} as a defender of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, and to cleanse his earlier hesitation with the purity of sacrifice.

Tarikh al Tabari records, through al Azdi, from Nazr ibn Saleh Abu Zuhayr al Abbasi, that when al Hurr joined the ranks of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, a man of Bani Tamim named Yazid ibn Sufyan cried out in rage,

"By Allah ^{AZJ}, had I seen al Hurr ibn Yazid when he defected, I would have pursued him with my spear and killed him."

His words, spoken in bitterness, would soon return upon Yazid ibn Sufyan.

Since al Hurr had crossed into the path of righteousness, the continuous fighting had taken its toll upon him.

The battlefield had erupted into fierce and unrelenting combat.

Warriors from both camps clashed in single engagements and collective charges, and among them was al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi, advancing with relentless force and striking at the enemy ranks while reciting the words of Antara:

"With the neck and breast of my steed,
I shall hurl myself upon them again and again,
Until it is clothed in blood."

¹⁸⁰ It is reported that the severed head of Abdullah ibn Umayr was cast toward the tents of Imam ^{a.s}. His mother lifted the head, kissed it, and hurled it back toward the soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd, striking and killing one of them. Then she lifted up a peg of the tents and killed two others until the Imam ^{a.s} saw her and said, "O mother of Wahab! Return back. You and your son will be alongwith the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, while Jihad is lifted off from the women." Hearing this she returned saying, "O Lord! Do not disappoint me." Imam ^{a.s} told her, "May your Lord not disappoint you, O mother of Wahab."

And indeed, the horse of al Hurr bore the marks of the struggle, struck upon its ears and forehead, with blood streaming down its face. Yet al Hurr did not retreat. Amid the chaos, he raised his voice once more, as Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates that al Hurr proclaimed:

"I am al Hurr, and I grant refuge to the guest,
Today I strike at your necks with the sword,
In defence of the one who has alighted at the ground of Kheef in Mina.
I strike you without fear of wrongdoing.
I have sworn not to be killed until I have slain,
And I shall not be wounded except while advancing further.
I shall strike with a sharp-edged sword,
I shall neither retreat nor flee from the battlefield."

Al Hurr was unyielding in battle, the warrior once revered even by his enemies as the bravest man in Kufa. Watching from the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd were Hussein ibn Tamim and Yazid ibn Sufyan al Tamimi.

The two exchanged glances as al Hurr tore through the field.

Tarikh al Tabari states that Hussein ibn Tamim turned to his companion and said,

"There is al Hurr ibn Yazid, the one you were seeking."

"Indeed," Yazid ibn Sufyan replied.

Spurring his mount forward, Yazid ibn Sufyan advanced at a steady pace, driven by the ambition to be known as the one who would slay al Hurr. Abu Mikhnaf narrates, through Abu Zuhayr al Nadr ibn Saleh al Absi, that Yazid ibn Sufyan called out,

"O Hurr ibn Yazid, do you desire single combat?"

Without hesitation, al Hurr advanced toward Yazid ibn Sufyan and answered, "Yes, I do."

Hussein ibn Tamim later recalled that when Yazid ibn Sufyan rode out to face al Hurr, it was as though his life lay already in the hands of al Hurr. Al Hurr closed the distance swiftly and struck Yazid ibn Sufyan down, killing him before the encounter could properly begin.

Elsewhere on the field, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn rode out alongside al Hurr, the two fighting in tandem like brothers bound by valour. Their movements were coordinated within the fierce rhythm of battle. When one charged, the other followed closely behind.

When the fighting grew dense and entangled, they rushed to one another's aid, defending and rescuing each other amid the press of the enemy.

They continued in this manner for a time. But the infantry of the opposing force was vast, and as they pressed forward in great numbers, al Hurr ibn Yazid found himself gradually encircled. There was no wide field for display, no space for extended manoeuvre.

The fighting had drawn inward. Still, al Hurr surged toward the densest point of attack, striking fiercely at those who pressed hardest toward the Imam's ^{a.s} position.

Struck repeatedly, al Hurr was finally overwhelmed, and his body fell upon the plain of Karbala beneath a storm of blows.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi.

Shaykh al Saduq records in al Amali that by this time al Hurr had killed eighteen men of the enemy before he was slain. Ibn Shahr Ashub, in Manaqib, and Allamah al Majlisi in Bihar al Anwar, state that al Hurr had killed more than forty enemies.

Seeing al Hurr struck down, the Imam ^{a.s} rode toward him in haste. The Imam ^{a.s} reached his side while blood still flowed from his wounds, a deep gash cleaving his forehead.

Rawdat al Waisin relates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} dismounted, knelt beside al Hurr, and gently lifted his head into his lap. Gazing upon him with compassion, the Imam ^{a.s} said, “Well done, O Hurr. You are free, just as you were named, in this world and the hereafter.”

Al Amali narrates, through Abdullah ibn al Mansur, from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that as these words were completed, al Hurr breathed his last in the blessed lap of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The Imam ^{a.s} was deeply grieved by his loss and lamented, saying:

“The best of free men is Hurr of the Banu Riyah,
The best of free men, who endured the clash of spears,
The best of free men, who, when Hussein called, gave his life in hours of the morning.”

Another narration relates that some of the companions removed al Hurr from the battlefield while life still remained within him. Al Hurr was brought before the Imam ^{a.s}, who wiped the dust from his face and spoke to him with tenderness, saying, “You are Hurr, just as your mother named you, free in this world and free in the hereafter.”

Al Irshad records that Ayyub ibn Musarrih al Khiyawani, along with another horseman from Kufa, was responsible for striking the final blows that killed al Hurr.

That same man would later recount the moment with regret.

And thus, the one who had once halted the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} met his end beneath the gaze and approval of the Imam ^{a.s}, having transformed a moment of hesitation into eternal freedom, and having sealed his repentance with blood upon the sands of Karbala.

THE MARTYRDOM OF WADI'H, SULAYMAN AND MUNJIH

Al Manaqib relates that among those who remained steadfast beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was Wadi'h, a Turkish bondsman in his service, loyal in faith and commitment. Wadi'h had memorised the Qur'an, and for years his heart had followed his master with diligence.

Now, Wadi'h longed to sacrifice himself in the presence of the living embodiment of the Qur'an itself, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Having secured the Imam's ^{a.s} approval for martyrdom, Wadi'h stepped forward, his posture resolute despite the devastation that surrounded him.

The dust of Karbala swirled in the heated air as Wadi'h recited his prosody:

“The ocean shall blaze from the force of my sword and spear,
And the air shall be filled with my arrows,
And when the sword is placed in my right hand, the hearts of the envious shall burst.”

With the anguish of injustice burning within him and love for the Imam ^{a.s} guiding his every movement, Wadi'h charged into the ranks of the enemy.

His sword rose and fell with relentless force, and al Manaqib records that by then seventy men had fallen beneath his strikes. Yet martyrdom was drawing near.

Wounded and exhausted, his strength began to fade, and blood flowed from his injuries, staining the sands beneath him.

At last, Wadi'h fell from his horse and collapsed upon the plain of Karbala.

Upon seeing him fall, the Imam ^{a.s} advanced toward Wadi'h while the battle still raged only paces away. Such was the devotion of this companion, and such was the tenderness of the Imam ^{a.s}, that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} knelt beside Wadi'h in his final moments and wept over his wounded state.

Then, with a mercy and honour beyond words, the Imam ^{a.s} gently pressed his blessed cheek against the cheek of his dying companion. It was an act of intimacy, recognition, and love, revealing the noble station Wadi'h had attained through his sacrifice.

The tears of the Imam ^{a.s} fell upon him. In that moment, it seemed as though life stirred within the wounded body once more.

The bondsman opened his eyes for the final time. Though speech had left him, his gaze fixed upon the luminous yet sorrowful face of his Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

A faint smile crossed the parched lips of Wadi'h.

To depart this world with his cheek touching that of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, beneath the tears of the Imam ^{a.s}, was a station beyond all description.

At peace and content, his soul departed from his body.

May the mercy and blessings of Allah ^{AZJ} be upon Wadi'h, the Turkish bondsman of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Sulayman and Munjih were also among the freedmen of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} present in Karbala. Though their chains had been lifted and they were no longer bound by any obligation of servitude, their hearts bound by loyalty to the household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

On the Day of Ashura, they stood beside their Imam ^{a.s} not as men compelled by duty, but as free souls who had chosen sacrifice with full conviction.

Their freedom had not taken them away from the Imam ^{a.s}; rather, it had drawn them closer to him, for they remained by his side through faith, devotion, and recognition of truth.

Having offered their lives willingly in the path of Allah ^{AZJ}, they attained a freedom far greater than anything this world could grant.

Thus, Sulayman and Munjih, the freedmen of the Imam ^{a.s}, stand as lasting examples that the bond between Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions was not one of rank or worldly station, but one of love, faith, loyalty, and sacrifice.

May the mercy and blessings of Allah ^{AZJ} be upon Sulayman and Munjih, the freedmen of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

THE BURNING OF THE TENTS

It was approaching noon on Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The fighting raged with unrelenting ferocity as the sun climbed toward its zenith. Neither side withdrew, and the clash only intensified with each passing hour.

Tarikh al Tabari records that, despite their overwhelming numbers, the enemy found themselves constrained on the battlefield. Al Khawarizmi likewise notes that they were unable to attack the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} except from a single direction, for the tents of the Imam ^{a.s} had been drawn close together and bound tightly, forming a barrier that denied the enemy the ability to surround them.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Namir ibn Walah, who narrated from Ayyub ibn Musarrih al Khiyawani, that by the middle of the day the battle had reached its fiercest point.

Smoke and flames rose high from behind the encampment, so high that the tents and those within them would not be exposed to attack from behind. The fire burned as a barrier between the family of the Imam ^{a.s} and the enemy.

By this stratagem, the enemy were left with no path of approach except from the front.

When Umar ibn Sa'd realized that his numerical advantage was proving ineffective, he issued a new command. He ordered his men to tear down the tents from the right and the left, intending to surround the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} by destroying the camp.

At once, the soldiers of Ibn Sa'd surged forward, thrusting their lances and swinging their swords toward the dwellings, attempting to pull them down.

However, Al Tabari states that the companions of Imam ^{a.s} moved swiftly and decisively. In groups of three or four, they darted between the tents, striking down any hand raised against the sanctity of the camp. They cut down attackers at close range, wounded others with arrows loosed from only a few paces away, and drove the rest back. Several enemies were killed in these desperate encounters, and each attempt to violate the camp was repelled with force.

Al Khawarizmi similarly relates that the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} launched their attacks from between the tents themselves. Anyone who advanced to uproot or plunder the tents was swiftly struck down or wounded by an arrow before he could retreat.

Frustrated and enraged, Umar ibn Sa'd then issued his next command:

“Set them on fire!”

Flames caught along the ropes that tethered the tents together.

The fire leapt from one cord to another, and thick, dark smoke coiled upward into the sky. As the fire spread, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} again called out to his companions,

“Leave them. Let them burn the tents, for if they do so, the fire will act as a prevention against them.”

And so it came to pass exactly as the Imam ^{a.s} had foreseen. The burning tents denied the enemy the ability to flank or surround his companions. Forced back by heat and flame, they were compelled to fight from one direction alone, just as before.

Al Ansab al Ashraf states that as midday drew near, Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan regrouped the soldiers of his flank. Many of them had scattered during the previous assault, but now Shimr gathered them once more. The previous humiliation and losses had made Shimr burned with enmity, his fury became more undiminished, as Shimr prepared for another charge.

This time, Shimr directed his hatred toward the very heart of the camp of Imam ^{a.s}.

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan surged forward with the men under his command. They concentrated upon a particular point of the camp and broke through the left flank, pushing past the defenders, until Shimr himself reached a particular tent belonging to Imam ^{a.s}.

There, the vicious enemy of Allah ^{AZJ} drove his spear into the fabric of the tent and shouted, “Bring me fire, so that I may burn this house down upon its inhabitants!”

It was a call that echoed a dark precedent, reminiscent of the day that the second Caliph Umar set fire to the door of Sayyidah al Zahra ^{s.a}. Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan was following that same path, imitating the very conduct of Umar ibn al Khattab.

At once, the screams and cries of women and children rose from within the tents, tearing through the air as they fled in terror. Panic spread through the camp as they rushed outward, seeking refuge from the flames being called down upon them.

Al Ansab al Ashraf records that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} roared in fury, his voice thundering across the battlefield:

“O son of Dhi al Jawshan! How dare you?! You call for fire to burn my house upon my family?! May Allah ^{AZJ} burn you in the fire of Hell!”

The force of the Imam's ^{a.s} voice struck fear into the attackers. His anger was unmistakable, and those advancing upon the tents recoiled, retreating in the face of his rebuke.

Al Azdi narrates from Sulaiman ibn Abi Rashid that among those observing was Humayd ibn Muslim al Azdi. Humayd watched as Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan issued commands to violate the tents, and something within Humayd ibn Muslim recoiled at what he witnessed.

Unable to remain silent, Humayd ibn Muslim stepped forward, protesting the depths of hate and bloodlust to which the forces of Umar ibn Sa'd had sunk.

“Glory be to Allah ^{AZJ},” Humayd ibn Muslim exclaimed, his voice sharp with disbelief.

“This is not fitting for you. Do you wish to bring upon yourself two crimes: the punishment of Allah ^{AZJ} and the killing of women and children?

By Allah ^{AZJ}, the killing of the men alone would satisfy your commander.”

Shimr turned toward Humayd ibn Muslim with disdain, his face hard.

“Who are you?” Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan demanded.

But Humayd ibn Muslim feared that if Shimr learned his name, it could bring harm upon him from the governor, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Humayd withdrew cautiously and replied,

“I will not tell you who I am.”

Soon thereafter, another voice rose from among the enemy ranks. Even men hardened by sin and faithlessness, such as Shabath ibn Ribi al Tamimi, turned upon Shimr in rebuke.

“I have not heard more evil speech from you before,” Shabath ibn Ribī shouted,
 “nor have I seen a more degraded situation that you have brought upon yourself.
 Have you now become a terror upon women?!”¹⁸¹

Then Zuhayr ibn al Qayn charged forward with ten men from among the companions of Imam ^[a.s.]. They struck at Shimr and those with him, driving them back from the tents.

The attackers fled until they withdrew toward the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd, though in that clash some of Shimr's companions, such as Abu Udhrah al Dhahabi, were killed.

Yet the assaults did not cease. The enemy continued to hurl themselves upon the companions of Imam ^[a.s.] with relentless fury.

Wave after wave crashed against them, overwhelming them with sheer numbers. Al Tabari, quoting Humayd ibn Muslim, records that each charge tore deeper into their ranks.

With every assault, more of the companions of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] were struck down.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon all the companions of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

They fell one after another, and whenever one or two were martyred, the loss was immediately felt within the camp. It is reported that the lines of companions grew thinner, the defense weakened, and the absence of each fallen man was visible to all.

But the enemy were so numerous that even when many of them were killed, the next assault was not diminished. Each new wave came forward with the same ferocity as the last, as though no loss had touched their ranks at all.



¹⁸¹ Maqṭal of al Khawarizmi reports that Shabath ibn Rib'i spoke to Umar ibn Sa'd rather than Shimr, "May your mother mourn over you! Are you terrorizing the women?" Umar Ibn Sa'd turned away from him, embarrassed. In the end, the enemy could only approach them except from one direction.

THE MARTYRDOM OF THREE COMPANIONS

From both flanks, the cavalry pressed forward, and the clash of steel drew ever nearer to the camps of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. The defenders now stood closer than before, shoulder to shoulder, their formation no longer wide but tightened by necessity.

Dust hung heavily in the heated air, clinging to blood and sweat alike. The sun had climbed higher, and its glare bore down upon the companions of the Imam ^[a.s.], already strained by repeated waves of attack. Amid this suffocating pressure, several of the remaining companions stepped forward in succession, seeking neither delay nor prolonged farewell.

Shaykh Muhammad, in al Manaqib, states that Malik ibn Dawdan was among them, a warrior whose heart had been kindled by allegiance to the Ahlul Bayt ^[a.s.].

With little ceremony, Malik ibn Dawdan approached the Imam ^[a.s.] with humility, seeking permission to step into the field of death.

Dust rose in the air, mingling with the cries of combat, and Malik declared his prosody:

“This is the strike of Malik, a ferocious lion!

This is the strike of one who defends the noble and the generous!

And who seeks reward from Allah ^[AZJ], the Possessor of favors!”

Malik ibn Dawdan struck fiercely at those pressing closest to the Imam's ^[a.s.] position. The defenders no longer advanced outward; they fought where they stood. Malik felled a number of the attackers before he was drenched in blood by successive blows.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Malik ibn Dawdan.

When Malik ibn Dawdan fell, the companions were forced to tighten once more, closing the space he had held. Before the line could fully steady, Ibrahim ibn Haseen al Asadi moved into the breach. Al Manaqib relates that the dust had not yet settled from Malik's fall when Ibrahim ibn Haseen raised his voice and recited his prosody:

“I will strike your joints and calves with the sword,

So that this nation may spill my blood, and Abu Ishaq may attain martyrdom!

By this nation, I mean the corrupt sons of adulterous women!”

His words were sharp, but his time was brief. Encircled amid the crush of bodies, Ibrahim ibn Haseen fought at close range, striking at those who sought to break through toward the tents. Blades fell upon Ibrahim ibn Haseen from more than one side.

Wounded and battered, Ibrahim ibn Haseen continued until he was cut down where he stood. His body collapsed within a narrowing corridor of defenders, who were now forced to step inward yet again.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Ibrahim ibn Haseen al Asadi.

Shaykh Muhammad narrates in al Manaqib that Ahmad ibn Muhammad al Hashimi followed without hesitation. Ahmad ibn Muhammad was a man of noble lineage and faith and now approached the Imam ^[a.s.], seeking permission for martyrdom.

There was no formal assembly now, and Ahmad ibn Muhammad had advanced only a short distance from the Imam's ^[a.s] position when he proclaimed his prosody:

"Today I shall test my ancestry and my religion,
Through my clear-cut sword in my right hand,
And with it I shall defend my religion in battle."

The enemy had grown bolder. Their cavalry no longer withdrew far between charges.

Ahmad ibn Muhammad met them at the edge of the tightening ring, striking with persistence, but numbers bore down upon him. He was overwhelmed within sight of the Imam ^[a.s], his body falling scarcely beyond the line of shields that protected their Master.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Ahmad ibn Muhammad al Hashimi.

With the fall of these three in swift succession, the defenders were visibly reduced. No longer could they maintain a broad front. They contracted sharply, forming a denser ring around Imam al Hussein ^[a.s]. The clash of weapons now sounded only paces away.

From either flank, scattered groups of enemy infantry began to probe for openings, testing the narrowing formation.

The space between the Imam ^[a.s] and his enemies had diminished. Though Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] remained shielded, the battle no longer unfolded at a distance from the Imam ^[a.s].

The defenders of the Imam ^[a.s] stood firm, but the field had undeniably tightened, and the pressure upon them was mounting with each passing surge.



THE MARTYRDOM OF AMR IBN KHALID AND HIS SON, KHALID

Earlier on the day of Ashura, Amr ibn Khalid al Saydawi had already stood at the edge of death. At the opening of the battle, Amr was among the four men who broke through the enemy in a daring charge, only to be swiftly surrounded and cut off.

The enemy closed in upon them, striking from every side, and one by one his companions fell, attaining martyrdom before his eyes. Amr ibn Khalid himself was battered and wounded, his strength nearly spent, and it was only the decisive intervention of al Abbas ibn Ali, who stormed into the fray and tore him free from encirclement, that saved Amr from certain death.

Bleeding and exhausted, Amr ibn Khalid was pulled back within the tightening ring of defenders. The bodies of his fallen companions lay where they had been struck down. According to the report of Ibn Tawus, Amr now approached the Imam ^[a.s], his voice heavy with grief,

"May I be sacrificed for you. I wished to join your companions and meet the fate they met. I do not want to remain behind, to witness you slain before your family, alone and isolated."

It was for this reason that al Malhuf states that the companions of the Imam ^[a.s] now vied with one another to sacrifice their lives before the Household of Imam ^[a.s].

Their fidelity would not permit that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] be left to face his enemies in solitude, nor that the tragedy be borne first by the Prophet's family while they yet lived.

Al Malhuf relates that the Imam ^[a.s] looked upon Amr ibn Khalid and saw the sorrow etched upon his face, grief weighing heavily upon his heart.

With calm certainty and gentleness, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] replied,

"Go forth, and very soon we too shall join you."

Those words settled Amr ibn Khalid's spirit. Amr turned once more toward the advancing ranks, now only paces away. Though drained of strength, courage surged anew within him, and dignity steadied his steps.

Summoning the last of his energy, Amr ibn Khalid pressed on into the fray for the final time, reciting with restrained sorrow:

"O self, proceed to the Beneficent Lord ^[AZJ], with glad tidings of spirituality and sweet basil.
Today you shall receive favor for the virtues you performed,
which are written upon the Tablet near the Rewarding Lord ^[AZJ].
Do not fear nor be frightened, for every living thing must perish,
and patience holds the greater share in your peace, O people of Azd from Bani Qahtan."

Amr ibn Khalid fought with fierce tenacity, striking until his strength failed and his body was exhausted. There, Amr ibn Khalid al Saydawi was martyred.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Amr ibn Khalid al Saydawi.

From behind the shrinking line, shouts rose as enemy infantry tested the space near the tents. It is narrated in al Manaqib that when Amr fell, his son Khalid ibn Amr could no longer restrain himself.

Grief burned within Khalid ibn Amr as he stepped boldly in his father’s footsteps, calling out:
“Combat to the death, O clan of Qahtan, so as to attain the pleasure of the Beneficent Lord of Grandeur, the Lord ^{AZJ} of Glory and Manifestation, of Eminence, Longevity, and Benevolence. O dear father, you have reached Paradise in palaces adorned with finest pearls!”
With these words upon his tongue, Khalid ibn Amr pressed into the battle. Khalid fought until he too was cut down, attaining martyrdom beside the legacy of his father.
May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Khalid ibn Amr al Saydawi.

THE MARTYRDOM OF SA'D IBN HANZALAH AND AMR IBN MUTA

The sun stood high above Karbala, its heat pressing down mercilessly as shadows shortened beneath weary feet. The defenders of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} now stood in a tightened circle, their numbers visibly thinned from when the battle had started.
The clash of steel rang within only a few paces of where the Imam ^{a.s} remained, mounted yet no longer distant from danger, for the field of battle was closing into his vicinity.
Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shahr Ashub relates in his book al Manaqib that from among the remaining companions there emerged Sa'd ibn Hanzalah al Tamimi. Sa'd was fully aware of what that choice demanded. As Sa'd ibn Hanzalah stepped onto the plain of Karbala, amid the cries of battle, he raised his voice so that his words might be heard above the chaos:
“Have patience upon the swords and spears; endure them to enter Paradise,
And attain the Hur al Ayn in their beauty, like one who seeks victory and success.
This is neither doubt nor conjecture, O self.
Strive for tranquillity and seek righteousness.”
Sa'd ibn Hanzalah advanced into the crush of bodies.
The line no longer surged outward; it held where it stood. Sa'd ibn Hanzalah struck at those pressing closest to the Imam’s ^{a.s} position, his blade flashing in the harsh glare of the sun. Enemy soldiers bore down upon Sa'd ibn Hanzalah from more than one side.
May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Sa'd ibn Hanzalah al Tamimi.
The field was now strewn with the bodies of the companions of Imam ^{a.s}. Amr ibn Muta al Jufi was among those who persisted with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} when the field had grown narrow and the lines of allegiance had been made clear.
Al Manaqib relates that Amr ibn Muta rose from among the loyal companions, resolute in his purpose and prepared to meet what lay before him.
Stepping forward into the open ground, his prosody carried across the battlefield:
“Today, the striking of the sword is a joy for us, for the sake of al Hussein, in a fierce assault.
By this, we seek success and refuge from the fire of Hell,
when no refuge will remain for the disbelievers.”
With his allegiance declared and his path set toward eternal nearness, Amr ibn Muta surged into the fray, his sword in hand.

Blow after blow, Amr ibn Muta fought until he too was struck, his body falling upon the plains of Karbala, while his spirit rose among the ranks of the eternally honoured.
May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Amr ibn Muta al Jufi.
With their martyrdom, the remaining companions of the Imam ^{a.s} closed ranks once more. The ring around the Imam ^{a.s} tightened sharply. Enemy horses circled at the perimeter, while their infantry edged nearer to the rear of the camps, their movements growing bolder.
The distance between the Imam ^{a.s} and his enemies had now diminished more.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JAWN IBN HARITH

The circle around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had narrowed to its tightest form yet. Shields touched shields. The clash of steel rang only a few paces away. From behind the defenders, shouts rose near the tents as enemy infantry probed the shrinking perimeter.
The sun stood at its height, burning overhead without mercy. Amid that suffocating pressure stood a figure whose faithfulness defied all barriers of race, lineage, and status: Jawn ibn Harith, the freedman of the noble companion Abu Dharr al Ghifari.
Shaykh Muhammad, in al Manaqib, narrates that Jawn was an African man, once a servant, yet elevated by faith to stand among the most honoured of the people of truth.
Jawn ibn Harith had lived in the household of righteousness and been raised under the shade of loyalty. Now, as the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} fell one after another, his hour approached.
Al Malhuf states that, seeing the circle of his companions narrowing, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned to Jawn ibn Harith with a gaze filled with mercy and said,
“I give you permission to leave, O Jawn, for you were with us in times of ease; do not bind yourself to our fate now.” ¹⁸²
But Jawn, though humble in origin, possessed a nobility that would not waver.
Al Malhuf and Muthir al Ahzan record that Jawn ibn Harith stood before the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, tears glistening in his eyes, and replied:
“O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}! I shared in your provisions during times of ease and safety, so how can I abandon you in hardship?
By Allah ^{AZJ}, the smell of my sweat is foul, my lineage is low, and my colour is dark.
Permit me to enter Paradise, so that my scent may become fragrant, my lineage ennobled, and my face illuminated. No, by Allah ^{AZJ}, I shall not leave you until this black blood of mine is mixed with your pure blood!”

¹⁸² Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} knew what awaited his companions. He knew that those who remained would meet the sword. Yet even in that moment, his concern was not for himself, but for Jawn. He wished to spare him from enslavement, imprisonment, or humiliation at the hands of the enemies of Allah ^{AZJ}. In that compassionate offer was the full nobility of the Imam ^{a.s}: he freed those who would choose to stay, so that their sacrifice would be pure and voluntary.

With that declaration, Jawn advanced fearlessly toward the battlefield, and spoke:

“How will the polytheists endure the strike of a black sword,

In defence of the children of Muhammad ^{saws}?

I will defend them with my tongue and my hands,

Seeking Paradise on the Day of Qiyamah through this!”

The fighting was now at close quarters. Al Malhuf states that Jawn ibn Harith struck at those pressing nearest to the Imam’s ^{a.s} position, and reports indicate that by this time Jawn ibn Harith had slain twenty-five enemies before he was finally martyred.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Jawn ibn Harith, the freedman of Abu Dharr al Ghifari.

Jawn ibn Harith had collapsed not far from where the Imam ^{a.s} stood. It is reported that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} hastened toward Jawn and stood beside his fallen body, praying for him:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}, illuminate his face, make his scent fragrant, include him among the devout, resurrect him in the company of the righteous, and place him with Your Muhammad ^{saws} and his progeny ^{a.s}.”

And that supplication was accepted. Imam al Baqir ^{a.s} narrates from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} that when people came ten days later, on the 20th of Muharram, to bury the martyrs, they found the body of Jawn ibn Harith mostly intact.

From Jawn ibn Harith emanated the fragrance of the most striking musk, perfuming the land of Karbala. Thus, Jawn ibn Harith, once a servant in this world, became eternal in the company of the righteous. The companions who now remained stood pressed close together, their breaths heavy beneath the climbing sun, their numbers visibly reduced.

The hour was tightening, and the pressure upon the small band of companions increased with each passing surge. The battlefield seemed to contract around them, as the sun stood high above and the moment for the Dhuhr prayer drew near.



THE PRAYER BENEATH ARROWS

THE CALL TO DHUHR PRAYER

It was the time for the Dhuhr prayer on Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in year 61 AH.

The sun stood high over the plain of Karbala, suspended mercilessly above its shimmering sands and heat haze. It was relentless. Every breath was heavy. Every movement demanding.

The heat pressed down upon the battlefield with an almost tangible force, drawing the last reserves of strength from men who had fought since the morning.

Dust clung to their faces, their garments, and their wounds. The cries of the wounded mingled with the sounds of weapons and hooves.

Many companions of the Imam ^{a.s} had already attained martyrdom since the morning.

The ranks of the companions bore the marks of heavy loss, yet a firm circle of loyal defenders still stood between Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and the advancing enemy.

The companions still continued to function as an organized defensive body.

It was in this moment, amid exhaustion, that Abu Thumamah Amr ibn Abdullah al Saidi surveyed the field and sensed the passing of the hours. His gaze moved upward toward the sun that marked the entrance of the time for prayer. Turning toward Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Abu Thumamah spoke with calm sincerity through the noise of battle.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates from Humayd ibn Muslim that Abu Thumamah said,

“O Aba Abdillah! May I be your ransom! I see that this army has advanced closer to you. But Allah ^{AZJ} willing, they shall not be able to kill you until they have killed us.

And I desire that I go to the presence of Almighty Allah ^{AZJ} having recited the prayers in your lead, whose time has already approached.”

At these words, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his head.

The gravity of the moment was etched upon his face, yet it was accompanied by serenity. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} replied with calm affirmation,

“You have remembered prayer. May Allah ^{AZJ} raise you among those who establish prayer and remember Him ^{AZJ} often. Yes indeed, the prime time for prayer has now entered.”

With this response, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} affirmed that the preferred time for the Dhuhr prayer had entered.

Even upon a battlefield soaked in violence and bloodshed, prayer was not to be delayed. Turning to his companions, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then issued a request:

“Ask them to cease their attack, so that we may observe the prayer.”

Yet even this appeal, rooted in the very faith claimed by both sides, was met with scorn. Hussein ibn Tamim, the commander of the armored forces of Umar ibn Sa'd, mocked the request and declared coldly,

“Your prayers will not be accepted!”

The cruelty and absurdity of this statement struck the companions deeply.

Habib ibn Muzahir, unable to restrain his indignation, cried out in response,

“You think that the prayers of the progeny of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws} are not accepted, while the prayers of you, a wine-bibber, are accepted?!”

The enemy ranks still did not withdraw, but their advance slowed momentarily as commanders reordered their lines, tightening their formation while refusing the Imam ^{a.s} even the dignity of prayer. The heat of Karbala was searing, and exhaustion weighed heavily upon them. The pause allowed the enemy commanders an opportunity to regroup their units and restore order among their lines. The prayer was not to be abandoned for the Imam ^{a.s}.

Al Irshad records that as the fighting intensified and the number of wounded and martyred among the companions increased, midday had now arrived in the land of Karbala.

At that moment, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} led his remaining companions in prayer upon the battlefield itself. The sources describe this prayer as ‘salat al khawf’, the prayer prescribed in moments of danger. This account is transmitted by Shaykh al Mufid, al Sibti, and in Ilam al Wara. Though termed the ‘Prayer of Fear,’ it is more precise to understand that Imam ^{a.s} performed the Dhuhr prayer in its shortened form, as permitted under extraordinary circumstances such as active combat, surrounded by bloodthirsty enemy.

The reports of the Day of Ashura converge unanimously upon this moment.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not abandon the prescribed obligations of worship despite the violence that surrounded him; rather, the Imam ^{a.s} established the Dhuhr prayer in congregation upon the battlefield itself. The prayer thus became a steadfast declaration that the stand of the noble Imam ^{a.s} was rooted entirely in submission to the Almighty Allah ^{AZJ}.

As arrows descended and the tumult of war continued unabated, the prayer of Karbala arose as a living testimony that even at the threshold of martyrdom. For Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his companions, the obedience to Allah ^{AZJ} endured without interruption.



THE MARTYRDOM OF SA'ID IBN ABDULLAH

As the sun stood harshly over Karbala, the Dhuhr prayer commenced while the battle raged around the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. As the call to prayer was raised upon the battlefield, the congregation formed behind the Imam ^{a.s}.

Al Malhuf relates that when Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} commenced the Dhuhr prayer, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn and Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi stepped forward without hesitation.

Together with a group of the companions, they positioned themselves before the Imam ^{a.s}, forming a living shield between Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and the enemy so that the Imam ^{a.s} might perform the prayer uninterrupted. Their bodies were offered gladly to receive the arrows meant for the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi was among the loyal companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and his name was already known for steadfast devotion. When Muslim ibn Aqil arrived in Kufa, Sa'id ibn Abdullah went to the house of al Mukhtar and openly declared his allegiance to the cause of the Imam ^{a.s}. Through his words and actions, Sa'id encouraged the people to pledge themselves through Muslim and to obey him, staunch in his commitment to the Imam ^{a.s}.

“Allahu ^{AZJ} Akbar,” the Imam ^{a.s} proclaimed, commencing the prayer amid chaos and bloodshed. At that moment, movement stirred within the enemy ranks.

Groups of mounted soldiers broke formation and charged toward the Imam ^{a.s} and his prayer congregation, the dust from their horses rising thickly into the air.

Seeing the riders advancing at full gallop, their bows nocked with arrows, Sa'id ibn Abdullah stepped fully into position before the Imam ^{a.s} as he led the prayer. With each thunderous stride of the horses, the danger grew more immediate. Sa'id widened his stance, lifted his chest, and offered his body as a barrier between the Imam ^{a.s} and the enemy arrows.

The riders swept past the congregation in a swift arc, loosing arrows without restraint toward the place of prayer. Sa'id stood immovable before the Imam ^{a.s}, raising his shield and using his own body to deflect every arrow that threatened the Imam ^{a.s}.

One arrow struck Sa'id ibn Abdullah, then another, and then another still. Each found its mark, piercing flesh and drawing blood. His body shuddered with every impact, yet Sa'id would not turn his back. Sa'id ibn Abdullah remained standing for as long as his legs could bear him, absorbing the blows.

The prayer continued, and Sa'id remained at his post. Blood flowed freely from his wounds, his strength draining with every passing moment. When his legs began to fail him, Sa'id drove his weapon into the earth and leaned upon it to remain upright, refusing to fall while the prayer of the Imam ^{a.s} was still ongoing. Sa'id knew the riders would soon return.

As expected, the horsemen regrouped and circled back, seeking once more to unleash their arrows upon the Imam ^{a.s} and his congregation. These were unimpeded shots, and the danger was grave. Drawing upon the last reserves of his strength, Sa'id inhaled deeply and once again placed himself fully before the Imam ^{a.s}. Another volley of arrows tore through the air.

Arrowheads pierced his chest and sides, while others lodged in his arms and shoulders. Still Sa'id stood, until at last the riders withdrew toward the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd.

Only then did the weight of his wounds overcome him. Sa'id ibn Abdullah fell forward onto the earth of Karbala, the ground beneath him darkened by his blood. As life ebbed from his body and his breathing grew laboured, Sa'id lifted his face toward the heavens.

In the final moments granted to Sa'id ibn Abdullah, his voice emerged broken: “O Allah ^{AZJ}! Send curse upon them similar to the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud. O Allah ^{AZJ}! Deliver my greetings to Your Prophet ^{saws}, and make him aware of the pain and wounds that I have borne, for I crave Your reward while defending the progeny of Your Prophet.”

With those words, his breath faded. Al Malhuf states that thirteen arrows had pierced the body of Sa'id ibn Abdullah, apart from earlier wounds inflicted by lances and swords.

Sa'id ibn Abdullah lay dead upon the plain, having fulfilled his purpose.

The Dhuhr prayer of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was now complete.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Sa'id ibn Abdullah al Hanafi.

Ibn Nima records that the situation surrounding the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was so severe that some narrations state the Imam ^{a.s} and his followers performed the prayer individually, using gestures, as the customary standing and prostration were nearly impossible under the relentless rain of arrows.

Ma'ani al Akhbar narrates from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} that as the battle intensified, the companions looked upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and noticed that his state differed from theirs. As the danger grew more severe, their faces paled, their shoulders trembled, and their hearts beat faster. Yet, astonishingly, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and a small group of his closest companions displayed no such fear. Their faces grew more radiant, their limbs more relaxed, and their hearts more tranquil.

The companions garnered strength through this and said to one another,

“Look at al Hussein. The Imam ^{a.s} is not at all concerned about death!”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then addressed the companions and said:

“Be steadfast, sons of noble men, for death is no more than a bridge that shall transport you from desolation and adversity to expansive gardens and the eternal bliss of Heaven.

Would any of you dislike being taken from a prison into a palace?

And what awaits your enemies is a transfer from a palace to a prison, and to the punishment of eternal Hell!

My father, Ali ibn Abi Talib, narrated to me from Allah's Messenger ^{saws},

“This world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the disbeliever, and death is a bridge leading one group into their paradises and the other to their hells.’

I have not lied, nor have I been lied to!”

Tarikh al Tabari reports through Humayd ibn Muslim that as the prayer concluded, the enemy pressed forward once more, and the struggle around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} intensified without respite, leading into the afternoon.

THE MARTYRDOM OF HABIB IBN MUZAHIR

It was now after the Dhuhr prayer on Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

No respite followed the completion of the prayer. Even as the companions reformed around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the enemy pressed forward with renewed aggression.

The narrations relate that the armoured contingent under the command of Hussein ibn Tamim al Tamimi remained close to the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, probing and pressing wherever resistance could be broken.

As the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} regrouped and scattered skirmishes flared across the battlefield, Habib ibn Muzahir ¹⁸³ once again found himself face to face with Hussein ibn Tamim. The two men stood locked in a tense confrontation amid the chaos of war, each measuring the other.

Habib ibn Muzahir, who had commanded the left flank earlier in the battle, now stood organising the shrinking defenders gathered near the Imam ^{a.s}. His bravery, discipline, and tactical nouse in organising resistance and repelling repeated assaults were awe-inspiring. Though advanced in age, his presence on the battlefield remained commanding.

Habib ibn Muzahir advanced to repel the assault pressing toward the Imam ^{a.s}, reciting:

“I am Habib, and my father is Muzahir, a horseman of the battlefield when it is fierce!

You are armed and great in number, but we are more obedient and forbearing than you.

Our proofs are exalted and the truth is manifest, and we are pious and penitent than you!”

These words cut deeply into the enemy ranks, and the enemy soldiers began to mutter.

Stung by the losses inflicted upon them and by the eloquent rebukes of Habib, Hussein ibn Tamim himself was overcome with rage. His face hardened, and his anger flared as he urged his horse forward, determined to strike down the commander of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Habib ibn Muzahir al Asadi rode out alone to confront Hussein ibn Tamim, undaunted and resolute. Habib had long awaited the moment to face this accursed man in combat.

A fierce clash followed, and in the heat of battle, Habib ibn Muzahir struck the face of Hussein ibn Tamim's horse with his sword.

The startled animal reared violently, throwing its rider to the ground. Some narrations state that Habib ibn Muzahir also struck Hussein ibn Tamim upon the face, adding humiliation to his fall. The soldiers of Hussein ibn Tamim rushed forward at once, rescuing their commander and pulling him to safety until he was able to recover and rejoin the fray.

As Hussein ibn Tamim was rescued, Habib called out after him, his voice ringing:

“I swear that if we were equal to you in number, or even half of that,

You would have turned your backs from us, O men of ill origin and impotence!”

¹⁸³ Habib ibn Muzahir al Asadi had been also been a close companion of the noble Imam Ali ^{a.s} and Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. According to Ibn al Hajar in al Isabah, Habib ibn Muzahir had also witnessed the era of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. During the caliphate of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, Habib ibn Muzahir was among the select members of his elite military unit, called ‘Shurtat al Khamis’.

Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid narrated to Abu Mikhnaf, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that Habib ibn Muzahir continued to fight with unmatched bravery.

Habib stood almost alone against the armoured division of Hussein ibn Tamim, striking relentlessly until he had killed sixty-two enemies.

Amidst the fighting, a man from Banu Tamim named Budayl ibn Suraym charged at Habib ibn Muzahir and struck him on the head with his sword. Habib ibn Muzahir wavered upon his horse, and another man then thrust a spear forcefully into his side. The weapon drove deep into his body. Habib struggled to remain upright, but then fell heavily to the ground.

Habib ibn Muzahir, the commander of the left flank of the army of the Imam ^[a.s], attempted to rise again, the spear still lodged within him. But Hussein ibn Tamim had been watching Habib ibn Muzahir closely ever since his own humiliation at the hands of Habib.

Habib ibn Muzahir had become a marked prize for him. With haste, Hussein ibn Tamim rode forward and brought his sword crashing down upon the wounded Habib's head.

Habib fell once more to the earth. Without hesitation, Hussein ibn Tamim dismounted and rushed toward the fallen warrior. Hussein ibn Tamim seized Habib by his white hair and began striking at his neck, severing the noble head of Habib ibn Muzahir.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Habib ibn Muzahir al Asadi.

Budayl ibn Suraym then rode up to Hussein ibn Tamim and demanded that the head of Habib ibn Muzahir be handed over to him, for it was his attack, Budayl claimed, that had brought down the mighty companion. Budayl sought to claim the head as a trophy, intending to present it to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad in exchange for reward.

Like savage beasts, the two men quarrelled fiercely over the severed head. Hussein ibn Tamim declared, "I too am a partner in his killing along with you!" Budayl ibn Suraym replied, "By Allah ^[AZJ]! No one except me has killed him!"

Hussein ibn Tamim responded, "Then give me his head so that I may hang it from the neck of my horse, so that people may see and understand that I too have participated in his killing. Then you may take it back and carry it to the presence of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, for I have no desire for the reward which he will offer you in return for the killing of Habib."

Budayl ibn Suraym refused, and their dispute intensified until their fellow soldiers intervened and reconciled between them.

Eventually, Budayl ibn Suraym allowed Hussein ibn Tamim to parade the head of Habib ibn Muzahir through the camp, hung from the neck of his horse, boasting of his killing.

Afterwards, the head was returned to Budayl ibn Suraym. ¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ When the army returned to Kufa, Budayl ibn Suraym carried the head of Habib ibn Muzahir to Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. Al Qasim ibn Habib, then an adolescent, followed him and asked for his father's head so that he might bury it. Budayl refused, hoping for reward. The boy replied that Allah ^[AZJ] would reward him only with punishment and wept. Years later, during the time of Musab ibn Zubayr, al Qasim encountered his father's killer at the battle of Bajmira. Finding him resting in his tent, Al Qasim ibn Habib struck Budayl with his sword and killed him.

The jeers of the enemy soon spread across the battlefield, announcing that Habib ibn Muzahir had been killed. These cries reached the camp of the Imam ^[a.s], and grief descended upon it. Habib was not only a warrior but a leader among the companions and one of the most fiercely loyal. His martyrdom was especially devastating to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Al Azdi states that the Imam ^[a.s] was 'now bent.' He raised his hands to the sky and prayed, "I assign the judgement for my martyrdom, and that of my companions, to Allah ^[AZJ]!"

It is stated in some books of Maqatil that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] said, "Your achievement is due to Allah ^[AZJ], O Habib! You were a man of distinction, and you would complete the recitation of the entire Qur'an in a single night!"

The narrations state that grief weighed heavily upon the Imam ^[a.s], and that he was deeply pained by the loss of his long-time companion. This marked the collapse of organised command among the companions at Karbala.

The life of Habib ibn Muzahir was one of loyalty, faith, and unwavering devotion, and his death upon the field of Karbala sealed his place among the most honoured of martyrs.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ZUHAYR IBN AL QAYN

The sun hung mercilessly over the plains of Karbala, its glare pouring down upon the land as the air shimmered above.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rose and surveyed his camps and the companions who yet remained. The Imam ^{a.s} stood in solemn stillness, his gaze fixed upon the horizon ahead. Behind the Imam ^{a.s}, the tents were scorched and blackened, some still smouldering from the flames that had been set upon them. Smoke lingered in the air, blending with dust and the scent of blood.

Around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lay the bodies of his companions, strewn across the plain where they had fallen in his defence. Before the Imam ^{a.s}, the enemy lines pressed ever closer, their ranks swelling, their shouts and jeers carrying across the battlefield with cruel confidence.

Zuhayr ibn al Qayn ibn al Harith al Bajali stood among the most distinguished and resolute companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. On the day of Ashura, Zuhayr had earlier commanded the right flank of the Imam's ^{a.s} forces. Through his firmness and courage, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn played a decisive role in repelling repeated advances by the Kufan army.

Al Irshad records that the accursed Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan advanced once more toward the tents with his men, seeking to press closer to the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Nafasul Mahmoom states that the accursed Shimr was ravenous, his desire to kill the Household of the Prophet ^{saws} insatiable. Shimr attacked the army of the Imam ^{a.s}, saying:

"Leave him, O Lion of Allah ^{AZJ}, leave Shimr, so that he may strike at them with his sword and will not flee, for he is a bitter tree and a fatal poison for you!"

At that moment, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn rallied some ten other companions and surged forward to strike at them, forcing them back from the encampment. They met intense resistance in this clash, and several of the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} were struck down.

Eventually, the remaining companions were compelled to withdraw, returning once more to their positions before the tents of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Having thwarted the latest assault, Tarikh al Tabari narrates that Zuhayr ibn al Qayn returned to the camp and saw Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} seated solemnly at his tent.

The estrangement of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} aggrieved Zuhayr, and he now sought to bid his final salutations. Zuhayr placed his hand upon the blessed shoulder of the Imam ^{a.s}, and said:

"Proceed further, for you are rightly guided and are a guide.

For today, you shall meet your grandfather, the Prophet ^{saws},

And al Hasan, and al Murtada Ali,

And the brave two-winged youth, Jafar the valiant warrior,

And the Lion of Allah ^{AZJ}, Hamzah the ever-living martyr."

In al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub, it is related that many of the companions would come to bid farewell to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} before departing for the battlefield. They would say,

"Peace be upon you, O son of Allah's Messenger ^{saws}," and the Imam ^{a.s} would reply,

"And upon you be peace. We are following behind you."

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would then pray for them and recite the verse:

"Among the believers are men who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah ^{AZJ}. Some of them have fulfilled their pledge with their lives, and others are waiting for their turn. They have never changed their 'commitment' in the least." (Q33:23)

At times, the companions approached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} singly or in pairs, seeking his permission to fight in his defence. Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah, quoting Muhammad ibn al Qays, similarly states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would pray for them, saying,

"May Allah ^{AZJ} reward you with the best of the rewards reserved for the people of God-mindfulness (taqwa)."

They would then send greetings of peace upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and proceed toward the combat, where they fought until they attained martyrdom.

Weary in body yet unbroken in purpose, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn now stepped forward once more and sought permission from the Imam ^{a.s} to return to the field.

Hours of combat had weighed heavily upon Zuhayr, and wounds marked his body, yet his faith remained firm and his loyalty undiminished.

Muthir al Ahzan relates that Zuhayr ibn al Qayn fought with ferocious valour, proclaiming:

"I am Zuhayr, the son of Qayn. With my sword, I shall drive them away from al Hussein, For he is one of the two grandsons of the Prophet ^{saws}, a virtuous and chaste progeny.

There is no doubt that he is the Prophet's ^{saws} grandson. I shall kill you and not regret it, And I wish that I could be divided into two, so that I may fight you with double strength!"

The Maqatal of Muhammad ibn Abi Talib records that throughout the day, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn had continued his assaults until he had killed one hundred and twenty men.

At last, worn by wounds and fatigue yet still holding his ground, Zuhayr was encircled.

Kathir ibn Abdullah al Shabi and Muhajir ibn Aws al Tamimi charged upon Zuhayr together, and with their blows, Zuhayr ibn al Qayn was struck and martyred.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Zuhayr ibn al Qayn ibn al Harith al Bajali.

Al Khawarizmi, in his Maqatal, relates that when Zuhayr ibn al Qayn fell from his horse amid the enemy lines, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} raised his voice and proclaimed:

"O Zuhayr! May Allah ^{AZJ} not keep you away from His mercy!

And may Allah ^{AZJ} send His ^{AZJ} wrath upon your killers, as He ^{AZJ} sent it upon those who were transformed into monkeys and pigs."

By this stage of Ashura, the fighting had not unfolded through isolated duels alone, but through repeated and violent assaults launched by the enemy ranks. The companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had met these advances together, forming a defensive line before the tents, repelling charges and absorbing the full weight of the Kufan army. Many were slain in the press of these engagements, not in single combat but amid the crush of battle.

With the martyrdom of senior commanders, Habib ibn Muzahir and Zuhayr ibn al Qayn, the command structure of the companions collapsed. From that point, the defensive attrition around the Imam ^{a.s} transformed into sacrificial defence.

THE MARTYRDOM OF NAFI IBN HILAL AL JAMALI

As their numbers diminished and exhaustion overtook the companions of the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, the nature of the struggle began to transform.

Sensing that the end was near, the companions approached the Imam ^{a.s} one after another, seeking his permission to fight. Each wished to take leave of his Imam ^{a.s} before entering the field, offering his life and departing under the Imam's ^{a.s} prayer.

They placed themselves between the enemy and the camps, determined that the family of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} would remain protected for as long as any companion yet stood.

Nafi ibn Hilal al Jamali was among the devoted companions of the valorous Imam Ali ^{a.s} and stood on the Day of Ashura as one of the most formidable warriors in the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Renowned for his mastery of archery and unwavering loyalty, Nafi ibn Hilal had entered the battle from its earliest hours and fought without rest as the day advanced and the circle of war tightened around the Imam ^{a.s} and his remaining companions.

By the time the sun inclined toward the afternoon, wounds marked his body and fatigue weighed heavily upon Nafi ibn Hilal.

Nafi had earlier engraved his name upon the feathers of his arrows, marking each one. Nafi ibn Hilal had dipped the arrow tips in poison, and he released them in rapid succession into the advancing ranks of the enemy. As the arrows left his bow, Nafi proclaimed in verse:

“I shoot these arrows whose tips bear marks;
They do not fail those who strike with them.
They are smeared with poison that keeps the enemy in turmoil,
And their strike fills the earth with blood.”

The arrows of Nafi ibn Hilal struck with deadly precision, and it is narrated that Nafi felled twelve enemies across the battlefield, scattering those who advanced toward the camp.

Earlier in the day, when Ali ibn Qurazah, the brother of Amr ibn Qurazah, charged toward the Imam ^{a.s}, it was this same Nafi ibn Hilal who intercepted Ali ibn Qurazah, pierced him with his spear, and cast him to the ground.

Now, as the companions grew fewer and the enemy pressed closer, Nafi ibn Hilal remained fiercely engaged in battle, reciting the following couplets:

“I am the son of Hilal! My religion is the religion of Ali ^{a.s}!”

In response, a man emerged from the opposing ranks, shouting defiantly,

“I am upon the religion of Uthman!”

This provoked Nafi ibn Hilal, and Nafi stepped toward this enemy and replied,

“You are upon the religion of Satan!”

With that, Muzahim charged toward the camp, and Nafi advanced to meet him.

Within moments, the opponent of Nafi ibn Hilal lay slain upon the sands of Karbala.

In that encounter, the distinction between the two camps stood revealed without ambiguity: one fought in loyalty to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} and truth, while the other stood aligned with power and the authority of the usurpers.

Hisham ibn Muhammad relates from Abu Mikhnaf, through Yahya ibn Hani, that when Nafi ibn Hilal's quiver was finally emptied, he unsheathed his sword and recited his prosody:

“I am a youth of the Yemeni tribe of Bajalah,
I follow the religion of al Hussein and his father, Ali.
I shall be martyred today, and this is my heart's desire,
And I shall meet my deeds and actions.”

Nafi ibn Hilal fought with relentless courage until grievous wounds overwhelmed him. Both of his arms were severely injured, to the point that Nafi could no longer wield his weapon or defend himself. In this state, Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan, accompanied by a group of his men, besieged Nafi ibn Hilal and overpowered him.

Wounded and exhausted, Nafi ibn Hilal was taken captive and dragged roughly across the battlefield until they brought him before Umar ibn Sa'd.

Blood streamed down his beard and body.

Seeing Nafi ibn Hilal in that condition, Umar ibn Sa'd said,

“Woe to you, O Nafi. What made you do to yourself what you have done?”

Despite his injuries, Nafi ibn Hilal replied with remarkable bravery,

“Indeed, my Lord ^{AZJ} knows what I intended. By Allah ^{AZJ}, I have killed twelve of you, not counting those whom I wounded. I do not blame myself for the effort. And if my hands had remained and my wrists were intact, you would not have captured me!”

From behind, Shimr barked, “May Allah ^{AZJ} set you right. Shall I kill him?”

Umar ibn Sa'd replied dismissively,

“You have brought him. Kill him if you wish.”

Then, insolent as ever, Shimr stepped forward and drew his sword.

Tarikh al Tabari records that even in the face of death, Nafi ibn Hilal spoke once more:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, if you were truly a Muslim, you would fear meeting Allah ^{AZJ} with our blood upon your hands.

All praise is for Allah ^{AZJ}, who has decreed our death at the hands of the most wretched of His creatures.”

Al Kamil fi al Tarikh states that Shimr then struck Nafi with his sword and killed him.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Nafi ibn Hilal al Jamali.

Abu Mikhnaf further relates that it was Nafi ibn Hilal who had earlier sent his horse with al Tirmimah ibn Adi to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} during his journey toward Kufa.

In the days preceding Ashura, when thirst weighed heavily upon the camp, the Imam ^{a.s} called upon his brother al Abbas ibn Ali ^{a.s} and dispatched Nafi ibn Hilal with thirty horsemen and twenty men on foot, entrusting Nafi ibn Hilal at their forefront.

THE FINAL WALL OF COMPANIONS

THE MARTYRDOM OF JUNADAH IBN AL HARITH AND HIS SON, AMR

It was afternoon on Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shahr Ashub relates in his book al Manaqib that when the number of the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had visibly diminished, Junadah ibn al Harith stepped forward, seeking permission to fight. The wife and children of Junadah were also present in the camp, witnessing the peril that now surrounded it, and the certainty of death that encircled the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

Yet none of this restrained Junadah ibn al Harith. With conviction, Junadah advanced toward the battlefield, sword in hand, undaunted by the nearness of death or the fate he would leave behind for his loved ones.

As Junadah ibn al Harith stepped onward, his wife and children looked on, strengthening his heart and urging him toward sacrifice. His longing for martyrdom in defence of his Master eclipsed every attachment. For Junadah, allegiance to the Imam ^{a.s} took precedence.

As Junadah ibn al Harith marched onto the plain of Karbala, Junadah proclaimed his lineage and his intention in ringing prosody:

“I am Junadah, the son of al Harith. I am neither helpless, nor am I an oath-breaker.

I will fight on until my heirs inherit from me; today my body will lie upon the earth.”

Junadah ibn al Harith entered the fray with the courage of the Ansar, striking with determination and standing firm against overwhelming numbers.

Junadah ibn al Harith fought bravely as attackers pressed inward, until his strength was spent and his body fell upon the sacred soil. Junadah lay martyred before the eyes of his family.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Junadah ibn al Harith.

Yet the story of Junadah ibn al Harith did not end with his fall. Faith glowed so intensely in the hearts of those in the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} that even the death of a father did not shake the faith of his household. Before the blood of Junadah ibn al Harith had dried upon the earth, his young son, Amr ibn Junadah, rose to take his place.

Though merely a youth, Amr bore within him the same flame of faith as his father.

With the image of his father’s martyrdom still fresh in his eyes, Amr ibn Junadah sought permission and advanced toward the enemy, proclaiming in defiant long prosody:

“Strangle the neck of the son of Hind,

And cast upon them this year the horsemen of the Muhajireen and the Ansar,

Who dyed their spears in the heat of battle against the polytheists,

In the days of the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws},

And today they shall be dyed with the blood of the adulterers.

Today they shall be dyed with the blood of the base men,

Who have forsaken the Qur'an in defence of evil.

They have come to avenge the blood of the Battle of Badr,

for which they have brought clear-cut swords and spears.

I swear by my Lord ^{AZJ}, I will continue striking the mischievous people,

With my swift and decisive sword.

It is incumbent upon the Azdi that each day he meets the enemy,

Casting him down and pressing forward in attack.”

Amr ibn Junadah fought with zeal, stepping forward from near the place where his father had fallen. Amr ibn Junadah struck with precision until he too joined his father in martyrdom, their bodies lying side by side upon the scorched soil.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Amr ibn Junadah ibn al Harith.

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE TWO GHIFARI BROTHERS

Ansab al Ashraf relates that the remaining companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} realised that the pressure of the enemy was closing in upon the Imam ^{a.s}, and that their ability to shield him weakened with every passing moment. Thus, each of them now hastened to seek precedence in sacrifice, keen to defend the Imam ^{a.s} while strength yet remained within them.

Al Iqbal records that among those who stepped forward at this moment were two brothers from the tribe of Ghifar, Abdullah al Ghifari and Abdul Rahman al Ghifari, the sons of Urwah ibn Haraq al Ghifari.

They approached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and sought his permission, saying,

“Peace be upon you, O Aba Abdillah!

The enemy has encircled us and hastens towards you from all sides. We desire to be martyred before you, so that we may protect and defend you with our lives.”

The Imam ^{a.s} responded to them, “Welcome to you both. Come closer to me.”

They drew near to the Imam ^{a.s} and began to fight at his side, placing themselves between him and the advancing enemy. They engaged the opposing ranks with determination, and during the combat one of them recited in prosody:

“Verily, those of Bani Ghifar and Khandaf know well,

And those of Bani Nizar know well,

That we fight the adulterous group with our swift and clear-cut swords.

O people! We defend the sons of noble fathers against their enemies,

Enemies armed with Eastern swords and sharp spears.”

The two Ghifari brothers continued to fight until they were struck down before the noble Imam ^{a.s}, their bodies falling within the narrowing space that still separated the Imam ^{a.s} from the enemy ranks.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah al Ghifari and Abdul Rahman al Ghifari, the sons of Urwah ibn Haraq al Ghifari.

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE TWO YOUTHS OF BANU JABIR

Then came two youths from Banu Jabir, Shabib ibn al Harith ibn Sari and Malik ibn Abd ibn Sari al Jabiri. They were half-brothers, born of the same mother, and also paternal cousins, for their fathers were brothers.

Bound by shared allegiance, they advanced together at a moment when the circle around Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had grown markedly smaller.

As the enemy pressed closer, Tarikh al Tabari relates, through the narration of Muhammad ibn al Qays, that the two Jabiri youths approached Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and drew near to the Imam ^[a.s] while weeping. The Imam ^[a.s] looked upon them with compassion and addressed them gently, saying, “O my nephews, what makes you weep? By Allah ^[AZJ], I hope that soon you will be filled with joy.”

They replied, their expressions trembling beneath the weight of the moment,

“May Allah ^[AZJ] make us your ransom.

We do not weep on account of ourselves; rather, we weep for you.

We see that you have been surrounded, while we are incapable of defending you.”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was moved by the clarity of their hearts and the sincerity of their concern. The Imam ^[a.s] said to them,

“May Allah ^[AZJ] reward you with the best reward of the God-wary, O my nephews, for your sorrow and for your consolation to me with your lives.”

Having received his blessing, Shabib and Malik turned away from the Imam ^[a.s] and proceeded toward the enemy. As they advanced, they cast one final glance back toward the noble Imam ^[a.s], bearing the pain of separation.

They called out together, “Peace be upon you, O son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].”

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] replied, “And upon both of you be peace and the mercy of Allah ^[AZJ].”

Tarikh al Tabari and al Kamil fi al Tarikh record that Shabib ibn al Harith ibn Sari and Malik ibn Abd ibn Sari al Jabiri fought until they were both killed.

Thus, the two youths of Banu Jabir fulfilled their pledge, offering their lives side by side in defence of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws].

May Allah’s ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Shabib ibn al Harith ibn Sari al Jabiri and Malik ibn Abd ibn Sari al Jabiri.



THE MARTYRDOM OF HANZALAH IBN AS'AD

Hanzalah ibn As'ad al Shibami stepped forward and stood before Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], placing himself directly in front of the Imam ^[a.s], shielding the Imam ^[a.s] with his own body from the swords, arrows, and spears of the enemy.

Tarikh al Tabari states that in that moment, Hanzalah ibn As'ad revived the words of the believing man from the family of Pharaoh, the mu'min of Firawn, and began to admonish the opposing ranks by loudly reciting the verses of the Qur'an:

“O my people! I truly fear for you the doom of earlier enemy forces, like the fate of the people of Nuh, 'Ad and Thamud, and those after them. Allah ^[AZJ] would never will to wrong His servants!

O my people! I truly fear for you the Day when all will be crying out to each other, the Day you will try in vain to turn your backs and run away, with no one to protect you from Allah ^[AZJ].

And whoever Allah ^[AZJ] leaves to stray will be left with no guide!” (Q40:30-33)

Hanzalah ibn As'ad continued his warning, rising above the clamour of the battlefield, and pleaded to the bloodthirsty enemies and with it, recited another verse:

“O people! Do not kill al Hussein!

'Woe to you! Do not fabricate a lie against Allah ^[AZJ], or He will wipe you out with a torment. Whoever fabricates lies is bound to fail!” (Q20:61)

Yet the words of Hanzalah ibn As'ad fell upon hearts that had already sealed themselves against guidance. They had long sealed their hearts and faith to any admonitions.

Tarikh al Tabari and al Kamil relate that no response came from the enemy.

Moved by the sincerity of Hanzalah's plea and witnessing the futility of admonition, the noble Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] addressed Hanzalah ibn As'ad:

“O son of As'ad, may Allah ^[AZJ] have mercy upon you.

They have become deserving of wrath from the time they neglected your invitation towards what is right before the battle, and from the time they rose against you and deemed lawful the shedding of the blood of your companions.

What escape remains for them after having killed your virtuous brothers?”

Hanzalah ibn As'ad understood the meaning and finality of the Imam's ^[a.s] words.

Hanzalah ibn As'ad replied with submission to his Master,

“You have spoken the truth, O Aba Abdillah. May I be your ransom.

You are more knowledgeable than I and more worthy of this.

Shall we not go forth to the afterlife and join our brothers?”

Al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] answered Hanzalah with certainty:

“Yes, go forth to what is better than this world and all that is in it.

Go towards a kingdom which will never wear out.”

Tarikh al Tabari records that with serene fortitude, Hanzalah ibn As'ad offered his farewell, saying, “Peace be upon you, O Aba Abdillah. May Allah ^[AZJ] send blessings upon you and upon the people of your house. May He grant nearness between us and you in His Paradise.”

The Imam ^{a.s} replied, repeating twice, “May it be so. Ameen.”

Hanzalah ibn As'ad al Shibami then proceeded into combat. Hanzalah fought with determination until he was struck down and martyred. ¹⁸⁵

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Hanzalah ibn As'ad al Shibami.

With the fall of Hanzalah ibn As'ad, the voice that had called them back to truth was silenced, and the struggle closed ever nearer around the Imam ^{a.s} and his camp.

THE MARTYRDOM OF AN ORPHANED YOUTH

Al Manaqib narrates that after many of the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} had already attained martyrdom, a youth emerged from the camp. His armour hung loosely upon his slight frame, and the sword the youth carried seemed almost too heavy for his young hands.

Yet the youth walked forward without hesitation, each step firm upon the desert of Karbala.

From behind him, a voice rose from the tents. His frail mother stood clutching the fabric of the tent, as though steadying herself:

“O dear son, step out and fight in presence of the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}.”

Her tone was shadowed by grief, yet steady. The boy moved forward towards the enemy, clutching his sword. The merciful eyes of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} fell upon this youth.

The Imam ^{a.s} rose, sorrow swelling in his chest, and called out with tenderness of a father:

“The father of this youth has already been killed; perhaps his mother would not wish for him to go out into battle.”

The call of the Imam ^{a.s} reached the boy. He turned towards the Imam ^{a.s}, a smile spreading across his face, “Rather, it is my mother who has ordered me to do so.”

Another son of a martyr. His father had already given his life, yet his mother still possessed one more offering, and she gave it freely. Her son, the last remnant of her household, was sent forth in service to the Imam ^{a.s}. The boy sought the signal from the Imam ^{a.s} to advance.

Having been granted permission, the gaze of the Imam ^{a.s} followed him, proud of the valour of this orphan, yet heavy with the knowledge of what fate awaited him. The youth said,

“My Master is al Hussein, and what a noble Master!

He is the delight of the heart of the bearer of glad tidings and warner Prophet ^{saws}.

Ali is his father, and Fatimah is his mother. Do you know of any who are his equal?

His countenance is like a shining star, and his forehead bright like a full moon.”

The youth having spoken with such eloquence, now fought with all the might his young body could muster, his oversized armour hanging from him as he swayed swinging his sword.

¹⁸⁵ Hanzalah ibn Asad al Shibami is the martyr about whom a group of exaggerators, the Ghulat, claimed that Hanzalah was transformed into the likeness of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and martyred on the day of Ashura, while Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was not killed but elevated to the heavens like Prophet Isa. Uyun Akhbar al Rida contains a tradition in which Imam al Ridha ^{a.s} strongly refuted this claim, declaring those who narrated it to be liars. May Allah ^{AZJ} curse the exaggerators, the Ghulat, with equal propensity as Allah ^{AZJ} curses the killers of the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Surrounded by seasoned warriors, the orphaned boy was struck down within sight of the tents and before Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. ¹⁸⁶

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon this martyred youth, along with all the other orphans of Karbala.

Nafasul Mahmoom, drawing from Shaykh Muhammad’s al Manaqib, recounts that the brutality of the enemy did not cease with his death. In rage, the enemy desecrated his body and severed his head. With pitiless cruelty, they hurled it towards the tents of the women.

But his mother had been watching. Every step her son had taken, her eyes had followed. When she saw his head severed and cast back, she rushed forward and picked it up.

She cradled it in her arms, saying:

“Well done, my dear son! O comfort of my heart! O coolness of my eyes!”

For a moment, she gazed at that head. The eyes that had once smiled at her, that had looked upon her with the tender love of a son, were now dimmed by death, matted with blood and dust. Yet even in that moment, her grief did not eclipse her loyalty to the Imam ^{a.s}.

The weight upon her heart was not her own loss, but the suffering of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, whose burden she felt more deeply than her own bereavement. In an act of astonishing devotion, she hurled the head back toward the enemy, her motion charged with defiance, striking down a man among them. She then seized a tent peg, gripping it with her frail hands.

Frail in body yet unyielding in spirit, this mother rushed toward the enemy, her steps driven by conviction, as she began to recite:

“I am a feeble and elderly servant of my master al Hussein,
whose household has been brought low and weakened.

Yet I will strike at you with force, in defence of the children of the noble Fatimah ^{s.a}.”

With that simple peg, she struck down two more soldiers.

But the Imam ^{a.s} called out to her, summoning her back to the tents. It is narrated that the Imam ^{a.s} then raised his hands toward the sky and prayed for her.



¹⁸⁶ Nafasul Mahmoom remarks that Shaykh Al Qummi perceives this brave youth to be the son of Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi. Shaykh Al Qummi states that the account found in ‘Rawzat al Ahbab’ and ‘Rawzat al Shuhada’, concerning the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Awsajah’s son after his father’s death, aligns with this narration in both detail and spirit. And Allah ^{AZJ} knows best.

THE MARTYRDOM OF SHABIB IBN ABDULLAH AL NAHSHALI

The enemy pressed inward from every direction, and those companions who yet remained beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} were forced ever closer around the Imam ^{a.s}.

Among the devoted souls who continued in faithfulness beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was Abu Umar, Shabib ibn Abdullah al Nahshali. Bihar al Anwar states that Shabib ibn Abdullah was a man of deep piety and profound faith, belonging to the tribe of Banu Nufayl ibn Daram.

Muthir al Ahzan states that as the battle raged and the earth trembled beneath the hooves of enemy horses, a witness named Mahran, the client of Banu Kahil, stood among the companions of the Imam ^{a.s} and watched a figure carve his way through the battlefield like a force unleashed. Dust swirled around him, spears flickered toward him, and yet he pressed forward, striking fiercely at those who drew nearest to the Imam ^{a.s}.

His strikes were sharp. He was a man who had spent his nights in abundant prayer, but now, on this final day, he fought in defence of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

Mahran recounts that after dispersing yet another cluster of foes, Shabib ibn Abdullah briefly withdrew from the immediate clash. Shabib ibn Abdullah returned toward the noble Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his face illuminated with yearning. Shabib called out to the Imam ^{a.s}:

“Give me the glad honourable tidings that I have been guided to the right path, that I shall meet Ahmad ^{saws}, and that I shall be elevated to the highest realms of Paradise.”

Those who stood nearby were struck by the depth of his certainty.

Mahran, overwhelmed by what he had witnessed, asked, “Who is this man?”

They replied, “This is Abu Umar, Shabib al Nahshali.”

Shabib ibn Abdullah fought relentlessly, carving through the opposition.

Shabib continued with ferocity until Amir ibn Nahshal, of Banu al Lat from the tribe of Thalabah, saw an opening amidst the chaos. Concealed within the whirlwind of dust, Amir ibn Nahshal lunged forward and delivered a fatal strike. Shabib ibn Abdullah staggered, the weight of the blow overcoming him. As Shabib ibn Abdullah lay wounded, Amir ibn Nahshal rushed upon him and, in an act of brutality, severed his head.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Shabib ibn Abdullah al Nahshali.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ABU THUMAMAH AL SA'DI

With each fallen companion, the defenders around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} diminished, and the struggle pressed ever closer toward the Imam ^{a.s}.

The voices that had once answered his call were now stilled in martyrdom, and the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} grew visibly smaller beneath the relentless assault. It was in this hour that Abu Thumamah, Amr ibn Abdullah al Sa'idi al Hamdani ¹⁸⁷, stepped forward.

Al Manaqib describes Abu Thumamah as resolute, his heart heavy with the weight of what he witnessed. He had stood through the slaughter of his brothers in faith, witnessing the growing peril surrounding the camp and the isolation of the grandson of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Tarikh al Tabari states that Abu Thumamah had earlier killed his cousin, who bore enmity toward the Imam ^{a.s}, and had then performed the Dhuhur prayer behind the Imam ^{a.s}.

Now, Abu Thumamah sought permission from Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to enter the arena for the final time, and the Imam ^{a.s} granted it. Thus, the wounded Abu Thumamah walked toward the battlefield. The prosody of Abu Thumamah rose like a dirge across the battlefield, carrying with it the grief within him:

“Condolence for the progeny of Mustafa ^{saws} and his daughters,

Due to the siege by the enemies of the son of Muhammad ^{saws}, the best of mankind.

Condolence for al Zahra' ^{s.a}, the daughter of the Prophet ^{saws}, and for her husband,

Who is a treasure of knowledge after the Prophet ^{saws}.

Condolence for the dwellers of the East and the West,

And wail for the army of al Hussein, the doer of good.

Who then will convey my message to the Prophet ^{saws} and his daughter,

That your son has fallen into distress?”

Abu Thumamah charged into combat. He fought until the blows of the attackers overcame him. There, amidst the clash and the cries, Abu Thumamah collapsed, and his blood joined that of the martyrs before him.

It is related that Abu Thumamah was slain in combat by Qays ibn Abdullah.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abu Thumamah Amr ibn Abdullah al Sa'idi al Hamdani.

The foot soldiers of the enemy that had continuously pressed inward from every side, now began to narrow the space around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his camp yet again. These spaces were becoming more constraint because the defenders of the Imam ^{a.s} were lessening.

¹⁸⁷ Amr ibn Abdullah al Sa'idi al Hamdani, was a devoted companion of Imam ^{a.s}. He is reported to have fought alongside Imam Ali ^{a.s} and remained loyal to Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. From Kufa, he was among those who wrote to the Imam ^{a.s} after Muawiyah's death and supported Muslim ibn Aqil, gathering arms and funds. Muslim appointed him over the forces of Tamim and Hamadan, and he helped besiege Ibn Ziyad in the palace. After Kufans abandoned Muslim, he left Kufa and joined Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} in Karbala, remaining among the steadfast. Known for his commitment to prayer even in battle, he fought bravely on Ashura and is reported to have killed even his own cousin among the opposing forces.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABIS IBN ABI SHABIB AND SHAWDHAB

Shaykh al Mufid also records that the enemy foot soldiers pressed in from the left and the right, surrounding the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and cutting them down.

The onslaught was merciless and methodical. With each fallen companion, the sphere narrowed further, until the Imam ^{a.s} remained with only three or four companions, alongside the members of his family. The battlefield had been emptied of almost all who had pledged their lives in his defence, and the final chapter of Karbala was drawing ever nearer.

Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri ¹⁸⁸ was a man of noble origin and resolute faith.

Abis belonged to the clan of Shakir, a distinguished Yemeni lineage that formed a branch of the great tribe of Hamadan. From this house came men known for courage, loyalty, and firmness in trial, and Abis stood among them as one of their finest. Abis ibn Abi Shabib was a devoted companion of the Imam ^{a.s}, steadfast in allegiance and firm in conviction.

Accompanying Abis throughout this journey was Shawdhab, his close companion and relative. Shawdhab was not his servant, as some have mistakenly claimed, but a devoted ally who shared in his path and his fate. ¹⁸⁹

Tarikh al Tabari relates that on the Day of Ashura, Abis stepped forward accompanied by Shawdhab. Turning to his companion, he asked, “O Shawdhab, what is your heart’s desire?”

Shawdhab replied without pause,

“What do I desire? I desire to fight alongside you in defence of the son of the daughter of Allah’s Messenger ^{saws}, until I am martyred.”

Abis ibn Abi Shabib, known for his eloquence and clarity of heart, responded,

“I had hoped the same for you. Then proceed towards the Imam ^{a.s}, so that he may dedicate your sacrifice to Allah ^{AZJ}, as he has dedicated the sacrifice of his other companions, and so that I too may dedicate your sacrifice to Allah ^{AZJ}.

For if at this moment I had with me anyone dearer than you, it would have gladdened me for him to go before me, so that I might offer his sacrifice to Allah ^{AZJ}.”

Abis continued, “On this day, we must do all that we can to seek Allah’s ^{AZJ} reward. After today, no action will remain, and only the Day of Accounting awaits.”

Shawdhab went forth as Abis had instructed. He approached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, greeted him, and then walked toward the battlefield. He fought with courage until he was killed.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Shawdhab, the companion of Abis ibn Abi Shabib.

¹⁸⁸ Abu Mikhnafe records that Abis stood among the early supporters of Muslim ibn Aqil in Kufa. When Muslim read the letter of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Abis was the first to pledge allegiance, speaking with resolve that stirred the crowd. Later, when eighteen thousand pledged at the house of Hani, Muslim entrusted Abis with a letter to the Imam ^{a.s} stating, “Hasten to come,” which he delivered in Mecca.

¹⁸⁹ al Iqbal mentions the merit and status of Shawdhab. Also, the esteemed scholar Hussein Noori, author of Mustadrakul Wasa’il, even suggests that Shawdhab’s status may have exceeded that of Abis, for it has been said of him, “Shawdhab would sit in gatherings, and the Shi’ah would come to hear traditions (ahadith) from him. He was one of the early recognized Shi’ah.”

After the martyrdom of his companion, Tarikh al Tabari states that Abis ibn Abi Shabib approached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and said,

“O Aba Abdillah, there is none upon the earth, among my relatives or others, who is more dear and beloved to me than you. If I had the power to defend against oppression with anything more precious to me than my life, I would surely have done so.

Peace be upon you, O Aba Abdillah. I call upon Allah ^{AZJ} as my witness that I am steadfast upon the path of your father and yourself.”

Abu Mikhnafe further narrates from Namir ibn Walah, from a man of Bani Abd of Hamadan who witnessed Ashura, that Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri stepped forward toward the enemy with his sword drawn. Abis ibn Abi Shabib advanced fearlessly, though he had already been wounded in the earlier clashes, bearing a deep gash upon his forehead.

Likewise, Azdi relates from Namir ibn Ramalah, from Rabi ibn Tamim al Hamdani, that when Rabi saw Abis ibn Abi Shabib approaching, he recognised Abis and cried out a warning to his fellow soldiers, “O people, this is a lion among the lions! This is the son of Abi Shabib al Shakiri. Let no one go forth to challenge him.”

Abis called out to the enemy, “Is there not a man to face a man?”

Yet there was not a single warrior among them who dared to confront him in single combat. Instead, Umar ibn Sa'd ordered his soldiers to isolate Abis and attack him collectively, saying, “Pelt him with stones instead.”

Stones were hurled at Abis ibn Abi Shabib from every direction. Seeing that they would not face him honourably, Abis cast aside his armour and removed his helmet.

Fearless, Abis ibn Abi Shabib hurled himself alone into their ranks, charging into the midst of the enemy. Abis drove back those nearest to the camp despite their overwhelming numbers. Rabi ibn Tamim al Hamdani narrates,

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, it is as if I saw Abis pushing back a group of two hundred men.”

Abu Mikhnafe further relates from Muhammad ibn Qays that the enemy then encircled Abis ibn Abi Shabib from all sides, pelting him with stones until he was finally killed.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri.

The narrator adds, “After his martyrdom, I saw the head of Abis ibn Abi Shabib in the hands of a group of men, each of whom was claiming, ‘It was I who killed him.’”

Tarikh al Tabari records that they carried his head to Umar ibn Sa'd, who said to them, “Do not quarrel. Such a warrior could never have been killed by one man alone.”

With this statement, Umar ibn Sa'd dispersed the bloodthirsty men before him.

Ansab al Ashraf similarly states that Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri was not slain by a single hand, but was overwhelmed and martyred by the multitude.

With the fall of Abis ibn Abi Shabib, the tumult closed inward, and only two companions remained between the enemy and the son of Sayyidah Fatimah ^{s.a}.

THE DEPARTURE OF AL DAHHAK IBN ABDULLAH

Among the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was one whose name would endure not through martyrdom, but through testimony. Al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi remained in the camp of the Imam ^{a.s} until the final collapse of resistance in Karbala.

Though al Dahhak ibn Abdullah would withdraw before the final moments, it is through his narration that later generations were granted one of the clearest windows into the final condition of the Imam's ^{a.s} camp on the night and day of Ashura.

It is narrated by Abu Mikhnaf, Lut ibn Yahya al Azdi, through Abdullah ibn Asim al Hamdani, that al Dahhak ibn Abdullah entered the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the eve of Ashura, accompanied by Malik ibn Nazr al Arhabi. Al Dahhak had come with news of Kufa and offered his loyalty to the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

When invited to remain among the companions, al Dahhak accepted, yet upon a stated condition: al Dahhak would fight so long as fighters remained beside the Imam ^{a.s}, and when none were left to defend him, al Dahhak ibn Abdullah would be permitted to depart.

The agreement was made openly, and Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} assented to it.

Al Dahhak endured through the night of Ashura, witnessing the quiet acceptance of the companions, their farewells, and the serenity that cloaked them despite the certainty of death. When morning broke and the battle commenced, al Dahhak stood among them.

One by one, al Dahhak watched the companions advance and fall. The ranks diminished visibly, and the voices that had filled the night with remembrance were silenced.

During the day of Ashura, when al Dahhak saw the horses of the companions crippled by the arrows of the enemy, al Dahhak quietly led his own horse away and concealed it in a tent belonging to some of the companions of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Al Dahhak then returned to the battlefield on foot and fought among them. Before the eyes of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, al Dahhak killed two men and severed the hand of another.

Al Dahhak himself reports that the Imam ^{a.s} prayed for him repeatedly that day, saying:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} never sever your hands. May Allah ^{AZJ} reward you with the best reward on behalf of the family of your Prophet ^{saws}.”

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from al Dahhak himself that when al Dahhak saw the companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} slain, and the enemy pressing ever closer toward the Imam ^{a.s} and his household, and when none remained beside him except Suwayd ibn Amr ibn Abi Muta al Khathami and Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami, al Dahhak knew that the condition of his pledge had been fulfilled.

Now the camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stood on the brink of devastation.

Al Dahhak approached the Imam ^{a.s} and requested,

“O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, do you remember the pact that was made between us? I had promised that as long as fighters remained with you, I would fight alongside them; but if none remained, I would be free to leave, and you had agreed to it.”

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, ever faithful to his word, affirmed,

“You have spoken the truth, O al Dahhak. But how will you save yourself?

If you are able to do so, then you are at liberty to leave.”

With permission granted, al Dahhak hastened toward the concealed horse.

Mounting it swiftly, al Dahhak struck it sharply with his heels until it reared upon its hind legs, then drove it toward the enemy ranks. The soldiers parted as he burst through their lines, cutting a path through the narrowing siege.

The mass of soldiers parted before him as al Dahhak forced his way through, yet fifteen men gave chase, pursuing him until al Dahhak reached the area of Shafiyyah, a village near the banks of the Euphrates. When they finally caught up to him, al Dahhak turned to face them, prepared to defend himself once more.

At that critical moment, several among the pursuers recognised him. Kathir ibn Abdullah al Shabi, Ayyub ibn Musarrih al Khiyawani, and Qays ibn Abdullah al Saidi called out:

“This is Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi, our cousin.

We implore you by Allah ^{AZJ}, spare him.”

Al Dahhak relates that three men from Banu Tamim who were among the pursuers responded, “By Allah ^{AZJ}, we will answer our brothers and kinsmen in what they desire, to leave their companion alone.”

With the Tamimis supporting the plea, the others relented, and the pursuit ended. Thus Allah ^{AZJ} granted al Dahhak escape. This narration, though heavy with the sorrow of retreat, offers an invaluable glimpse into the final hours of Karbala.

Al Dahhak ibn Abdullah's preservation of the inner events of the camp has allowed later generations to witness the unfolding of the tragedy in its most intimate detail.



THE LAST OF COMPANIONS

The camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] had dwindled until scarcely any remained. The encirclement had tightened, and the companions who had stood shoulder to shoulder in the morning light now lay lifeless upon the battlefield.

At last, only two from among the companions were left beside the Imam ^[a.s]: Suwayd ibn Amr ibn Abi al Muta' al Khath'ami and Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Zuhayr ibn Abdul Rahman that Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami was a man of unyielding faith and untiring allegiance to the Imam ^[a.s].

On the night of Ashura, when grief had already settled over the camp, news reached Bashir ibn Amr that his son had been taken captive in the borderlands. It was a trial capable of breaking the resolve of even the strongest of men.

Bashir ibn Amr possessed, by every measure, a legitimate excuse to depart. Indeed, Bashir ibn Amr was granted leave by the Imam ^[a.s].

Yet in Bashir's heart, allegiance to the truth outweighed even the anguish of fatherhood, and Bashir ibn Amr chose to remain.

Tahdhib al Kamal records that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], aware of his sorrow, addressed Bashir ibn Amr with compassion,

"You are free from your oath of allegiance, so go and try to secure your son's release."

Tarikh Dimashq states that Bashir ibn Amr resolutely replied,

"May beasts devour me alive if I ever leave your side!"

In Muqatil al Talibiyin it is mentioned that the Imam ^[a.s] even offered Bashir ibn Amr ransom so that his son might be freed.

Yet Bashir refused to depart. Instead, Bashir ibn Amr entrusted the ransom to his other son, sending him in his place, declaring,

"Allah ^[AZJ] forbid that I should leave you and then inquire about your fate from travellers! Shall I abandon you while you have so few companions? This will never happen!"

When the time came, Bashir advanced toward the battlefield. Tarikh al Tabari relates that he was among the first of those final companions to charge into the ranks of the enemy.

The dust rose around him as Bashir ibn Amr stepped forward against those pressing closest to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s]. As Bashir ibn Amr fought, his prosody rose in measured couplets:

"Today, O soul, I shall meet the All-Merciful,

And today, with complete honour, you shall be rewarded.

Do not be distressed, for everything perishes in time,

Steadfastness shall earn you greatest recompense from the Judge of the Day of Reckoning."

At last, overwhelmed by the enemy, Bashir ibn Amr fell upon the sands of Karbala.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami.

With the fall of Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami, only one companion remained beside the valorous Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Al Azdi narrates from Zuhayr ibn Abdul Rahman al Khath'ami that in the final, suffocating hours of that day, the last of the companions to remain with the noble Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was Suwayd ibn Amr. It is reported that Suwayd also advanced and fought until his wounds overcame him, and Suwayd collapsed among the slain; his sword was seized from his hand.

Sayyid Ibn Tawus praises Suwayd ibn Amr as a nobleman devoted abundantly to prayer. Suwayd ibn Amr was a man of worship as well as of the sword, one who stood in the stillness of the night before he stood in the chaos of battle.

On the Day of Ashura, Suwayd ibn Amr fought with the courage of a ferocious lion, committed until his wounds overcame him and he fell unconscious among the martyrs.

When Suwayd ibn Amr lay motionless upon the field, no companion remained alive beside Imam al Hussein ^[a.s]. The circle of loyalty that had surrounded the Imam ^[a.s] since morning had vanished, and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] now stood alone before the gathered army, along with his remaining household, the Hashemites.



THE PRINCES OF THE HASHEMITES

It was mid-afternoon on Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 AH.

The sun stood mercilessly above the plains of Karbala, its heat pouring down upon a land already soaked in blood. This desolate ground, once silent and forgotten, had now become the resting place of the loyal companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Their bodies lay scattered across the battlefield, each one a testament to faith fulfilled and a covenant honoured. None now remained beside the Imam ^{a.s} except his own Household, the sons of Banu Hashim.

Banu Hashim were remembered as a household distinguished by courage, nobility, and compassion. It was said that when they entered the heat of battle, their brilliance resembled the sun, while their faces shone like the moon. Yet alongside their valour was mercy, and they did not withhold compassion. They were described as men of radiant countenance and noble lineage, dignified figures of the highest rank, whose generosity was widely known.

Shaykh Ali ibn Isa Irbili relates in Kashf al Ghummah, through Awam ibn Hawshab, that the Prophet of Allah ^{saws} once looked upon a group of Qurayshite youths whose faces shone like drawn swords, and grief appeared upon his face.

When he was asked the reason, the Prophet ^{saws} replied with foreboding words,

“We are a household for whom Allah ^{AZJ} has preferred the Hereafter over this world.

I have just remembered how my family will face slaughter and expulsion at the hands of my own community.”

THE MARTYRDOM OF ALI AL AKBAR IBN AL HUSSEIN

Nafasul Mahmoom relates that this final circle of kin included the sons of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, the sons of Jafar ibn Abi Talib, the sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib, and the beloved sons of Imam al Hasan ^{a.s}. The final circle had drawn inward. At dawn, there had been a wall of companions shielding the Imam ^{a.s}; by mid-afternoon, that wall had narrowed to the heart of Banu Hashim. They stood close, embracing one another in farewell.

From within the tents, a voice called out to a youth among them. It was for Ali al Akbar, the son of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The youth turned back to answer, stepping briefly into the shade of the tents behind him.

The enemy had already advanced near the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}. Their jeers tore through the heavy air, the taunts of men who had slain the companions and now boasted among themselves. Armour clashed, and metallic sounds rang around the camp as they replenished themselves and drank the cool water of the Euphrates.

Soon thereafter, a youth emerged from the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, wrapped in the dignity of Hashemite nobility. As the curtain of the tent lifted and he stepped into the light, a sudden hush fell across the battlefield.

The radiance of his presence stilled the chaos. Al Malhuf narrates that this youth appeared as the very reflection of the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

It was the son of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Ali al Akbar ibn al Hussein. ¹⁹⁰

Al Malhuf states that Ali al Akbar was the most handsome and graceful of the Hashemites, luminous in appearance, noble in bearing, and refined in speech.

Eyes fixed upon him as Ali al Akbar advanced. His face carried the light of prophecy; his composure bore the fragrance of divine upbringing. It was said that whenever the family longed to behold the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, they would gaze upon Ali al Akbar and find in him that blessed reflection. In that moment, upon the scorched plains of Karbala, it seemed as though the Prophet ^{saws} himself had returned to walk among them.

Abu al Faraj transmits from Abu Mikhnaf, from Zuhayr ibn Abdullah al Khathami, that clad in Hashemite armour and moving with measured serenity, Ali al Akbar approached his father and sought permission to enter the battlefield.

The moment was heavy with meaning. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked long upon his son. In that gaze gathered the sorrow of every father who has stood at the brink of irrevocable loss. Before him, the Imam ^{a.s} beheld the living memory of his grandfather, the virtuous Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, revived in youth before him. The Imam ^{a.s} saw the echo of revelation in his son’s features and heard the cadence of prophecy in his voice. The Imam’s ^{a.s} heart fractured beneath the weight, yet the Imam ^{a.s} lowered his gaze, and tears welled in his eyes.

During the journey that led to Ashura, several reports highlight the presence and role of Ali al Akbar among the companions of the Imam ^{a.s}. When the Imam ^{a.s} informed the caravan on the way to Karbala that martyrdom awaited them, it was Ali al Akbar who was foremost in affirming his readiness to remain upon the path of truth even unto death.

When the forces of al Hurr confronted them, Ali al Akbar recited the adhan so that the companions could gather in prayer behind the Imam ^{a.s}, and on the eve of Ashura, Ali al Akbar was entrusted with bringing water to the camp.

Now, Al Khawarizmi records that Ali al Akbar stepped forward and sought permission to enter the battlefield before any other relatives of the Imam ^{a.s}. This time, the Imam ^{a.s} stepped slightly ahead of Ali al Akbar and faced the swelling ranks of the enemy.

Tasliyat al Majalis relates that the Imam ^{a.s} took hold of his beard with one hand, raised his gaze toward the sky, and supplicated:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! Be a witness over these people! For a youth has advanced towards them who most closely resembles Your Messenger, Muhammad ^{saws}!

Ali al Akbar resembles him in his features, manner, and speech! Whenever we desired to look again at the face of Your Messenger ^{saws}, we would look at his face.”

¹⁹⁰ Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Ziyad, that he refers to Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} as “the younger,” distinguishing him from Ali al Akbar who was martyred at Karbala. He also names the infant killed in his father’s lap as Abdullah ibn al Hussein. Al Tabari states that Ali al Akbar was killed and left no descendants, while Ali ibn al Hussein, was present but ill, survived.

The enemy remained hushed. The voice of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, now firm and edged with righteous anger, carried across the silent plain.

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! Withhold the bounties of the earth from them, cause dissension among them, and scatter them!

Disparage their policy and do not allow them to earn the pleasure of their chiefs!

For they invited us to assist us, then they leapt upon us and fought us!”

Having received permission, Ali al Akbar mounted his steed and rode toward the vast army of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. The Imam ^{a.s} watched as his son advanced alone toward ranks that stretched like a dark horizon across the plain.

Within the Imam’s ^{a.s} chest, a storm gathered. The master of patience now stood as a father, thunder rising in his voice.

Tasliyat al Majalis narrates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} then called out to Umar ibn Sa'd:

“What has happened to you?! May Allah ^{AZJ} cut off your progeny!

May Allah ^{AZJ} never bless any of your affairs! And may Allah ^{AZJ} set over you one who will behead you in your bed, just as you have severed our ties of kinship and did not regard the sanctity of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws} with respect to me!”

The battlefield remained suspended in silence, and the voice of the Imam ^{a.s} carried across the plain with piercing clarity. Then Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} recited the verse:

“Indeed, Allah ^{AZJ} chose Adam and Nuh, and the family of Ibrahim, and the family of Imran above all peoples.

They are descendants of one another. And Allah ^{AZJ} is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” (Q3:33)

Al Tabaqat al Kubra relates that a man from al Sham stood among the ranks of the army of Umar ibn Sa'd. When this enemy beheld the commanding and luminous form of Ali al Akbar advancing toward the field, he was struck by the youth’s presence.

Raising his voice, he called out to the prince of the Hashemites:

“You are kin, and a blood relative of the commander of the faithful Yazid!

If you desire, we shall grant you immunity and allow you to go wherever you wish!”

He imagined that the mention of lineage might loosen the youth’s determination. Al Irshad states that Ali al Akbar’s mother was Lady Layla, daughter of Abi Murrah ibn Amr ibn Masud al Thaqafi, and her mother was a daughter of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb. ¹⁹¹

Perhaps, this enemy thought, that the thread of distant kinship and the promise of survival might pull this outstanding youth away from his Imam ^{a.s}.

¹⁹¹ Urwah ibn Masud al Thaqafi was a leading noble of Thaqif in al Taif. He acted as a negotiator on behalf of Quraysh at al Hudaybiyyah and later testified to the unparalleled devotion of the companions to the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}. He later embraced Islam, returned to call his people to it, and was killed by them, attaining martyrdom. The Prophet ^{saws} said of him: “His example among his people is like the companion of Ya Sin among his people.” Urwah had become related to Abu Sufyan through marriage, which explains the later political and tribal link referenced in this context. The mother of Ali Al Akbar was Lady Layla, daughter of Abi Murrah ibn Urwah ibn Masud. As for her presence at Karbala, the historical record remains silent, and no reliable report confirms that she was among those present on the Day of Ashura. And Allah ^{AZJ} is the Best Knower.

But Ali al Akbar answered with firm clarity:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}! The kinship of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} is more significant to me than the kinship of Abu Sufyan.”

With that, Ali al Akbar pressed further into the field. The murmur of the enemy began to rise again, jeers attempting to reclaim the silence that had shamed them.

Al Irshad states that Ali al Akbar halted his steed before their ranks and proclaimed in ringing verse, his eloquence and tone of voice majestic:

“I am Ali, the son of al Hussein, the son of Ali!

By the House of Allah ^{AZJ}!

I swear we have a greater claim to the Prophet than Shimr or Umar ibn Sa'd, the base ones!

I shall strike at you with the sword until it bends,

the strike of a knight who is a Hashimi, a Qurayshi!

I shall continue to defend my father! And by Allah ^{AZJ}!

The son of the illegitimate one shall not have authority over us!”

With these words, Ali al Akbar drove his mount forward. It surged toward the heart of the army, cutting through the mass of shields and spears.

The wrath of Ali al Akbar descended upon them with unrelenting force.

Al Manaqib states that Ali al Akbar struck down seventy men before returning to his father and the camp. The formation of Umar ibn Sa'd’s army buckled beneath his assault.

The cries of the wounded and the terrified rose across the plain. Panic seized them.

The hordes of the enemy that had moments earlier pressed upon the tents now recoiled, retreating until a clear distance once more separated them from the camp of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Rawzat al Safa narrates that whenever Ali al Akbar charged, the masses fled before him.

Any who dared stand their ground were cut down. Ali al Akbar launched twelve assaults, each time plunging deep into the densest ranks.

Tasliyat al Majalis states that Ali al Akbar penetrated so far into their lines that he slew one hundred and twenty men, and the Kufan army began to wail.

Again and again, Ali al Akbar returned to the charge. Each time Ali al Akbar bore new wounds. Each time, thirst tightened its grip upon Ali al Akbar. The heat of Karbala pressed into his armour, weighing upon his shoulders.

The desert wind scorched his breath, and the sun burned against his brow.

At last, when the thirst became unbearable, Ali al Akbar turned back toward his father.

Al Malhuf states that his breaths were laboured, his strength visibly waning beneath the cruelty of thirst:

“O father, thirst is killing me, and the weight of this armour is draining my strength.

Is there a possibility of a sip of water that may revive my strength to fight the enemy?”

What answer could a father offer to such a plea? There was no water to give.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was indeed immensely proud of his valourous son having routed the heedless armies before them, but this simple request bore heavy sorrow upon his heart.

Al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon his exhausted son atop his steed:

“My dear son, it weighs heavily upon Muhammad ^{saws}, and upon Ali, and upon your father that you make this request to them, yet they cannot oblige you; and that you seek their help, yet they are unable to help you.”

Grief filled his chest, yet Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} did not allow despair to show. The Imam ^{a.s} extended his blessed hand, and Ali al Akbar leaned forward to kiss it.

Al Malhuf relates that the Imam ^{a.s} spoke again, his voice softened by tenderness:

“Be patient, my beloved. O aide, O dear son!

Fight for a while, and very soon you shall behold your grandfather Muhammad ^{saws}.

You shall drink from his flowing cup and shall never be thirsty again.”

Tasliyat al Majalis relates that when Ali al Akbar spoke of his thirst, the Imam ^{a.s} said:

“My dear son, bring forth your tongue.”

The Imam ^{a.s} sought to moisten his son’s tongue with his own. He removed his ring and said:

“Place this in your mouth and return to fight your enemy.

I hope that before night falls, your grandfather will quench your thirst from his brimming cup, after which you will never be thirsty again.”

Behind them, the tents trembled in the restless wind. Within their thin walls, the women wept in silence. Their eyes followed every martyr who stepped forward, and their hearts fractured at the sight of this painful farewell between father and son.

Strengthened not by water but by promise, Ali al Akbar straightened once more and stirred his steed. Every step, every gallop, every arc of his sword was being watched by the unblinking eyes of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The Imam ^{a.s} stood upon a raised sand mound, his gaze unwavering, his turban lashed by the wind, sand striking against his blessed face.

Again, the prince of Banu Hashim surged forward, driven by a courage born of divine love and inherited nobility.

Al Khawarizmi states that his voice rose once more across the battlefield as Ali al Akbar recited:

“The reality of war has been made manifest, and other truths shall become evident after it.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, the Lord ^{AZJ} of the Throne,

We shall neither leave alone your numbers, nor sheath our swords!”

The sand rose in waves beneath the hooves of his horse as Ali al Akbar plunged once more into the ranks of the enemy. Dust gathered around him, yet Ali al Akbar continued to advance with unwavering resolve, his sword flashing amid the chaos of battle.

Ali al Akbar fought with a ferocity that stunned the army before him. Every strike carried the force of faith and loyalty, and wherever Ali al Akbar charged, the enemy ranks faltered beneath the strength of his assault.

Al Irshad relates that by this stage Ali al Akbar had slain two hundred men. His sword carved a path through armour and shield, and wherever Ali al Akbar advanced, lines splintered and men retreated, unable to withstand the courage of the son of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Yet envy and hatred stirred within one among them. Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Zuhayr ibn Abdul Rahman that a man from Banu Abdul Qays, Murrah ibn Munqidh al Laythi ¹⁹², watched Ali al Akbar with seething resentment. Unable to bear the sight of the son of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} cutting through their ranks, Murrah ibn Munqidh swore:

“If he passes by me doing what he is doing, then I shall make his father weep over his death; otherwise, let all the crimes of the Arabs be borne by me!”

When Ali al Akbar charged again, dust swirling and steel flashing, Murrah ibn Munqidh seized his moment. Al Tabaqat al Kubra states that Murrah sprang forth and, with a powerful blow, thrust his spear into the noble body of Ali al Akbar.

The iron tore through his chest with devastating violence, splitting flesh and bone.

Upon the scorching plains of Karbala, the radiant youth, the living mirror of the blessed Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, was pierced.

The might of Ali al Akbar wavered atop the steed. He swayed.

The reins slipped from the bloodstained fingers of Ali al Akbar. Blood spurted from the wound, yet even then, Ali al Akbar refused to collapse before his father’s eyes.

Nafasul Mahmoom records from Abu al Faraj that even in this wounded state, Ali al Akbar sought to attack again. But as Ali al Akbar struggled to steady himself, an arrow screamed across the battlefield and struck him in the throat. It pierced deep.

The strength of Ali al Akbar faltered, and this time he could no longer remain upright.

Murrah ibn Munqidh, seeing Ali al Akbar bent forward upon his mount, advanced again and brought his sword crashing down upon the crown of the head of Ali al Akbar.

The blow was sickening as the metal cut through to the bone. Ali al Akbar could not lift himself fully. In a desperate effort to remain upon his steed, he wrapped his trembling hands around the neck of his horse, clinging to it as blood streamed from his wounds.

The prince of the Hashemites raised his voice one final time and called out:

“O dear father, peace be upon you. Here is my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, sending you greetings of peace and saying, ‘Hasten to us.’”

By then, the enemy, recovering from their earlier retreat, returned with renewed fury.

Al Irshad narrates that they encircled Ali al Akbar and struck with their swords from every side. The mighty Ali al Akbar, pride of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}, fell from his steed onto the burning sands of Karbala. The sons of the Hashemites stood aghast watching Ali al Akbar fall.

Tarikh al Tabari quotes from Abu Mikhnaf, from Zuhayr ibn Abdul Rahman al Khath'ami, that when Ali al Akbar fell, those enemy swarms who moments before had fled in terror now swarmed over his wounded body, hacking at the blessed body of Ali al Akbar.

¹⁹² Murrah ibn Munqidh ibn al Numan al Abdi al Laythi belonged to Banu Abdul Qays. He had previously been present with his father at Siffin under the banner of the Commander of the Faithful, and later carried the banner of Abdul Qays himself. In 66 AH, al Mukhtar sent Abdullah ibn Kamil al Shakiri against him, for his crimes in Karbala. He was attacked at his home and struck while attempting to defend himself, his hand being permanently paralyzed. He later fled and joined Musab ibn al Zubayr.

In their cruelty, the hordes of enemies now crowded upon Ali al Akbar with savage hatred. They hacked further at his body, cutting Ali al Akbar to pieces.

A final breath escaped his lips, and with it the soul of Ali al Akbar departed this world.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Ali al Akbar ibn al Hussein ibn Ali.

Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid narrated to Abu Mikhnaf from Humayd ibn Muslim al Azdi, a report also preserved by Abu al Faraj, that those who later recounted the maqatal trembled when describing what followed.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} saw Ali al Akbar son fall amidst the mass of enemies and rushed toward the field. The Imam ^{a.s} moved like a man crushed beneath a mountain of grief.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stumbled across the scorching sand, falling and rising, then falling again. Each step was weighted with unbearable sorrow. The plains of Karbala bore witness to a father advancing toward the mutilated body of his son.

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} finally reached the body of Ali al Akbar, the sight before the Imam ^{a.s} was one of merciless slaughter. Sayyid Ibn Tawus says that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} collapsed upon Ali al Akbar and placed his cheek upon that of his son.

The arms of the Imam ^{a.s} wrapped around Ali al Akbar, unwilling to separate from his son.

Humayd ibn Muslim states that the heart of the Imam ^{a.s} was shattered in that moment.

The brutality inflicted upon his son ignited within the Imam ^{a.s} the wrath of a Prophet's heir. Abu Mikhnaf reports from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that the voice of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} rose over the battlefield, and the Imam ^{a.s} openly cursed those who had committed this atrocity:

"May Allah ^{AZJ} kill the people who killed you, O my dear son! How audaciously they have defied the Merciful Lord ^{AZJ} and violated the sacred trust of the Messenger ^{saws}!

After you, the world is nothing but ashes!"

Humayd ibn Muslim still stood aghast among the onlookers. Humayd later testified that he heard these words with his own ears.

That searing lament was also preserved in Tasliyat al Majalis and in Tarikh al Tabari.

Indeed, the light of the world had dimmed for Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Al Tabaqat al Kubra narrates that the scene was so heart-rending that none among the enemy dared approach him. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} remained seated upon the scorched earth, cradling his son, until the pallor of death fully settled upon the once radiant face of Ali al Akbar.

Al Irshad reports that tears streamed uncontrollably from the eyes of the Imam ^{a.s}.

The army that had shown no mercy now stood at a fearful distance while the Imam ^{a.s} wept openly. Grief tore through his chest as the Imam ^{a.s} cried out again,

"Woe be upon this world after you, O Ali al Akbar."

Rawzat al Safa relates that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} wept beside his son with an intensity never before heard from the Imam ^{a.s}. The master of patience, the master of the youth of Paradise, whose endurance and patience could steady mountains, was now a father broken by loss.

Soon after, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lifted his grief-stricken gaze.

Tears still flowed as the Imam ^{a.s} looked upon the blood-matted face of his son. He brushed aside the blood clotted strands from forehead of Ali Al Akbar and kissed it.

Allamah Turayhi relates that the Imam ^{a.s} wept at the state of his wounds and mutilation,

"Now, O my dear son, you have found relief from imprisonment and the anxieties of this world, and very soon I too shall join you."

By now, the Hashemites had drawn near and stood in silence as the Imam ^{a.s} raised his shattered heart once more toward his Lord ^{AZJ}. Al Tabaqat al Kubra states that he supplicated:

"O Allah ^{AZJ}, they invited us to support our cause, but they deserted us and killed us.

O Allah ^{AZJ}, withhold from them the rain of the skies and deny them the bounties of the earth. Even if You allow them these favours for a time, cause discord among them, scatter them in divided paths, and do not let their rulers ever look upon them with favour."

Then, as related in Muthir al Ahzan and al Futuh, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} turned his tear-filled eyes toward the Hashemites who surrounded him.

His voice was subdued by sorrow as the Imam ^{a.s} said, "Carry your brother."

Tarikh al Tabari records that they lifted the mutilated body of Ali al Akbar from the place of his martyrdom. With reverence and trembling hands, they bore Ali al Akbar back across the same burning sands upon which he had fought with unmatched valour, until they laid Ali al Akbar before the tents he had so fiercely defended.

Tarikh al Tabari, Muqatil al Talibiyyin, and al Malhuf recount the harrowing aftermath. Shaykh al Mufid writes that from within the tents, a woman rushed forth, her cry piercing the air: "O my brother! O my nephew!"

She threw herself upon the lifeless body of Ali al Akbar, overwhelmed by grief.

This scene seared into the memory of Humayd ibn Muslim, as he recalled,

"I remember seeing a woman rushing out, coming forth like the rising sun.

She was calling out, 'O my darling! O my nephew! O fruit of my heart! O light of my eyes!'"

Humayd ibn Muslim asked someone about her and was told,

"This is Zaynab bint Fatimah ^{s.a}, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}."

Humayd ibn Muslim observed as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} approached her gently.

Though his own sorrow choked him, the Imam ^{a.s} lifted her head and gently took her by the hand, leading her back toward the tents. No sooner had they neared the tents than the cries of lamentation erupted from within:

"Wa Hussein! Wa Aliya! Wa ghariba! Wa Muhammada!",

Thus, as narrated by the majority of scholars and chroniclers, Ali al Akbar ibn al Hussein ibn Ali was the first of the noble men of Banu Abi Talib to fall on the Day of Ashura. ¹⁹³

¹⁹³ The scholars have differed regarding the age of Ali al Akbar at the time of his martyrdom. Ibn Shahr Ashub in al Manaqib, and Muhammad ibn Abi Talib, state that he was eighteen years old. Shaykh al Mufid records that he was nineteen, which would place him younger than Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}. Nafasul Mahmoom, however, cites narrations that he was twenty five years old, which would make him older than Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN MUSLIM

With the martyrdom of Ali Al Akbar, sacrifice entered the very heart of the House of the Prophet ^{saws}. The trial of Karbala that had claimed companions and allies now pierced the innermost sanctum of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}.

Tasliyat al Majalis relates that amongst the earlier Hashemite martyrs, another youth from the tents of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} stepped forth toward the battlefield. He was of noble lineage and unshakable faith: it was Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil.

Abdullah was the son of Muslim ibn Aqil, the faithful envoy of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} to Kufa, who had been treacherously martyred, and his mother was Sayyidah Ruqayyah ^{s.a}, daughter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s}.

It is narrated that Abdullah ibn Muslim was twenty-six years of age on the day of Ashura.

The prince of Sayyidah Ruqayyah ^{s.a} approached the Imam ^{a.s}, seeking permission to enter the battlefield.

When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} looked upon Abdullah ibn Muslim, memories surged through his heart of Muslim ibn Aqil, abandoned and alone in the streets of Kufa.

With a heart burdened by sacrifice, yet firm in submission to the decree of Allah ^{AZJ}, the Imam ^{a.s} embraced Abdullah ibn Muslim. In that moment, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} was sending yet another jewel of the Hashemites toward martyrdom.

With the tenderness of a guardian and the sorrow of a father who had already lost so much, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} reluctantly granted Abdullah ibn Muslim permission.

The eyes of Abdullah were already fixed upon the battlefield. Before him lay the dust and the cruelty of Karbala, but beyond it awaited reunion with his father, Muslim ibn Aqil.

Abdullah ibn Muslim mounted his steed and rode forward, his sword gleaming beneath the merciless sun of Ashura. As he entered the battlefield, Abdullah ibn Muslim raised his voice in verse and proclaimed before the enemy:

“Today I shall meet Muslim, my father,
And I shall meet the youths who gave their entirety for the religion of the Prophet ^{saws}.
They are a people who do not know falsehood;
They are just, and of noble descent from Hashim, the masters of the noble.”
Before Abdullah ibn Muslim stood men whose faces he despised.

These were the same Kufans who had betrayed his father only days earlier.

They had broken their pledges, abandoned Muslim ibn Aqil to the blades of tyranny, and afterwards dragged his mutilated and torn body through the streets of Kufa before hanging it by the feet at the refuse place of the city.

Now, the valiant son of Muslim ibn Aqil had come to the plains of Karbala to confront the inheritors of that treachery. With a swift kick to his steed, Abdullah ibn Muslim hurled himself into the enemy ranks. Dust gathered around him like a veil, yet through it the figure of Abdullah could still be seen advancing, his sword flashing amid the chaos of battle.

Bihar al Anwar states that Abdullah ibn Muslim advanced upon them while reciting:

“I swear that I shall not be killed except as a free man, though I know death to be bitter.
I will not be called a coward or a fugitive, for coward is the one who disobeys and flees.”

The attack of Abdullah ibn Muslim were fierce and disciplined, marked by the courage that flowed in the blood of Banu Hashim. It is recorded that Abdullah mounted three powerful assaults upon the opposing ranks, cutting through their lines and felling ninety-eight men, according to Tasliyat al Majalis. Each stroke of his sword echoed the courage of his father, and each advance was a vengeance for the betrayal of Kufa.

But even the bravest warrior cannot escape the toll of relentless battle.

Shaykh al Mufid and Tarikh al Tabari narrate that after these assaults, Abdullah ibn Muslim stood weakened and worn. His body bore wounds from the clash of swords and spears, his breath had grown heavy, and his lips were parched beneath the scorching heat of Ashura.

At that moment, a wretched enemy emerged from the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd. It was Amr ibn Sabih al Suda'i. ¹⁹⁴ Rather than face the youth in honourable combat with the sword, Amr ibn Sabih raised his bow and placed an arrow upon its string.

Drawing it tight, Amr ibn Sabih loosed the arrow toward the exhausted warrior.

Humayd ibn Muslim states that Abdullah ibn Muslim saw the shaft racing toward him, but it was too late. By instinct, Abdullah raised his left hand to shield his face.

The arrow struck with brutal force, piercing through the palm of his hand and driving onward into his forehead, pinning the hand of Abdullah ibn Muslim to his skull.

His head recoiled from the impact as the iron point lodged deep within the bone. The shaft protruded outward while blood poured down the face of Abdullah ibn Muslim.

In that moment of agony, Ibn Athir in his Kamil relates that Abdullah ibn Muslim raised his voice in supplication:

“O Allah ^{AZJ}! These men have deemed us lowly and wretched.
O Allah ^{AZJ}! Kill them as they have killed us.”

The pain forced the sword from his right hand, and it fell upon the sands of Karbala. Yet the courage of the Hashemites still burned within Abdullah ibn Muslim.

With his remaining strength, Abdullah ibn Muslim grasped the arrow's shaft with his right hand and struggled to wrench it free from his forehead and the hand pinned against it.

Abdullah ibn Muslim pulled with desperate effort, but the arrow would not move; it had sunk too deeply into the bone. Seeing Abdullah ibn Muslim in this state, with his hand nailed to his head, his sword fallen, and his strength fading as Abdullah struggled against the embedded arrow, the enemy gathered the courage to approach him.

¹⁹⁴ Amr ibn Sabih al Suda'i is reported among the killers of Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil in the narrations of Abu Mikhnaf and Abu al Faraj al Isfahani. Other reports attribute the fatal arrow to Zayd ibn Riqqad al Dhababi. Both men were later pursued during the uprising of al Mukhtar al Thaqafi and were killed in retribution for their role in Karbala.

Then another arrow came hissing through the air and struck Abdullah ibn Muslim in the chest.¹⁹⁵ Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Humayd ibn Muslim, records that the arrow tore through his flesh and split his heart, its force carrying with it a final and decisive violence.

It did not merely wound Abdullah; it struck with such severity that the breath was driven from his body, and the last reserves of strength began to leave him.

Abdullah ibn Muslim released his weakened grip from the arrow lodged in his forehead. His hand, which only moments before had tried to pull it free, now fell away as his strength failed him. With the little power that remained, Abdullah brought his right hand down and clutched the shaft of the arrow that had buried itself deep within his chest. His movements became slow, heavy, and uncertain, each motion burdened by pain, blood loss, and the overwhelming force of the wounds that had overtaken Abdullah.

Al Futuh relates that the violence of the arrows robbed him of breath. Blood filled his lungs, and his heart was torn within his chest. Every attempt to draw air became a struggle, as though life itself was being pulled from Abdullah ibn Muslim with each passing moment.

His body could no longer bear the weight of the injuries inflicted upon him, and his remaining strength abandoned him entirely.

Abdullah ibn Muslim staggered backward, his footing faltering upon the heated earth, and then collapsed upon the burning sands, falling upon the soil of Karbala.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

Al Kamil states that the one who fired the fatal arrow was Zayd ibn Riqqad al Dhababi. Later, when Zayd was captured by al Mukhtar al Thaqafi, Zayd admitted that he had shot an arrow at Abdullah ibn Muslim which struck his chest and pierced his heart.

Ibn al Athir recounts that after the youth had fallen, Zayd now stood over his body and began pulling the arrows from the noble corpse.

Zayd wrenched the arrow from the chest of Abdullah, tearing it free with force so that flesh was ripped and ribs broke as the shaft was drawn out. Ibn al Athir further states that Zayd ibn Riqqad then turned to retrieve the other arrow, the one embedded in the youth's forehead.

Zayd seized the shaft and pulled at it, but it would not come free, for it had lodged firmly in the wound. As Zayd pulled, the head of Abdullah ibn Muslim swayed in the direction of the force. He moved the shaft up and down violently, trying to loosen it, yet still it did not dislodge. With each movement, the lifeless head of the martyr shifted.

Even after Abdullah ibn Muslim's martyrdom, the brutality of the enemy had not come to an end, and his body remained marked by the violence of Karbala.

¹⁹⁵ Ibn al Athir, in al Kamil, recounts that this confession was later given in the court of Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubaydah when he summoned Zayd ibn Riqqad al Dhababi. Zayd admitted: "I nailed the hand of a youth to his forehead from among them with an arrow, and the youth was Abdullah ibn Muslim." And he said, "I shot another arrow at him and when I went to his side, he had died. Then I pulled out the arrow from his heart, which had killed him. I also started moving the arrow up and down from his forehead, but its handle came out while its point remained therein." Reports in Al Tabari and Ansab al Ashraf state that Zayd was later pursued by the supporters of Mukhtar and killed in retaliation for Karbala.

It is narrated that, in order to gain leverage, Zayd ibn Riqqad forced the head of Abdullah ibn Muslim down against the sand, whether with his foot or with his hands, and pulled with greater strength, his effort driven by the need to wrench the arrow free.

The act was harsh and deliberate, pressing the wounded head deeper into the ground.

At last, after considerable strain, the shaft gave way and broke from the arrowhead, leaving the iron point embedded within the forehead of Abdullah ibn Muslim.

Abu Mikhnaf and Abu al Faraj likewise record that Amr ibn Sabih al Saydawi and Asad ibn Malik were counted among those responsible for the killing of Abdullah ibn Muslim, their names preserved among those who took part in this brutal act.



THE MARTYRDOM OF AWN AND MUHAMMAD IBN ABDULLAH

Despite the overwhelming hordes of the bloodthirsty enemy that surrounded the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, their numbers pressing forward like a gathering storm from every direction, the assaults had not yet broken through. The attacks launched by the youth of the Hashemites had already instilled terror within the hearts of the opposing army.

Again and again, the enemy had been forced to recoil, retreating a short distance and maintaining a wary space between themselves and the tents of the Imam {a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari records that from within those tents there emerged, one after another, the noble sons of Banu Hashim. Each stepped forward with unshakable commitment, carrying the banner of devotion to the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}. Their hearts were firm, their purpose unwavering, and their loyalty to Imam al Hussein {a.s} unbroken.

One after another, they answered the call of sacrifice, advancing from the brief shelter of the tents into the battlefield of many enemies and certain death.

Among those who now came forth were two young brothers whose courage reflected the noble blood that flowed through their veins. Clad in the garments of battle and gripping their swords with youthful hands, Awn ibn Abdullah and Muhammad ibn Abdullah stepped out from the tents of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}.

They were the sons of Abdullah ibn Jafar ibn Abi Talib and Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}, the beloved granddaughter of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.¹⁹⁶

These two brothers were heirs to a lineage of unmatched honour.

Their father, Abdullah ibn Jafar, was renowned among the Arabs for his generosity, bravery, and unwavering loyalty to the household of the Prophet.

Their mother was Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}, the lion-hearted daughter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}, whose patience and strength would later illuminate the darkest aftermath of Karbala.

Through their grandfathers, they inherited a legacy that stood among the greatest in the history of Islam. The paternal grandfather was Jafar al Tayyar¹⁹⁷, the martyr of the Battle of Mu'tah, who was granted two green wings by Allah {AZJ}, with which he soars through Paradise.

Their maternal grandfather was the incomparable champion of Islam, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}. This was the bloodline of these impeccable youth hailed, hence their ferocious defence of the Imam {a.s} becomes more understandable.

¹⁹⁶ Abu al Faraj al Isfahani reports that Abdullah ibn Jafar had two sons named Awn: Awn al Akbar and Awn al Asghar. The martyr at Karbala was Awn al Akbar, the son of Sayyidah Zaynab al Aqilah {s.a}. The younger Awn was later killed during the tragedy of Harrah by Muslim ibn Uqbah. Works such as al Malhuf by Ibn Tawus, Bihar al Anwar by Allama al Majlisi, and al Maqtal by al Khwarazmi likewise identify Awn and Muhammad as the sons of Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}.

¹⁹⁷ Awn ibn Abdullah and Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar were the grandsons of Jafar ibn Abi Talib ibn Abdul Muttalib, the elder brother of Imam Ali {a.s}. He was among the earliest Muslims and a leader of the migration to Abyssinia. Jafar was martyred at the Battle of Mut'ah in 8 AH. The Prophet {saws} said that Allah {AZJ} replaced his severed arms with two wings in Paradise by which he flies, and for this reason he became known as 'al Tayyar' and 'Dhu al Janahayn'.

Before stepping into the battlefield, the two brothers sought permission from their uncle, Imam al Hussein {a.s}. It is said that the Imam {a.s} hesitated, for how could the Imam {a.s} easily grant leave to the sons of his beloved sister? Yet the young men persisted.

It is narrated that the brothers continued to plead for permission until, at last, the noble Imam {a.s} granted them leave. Their faces shone with joy, and they returned to the tents of their mother to inform her of the news of their impending martyrdom.

Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} received them with the dignity and fortitude befitting the daughter of Imam Ali {a.s}. With her own blessed hands, she prepared her sons for battle, clothing them in the garments of war and sending them forth to defend their master.

In that moment, the mother who had nurtured them now offered them in sacrifice upon the path of truth.

Mounted upon their steeds, the valiant sons of Abdullah ibn Jafar rode toward the battlefield and halted before the hostile ranks. At the sight of two youths emerging before them, the roar of the enemy army rose across the plain.

The Kufans looked upon them and mocked them as mere boys, believing them incapable of fighting. Yet the brothers stood unshaken before the multitude of unsheathed swords.

In Manaqib, it is narrated that before the clash began, Awn ibn Abdullah was the first to speak. Raising his voice above the tumult of the battlefield, Awn recited:

“If you do not know me, I am the son of Jafar,
The truthful martyr who soars in the illuminated Paradise,
With green wings among the purified ones.
This alone suffices as honour on the Day of Judgement.”

At the mention of the name of Jafar ibn Abi Talib, a murmur passed through the ranks of the enemy. That name still carried a weight of fear among them, for the courage of Jafar al Tayyar had become legend. The clamour of the army quietened.

Then Muhammad ibn Abdullah raised his voice and declared:

“I complain to Allah {AZJ} regarding these enemies,
These are a people blind, who spread corruption,
Who have altered the character of the Qur'an, the firm revelation, and its understanding.
They have aligned themselves in disbelief with the tyrants.”

With these declarations, the two brothers advanced into the ranks of the enemy. Like twin blades flashing amidst the storm of battle, they plunged into the hostile army.

From the edge of the battlefield, the eyes of their mother and their noble uncle followed them as they disappeared into the maelstrom of swords and spears.

Awn ibn Abdullah fought with extraordinary courage. His sword struck with relentless force, cutting through the enemy ranks with fearless determination.

Al Manaqib reports that Awn ibn Abdullah had by now felled three mounted warriors and eighteen foot soldiers as he pressed deeper into their lines.

On another front, Muhammad ibn Abdullah engaged the enemy with equal determination. His blade rose and fell with fierce tenacity as Muhammad ibn Abdullah struck down ten infantrymen who stood before him.

The two brothers fought like seasoned warriors raised upon the legacy of Imam Ali ^{a.s}, fearless in the face of overwhelming numbers and unshaken by the chaos of battle.

But amidst the confusion of combat, the forces of oppression closed in upon them.

Moments earlier, clouds of dust had swirled as both brothers tore deeper into the enemy ranks. Now, as the dust settled behind them, only one of them could be seen fighting. The steed of Awn was riderless, shifting anxiously among the converging hordes of soldiers.

An accursed man named Abdullah ibn Qutbah al Nabhani had struck Awn ibn Abdullah with a fatal blow. The young warrior fell from his steed onto the burning sands.

Jeers and taunts erupted from the direction where Awn had been fighting. Muhammad ibn Abdullah noticed that his brother Awn was no longer mounted beside him.

Turning his attention toward the place where Awn ibn Abdullah had fallen, Muhammad ibn Abdullah sought to reach him.

Tarikh al Tabari states that in that brief moment of divided focus, a man named Amir ibn Nahshal al Tamimi seized the opportunity and charged toward Muhammad ibn Abdullah.

Muhammad ibn Abdullah was struck down, and the second son of Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} fell upon the blood-soaked plains of Karbala, joining his brother in martyrdom. ¹⁹⁸

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Awn ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar and Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar.

Thus were the two sons of Sayyidah Zaynab ^{s.a} offered upon the path of loyalty and truth, standing beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} until the final moment.

Their sacrifice became another radiant testimony to the devotion of the House of Jafar and the steadfastness of the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} in the face of tyranny.

Later reports relate that the place associated with the grave of Awn ibn Abdullah came to be known as al Ghadiriyyah, a tract of land belonging to Banu Asad situated roughly one farsakh from Karbala.

The association of this place with the martyrdom of Awn ibn Abdullah reflects how far the young warriors had penetrated into the enemy ranks, driving them back across the open ground before they were finally surrounded and struck down.

¹⁹⁸ Tarikh al Tabari reports through Abu Kanud Abdul Rahman ibn Ubayd that when news of the martyrdom of the two brothers reached their father, Abdullah ibn Jafar ibn Abi Talib, people gathered around him to offer their condolences. One of his bondsmen, Abu al Lislal, remarked, “This is what has happened to us because of al Hussein.” Upon hearing this, Abdullah ibn Jafar struck him with his sandal and rebuked him, saying, “O son of an odious woman! You dare to say this about the noble al Hussein?! By Allah ^{AZJ}, if I had been with him I would have desired nothing more than to remain with him until I was killed alongside him. What eases the loss of my two sons is that they were martyred at the side of my brother and cousin, supporting him and remaining steadfast with him.” Al Irshad further relates that he then declared, “All praise belongs to Allah ^{AZJ} for the martyrdom of al Hussein. If my own hands could not support al Hussein, then at least my two sons supported him until death.”

THE DEATH KNELL FOR THE HOUSE OF AQIL

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH AL AKBAR IBN AQIL

The sun of Karbala burned mercilessly above the desolate plain, and a desert wind moved slowly across the battlefield, stirring the dust that clung to the ground darkened by blood.

Around the tents of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} settled a heavy stillness, a silence thick with grief and the nearness of parting.

It was broken only by the hushed farewells of men to their families and by the quiet sobbing of children who clung to the garments of the men of Bani Hashim.

Now the shadow of death crept ever closer upon the sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

Their hearts had long carried within them the deep wound left by the martyrdom of their brother, Muslim ibn Aqil, the faithful envoy of the Imam ^{a.s}.

They had heard the dreadful accounts of cruelty and betrayal directed towards Muslim in Kufa, and his desecration.

The memory of that loss had already been acknowledged by Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} on the night before the battle. On the night of Ashura, the Imam ^{a.s} had permitted the sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib to leave, yet they refused to depart.

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq narrates from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} that they stood and said,

“O son of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, what would the people say of us if we abandoned our leader, the son of our foremost uncle, and the grandson of our Prophet ^{saws}?

By Allah ^{AZJ}, we will not do so. We will strike with our swords beside you and fight with our spears until we share your fate.

We will give our lives before your life and our blood before your blood.”

Muqatil al Talibiyyin records that when Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} heard these words, their valor and faith made the Imam ^{a.s} weep, and they wept with him.

Now, on the day of Ashura, the sons of Aqil stood watching the unfolding tragedy before them. They saw with their own eyes how the same venom and hatred that had been directed against their brother, Muslim ibn Aqil, had now gathered manifolds against the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

The betrayal burned within their hearts, and their determination to stand beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had taken firm root within their souls.

The first among them to step forward was Abdullah al Akbar ibn Aqil. Though Abdullah had been born to a bondwoman, he had been raised within the house of nobility and honour, and the dignity of Abi Talib was evident in his bearing.

On the day of Ashura, Abdullah was thirty-three years of age. It is recorded in al Majdi fi ansab al talibiyyin that Abdullah al Akbar ibn Aqil was married to Lady Maymunah bint Ali ibn Abi Talib, and that his mother was Lady Ulayya.

At his side stood his younger brothers, Jafar ibn Aqil and Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil. Together they approached the tent of the Imam ^{a.s}, knowing that the request they were about to make would weigh heavily upon the heart of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

It was Abdullah al Akbar who stepped forward first.

With humility, Abdullah al Akbar gently called for permission to enter. From within, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} returned his greeting and granted them leave to come inside.

When Abdullah al Akbar ibn Aqil entered, his brothers followed behind him.

They found Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} gazing out upon the burning sands of Karbala, solemn and deep in thought. When Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lifted his blessed eyes, the Imam ^{a.s} saw before him the radiant faces of the three sons of Aqil, clothed for battle and standing in silent expectation. The Imam ^{a.s} understood at once why they had come.

Each of them stood with a sword at his waist and determination in his gaze, yet none spoke immediately. Their hearts trembled with the weight of what they wished to ask.

Abdullah al Akbar stepped forward again, lowered his head in humility, and took the blessed hands of his cousin.

Abdullah al Akbar kissed the hands of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} reverently before making his request, asking permission to ride out and join the ranks of those who had already given their lives for the cause of truth.

His brothers remained beside him, their eyes fixed upon the blessed and luminous face of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, as if they were sons awaiting their father's answer.

The sacrifice of their brother Muslim ibn Aqil had not quenched their devotion, and they too longed to offer their blood in loyalty to their master.

In their faces, the Imam ^{a.s} saw the likeness of Muslim ibn Aqil. Within them, the memory of his uncle, Aqil ibn Abi Talib, seemed to live once more.

The sight of these young men stirred both pride and sorrow within his heart. Tears gathered in his blessed eyes as Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} gazed upon these Hashemite warriors who stood before him with such eagerness to sacrifice their lives for his cause.

At length, the Imam ^{a.s} lowered his head, overcome with sorrow.

Then, with a heavy heart and a gentle nod, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} granted them permission.

The brothers bent once more to kiss the blessed hands of the Imam ^{a.s}.

One after the other, they offered their final salutations to him, and the Imam ^{a.s} replied to each of them with tenderness.

When they left the tent, their faces bore the faint glow of a smile, for they had been granted the greatest honour that could be bestowed upon any servant of Allah ^{AZJ}.

They hastened from the tent to carry the news to their families, informing them that the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had permitted them to join the martyrs of Karbala.

After bidding farewell to their loved ones, the three brothers gathered together once more. They embraced one another in a final parting before the battlefield could come to claim them.

Abdullah al Akbar was the first among the three to mount his horse. His brothers assisted him as Abdullah prepared himself for battle, tightening the straps of his armour and steadying the reins. For a moment, Abdullah paused and surveyed the horizon before him.

His gaze was calm and fearless, filled with the quiet contentment of one who had already surrendered his life to the cause of Allah ^{AZJ}.

Then Abdullah al Akbar ibn Aqil spurred his horse forward.

Like a lion emerging into the wilderness, Abdullah al Akbar charged toward the enemy ranks. The desert sun flashed upon his sword as Abdullah rode, a living embodiment of the courage and nobility that flowed through the lineage of Abi Talib.

When Abdullah al Akbar entered the battlefield, his blows fell with power and precision.

Each strike was swift and resolute, carried by the strength of a man who fought for the eternal triumph of truth. Yet the enemy that surrounded Abdullah al Akbar was vast in number, and Abdullah stood alone among them.

Still, Abdullah fought with unyielding determination, pressing forward through the ranks of those who had gathered to extinguish the light of the household of the Prophet ^{saws}.

Eventually, his body was overwhelmed by wounds. From every direction, blades descended upon Abdullah al Akbar like a swarm of locusts.

Nafasul Mahmoom records that among those who closed in upon Abdullah al Akbar were Abu Marham al Azdi and Laqit ibn Yasir al Jahni.

Together, they struck Abdullah al Akbar with merciless cruelty until he fell upon the burning sands of Karbala. Thus, the pure soul of Abdullah departed from his wounded body and ascended toward the mercy of his Lord ^{AZJ}.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah al Akbar ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib.



THE MARTYRDOM OF JAFAR IBN AQIL IBN ABI TALIB

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Hamzah narrates that Jafar ibn Aqil watched as the lifeless body of his brother, Abdullah ibn Aqil, was abandoned upon the burning earth of Karbala, left to the mercy of wind and drifting dust. Al Futuh states that another figure stepped forward from the ranks of the family of Aqil. It was his brother of Abdullah, Jafar ibn Aqil.

Tears still clung to his lashes, yet grief did not weaken Jafar ibn Aqil. Rather, the sorrow that weighed upon his soul only hastened his determination to proceed to the battlefield.

Jafar ibn Aqil entered the battlefield shortly after the martyrdom of Abdullah.

His mother was Lady Umm al Thaghr bint Amir of the tribe of Banu Kilab, a lineage well known among the Arabs for its courage, its proud warriors, and its steadfastness in battle.

Through both lineage and marriage, Jafar ibn Aqil was deeply connected to the noble household of the Prophet ^[saws], for Jafar was married to Lady Umm al Hasan, a daughter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^[a.s.].

Thus, Jafar ibn Aqil stood not only as a son of Aqil ibn Abi Talib, but also as a son-in-law of the Commander of the Faithful ^[a.s.]. According to Lubab al Ansab, Jafar ibn Aqil was twenty-three years old on the day of Ashura.

As he approached the battlefield, Jafar ibn Aqil lifted his voice and recited verses of defiance:

“I am a Makki youth, and a descendant of Abi Talib.

I am from the descendants of Hashim and Ghalib.

Without doubt, we are the masters of nobility,

And this is al Hussein, the most sanctified among all sacred.”

With these words still echoing through the air, Jafar ibn Aqil loosened the reins of his steed and surged forward into the ranks of the enemy.

Jafar ibn Aqil fought with immense courage, seeking martyrdom and advancing fearlessly into the storm of blades and arrows.

According to Nafasul Mahmoom, each swing of his sword split the ranks of the enemy with precision and force. Some narrations state that Jafar ibn Aqil slew two warriors, while others relate that fifteen horsemen fell before his blade.

The battlefield had already become a storm of dust and steel, and none among the soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd dared to confront Jafar ibn Aqil directly in single combat.

Unable to face Jafar openly, they once again resorted to arrows.

Al Futuh records that Abdullah ibn Urwah al Khathami drew his bow and waited for the moment when Jafar ibn Aqil was engaged among the fighters.

When the moment came, Abdullah ibn Urwah released the arrow.

It cut through the air and struck deep into the body of Jafar ibn Aqil.

The wound was grievous. Blood poured from his chest as the young warrior swayed upon his saddle. Strength began to leave his limbs, and, overcome by the severity of the blow, Jafar ibn Aqil fell from his horse, collapsing upon the scorching sands.

The enemy converged upon Jafar ibn Aqil as he lay upon the ground.

Al Manaqib reports that after Jafar ibn Aqil had fallen, it was Bishr ibn Khawt al Hamdani who approached and delivered the final blows that ended his life.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Jafar ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

Thus, Jafar ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib joined the ranks of the martyrs. Though young in years, his courage, loyalty, and devotion were forever inscribed in the sacred memory of Karbala.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDUL RAHMAN IBN AQIL

Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil had watched both Abdullah al Akbar ibn Aqil and Jafar ibn Aqil being martyred. Only moments earlier, Abdul Rahman had assisted his brothers as they saddled their horses and secured their armour before riding out to meet their fate.

Now, Abdul Rahman remained the last of those brothers who had earlier so eagerly approached Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], seeking permission to enter the battlefield.

Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil, like his brother Abdullah, was born to Lady Ulayya. Abdul Rahman was also married to Lady Khadija bint Ali ibn Abi Talib, a union that further bound him to the blessed household of the Prophet ^[saws].

Abdul Rahman was a man of striking presence and formidable stature.

According to Lubab al Ansab, his great height and commanding bearing earned him the title ‘the lance of the household of Aqil.’

On the day of Ashura, Abdul Rahman was thirty-five years old.

Now Abdul Rahman fastened his sword belt and drew the straps of his saddle tight upon the back of his horse. Before mounting, his gaze wandered across the battlefield once more. It fell upon the mutilated bodies of his brothers lying upon the burning sand.

The desert wind stirred the dust around Abdul Rahman, and the cries of battle drifted across the plain, yet he remained silent. His hand tightened slowly around the hilt of his sword. Then, with composed grief, Abdul Rahman took hold of the reins of his steed and walked toward Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

Abdul Rahman approached the Imam ^[a.s.] and bid him farewell. No lengthy words passed between them. Abdul Rahman mounted his horse, turned his face toward the immense ranks of the enemy, and rode forward without hesitation.

Al Manaqib records that as Abdul Rahman advanced across the plain of Karbala, his voice rose above the tumult of the battlefield, and he proclaimed:

“My father was Aqil, so know my standing among the Bani Hashim.

The Bani Hashim are brothers to one another,

And we are people of truth and masters of the Qur'an.

This is al Hussein, whose lineage is exalted above all,

And he is the Master of the elders and the youth.”

With the legacy of Abi Talib burning within his heart, Abdul Rahman plunged into the ranks of Umar ibn Sa'd's army. His sword flashed among the enemy, each strike swift and fierce, a testament to the courage of the house of Hashim.

Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub records that Abdul Rahman slew seventeen men before the overwhelming numbers of the opposing army began to close in around him.

Al Madaini narrates that amidst the chaos of the battle, two men conspired together against him: Uthman ibn Khalid ibn Asad al Juhani and Bashr ibn Sawt al Hamdani al Qanasi.

They attacked Abdul Rahman from both sides, seeking to overpower him through treachery rather than courage. Al Manaqib relates that they descended upon him relentlessly, striking blow after blow until the valiant warrior was brought low.

According to another report, as Abdul Rahman struggled in his wounded state, a man from Hamadan seized the moment and rushed toward him, delivering a fatal strike.

Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil collapsed from his horse and fell upon the sands.

Thus, Abdul Rahman was struck down upon the battlefield, falling upon the same earth that had already been soaked with the blood of his brothers.

No sooner had Abdul Rahman fallen than the enemy gathered around his body. Tarikh al Tabari narrates that once they were certain Abdul Rahman had died, the very men who had attacked him turned immediately to plundering his armour and belongings.

Uthman ibn Khalid and Bishr ibn Hawt pulled at his garments in haste, even as the body of the Hashemite warrior lay upon the battlefield. They stripped Abdul Rahman of what he wore and divided the spoils of his body between themselves.¹⁹⁹

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

According to al Maarif of Ibn Qutaybah, nine sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib rode alongside Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] to Karbala. Among them, Muslim ibn Aqil was the most renowned for his courage, and thus Muslim was whom the Imam ^[a.s.] had chosen as his emissary to Kufa.

One after another, the sons of Aqil had fallen. Yet among them, there still remained one more son of Aqil ibn Abi Talib: Muhammad ibn Abi Said ibn Aqil.



¹⁹⁹ Al Mukhtar al Thaqafi later seized two of the men who had killed Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil and stripped his body: Umar ibn Khalid ibn Asad al Juhani and Bishr ibn Hawt al Hamdani. They had attempted to flee toward al Jazirah, but Mukhtar sent Abdullah ibn Kamil in pursuit of them. Maqatil al Talibiyyin states they were captured in the cemetery of Kufa and brought back to the well of al Jad, where Mukhtar ordered their execution and their bodies burned in retribution. Some reports state that only Umar ibn Khalid participated directly in the killing, while others include both men.

THE MARTYRDOM OF MUHAMMAD IBN ABI SA'ID IBN AQIL

As the sun climbed higher over the barren plain of Karbala, the fury of battle deepened. The cries of war and the thunder of hooves rose and fell across the horizon.

One by one, the noble members of Bani Hashim had stepped forward into the field, and one by one they had fallen.

Among those who remained was Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id, known in some reports as Muhammad ibn Sa'id ibn Aqil. Though Muhammad was only twenty-five years of age, the devotion that filled his heart carried the weight of a man far older.

Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id stood near the entrance of the tents, his gaze fixed upon the battlefield, where clouds of dust swirled above the fallen martyrs.

Every passing moment seemed heavier than the one before it.

The air itself carried the scent of blood and sand, and the wind bore the distant echoes of grief that moved through the camp.

Behind Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id, the tents trembled with quiet sorrow. The women wept softly, and the frightened whispers of the children drifted through the canvas walls. The names of the martyrs were spoken through tears as prayers rose gently toward the heavens.

Before Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id stretched the vast field of Karbala, where the bodies of the loyal companions and the noble sons of Hashim lay scattered.

Within the heart of Muhammad ibn Sa'id, a solemn yearning grew. It was the yearning to stand where the others had stood, to offer the life entrusted to him in defence of the Imam ^{a.s} of his time. Many of his kin from the household of Aqil had already gone forward.

Each had sought permission, each had entered the field, and each had sealed his loyalty with martyrdom. Now that same call stirred within his own soul.

With composed calm, Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id approached Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. His steps were measured, his voice lowered with reverence.

The Imam ^{a.s} looked upon the young man who now stood before him, a descendant of Aqil ibn Abi Talib, ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of truth.

Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id requested permission to go forth and expressed that he could no longer remain among the tents while the companions of his family were falling upon the field. Eventually, permission was granted.

Having received permission, Muhammad ibn Sa'id mounted his steed and rode toward the battlefield. The heat and haze of Ashura striking him as he stood mounted.

Before Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id stretched a bloodthirsty army that seemed without end, ranks upon ranks of soldiers who had gathered to extinguish the light of the household of the Prophet ^{saws}. Yet the young Hashemite advanced without fear.

The clash of steel soon surrounded him. Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id fought with the fervour of youth and the courage that flowed through the blood of Bani Hashim.

The movements of Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id were swift and resolute, each strike driven by unwavering loyalty. For a brief moment, Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id pushed back those who attempted to surround him, his determination blazing through the dust that filled the air.

But the enemy were many. The attacks were too relentless. The hatred too venomous.

From among their ranks emerged Laqit ibn Nashir al Juhani. Laqit ibn Nashir raised his bow, fixed his aim, and released an arrow toward the young warrior.

According to the report preserved in al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub, the arrow cut through the air with a sharp hiss before striking its mark. It buried itself deep into the side of Muhammad ibn Sa'id.

The young man staggered. The force of the wound drove the breath from his chest, and the world around Muhammad ibn Sa'id began to sway and blur. The battlefield trembled before his fading sight. The tents of the camp, the enemy ranks, and the lonely horizon of Karbala seemed to spin together in one final whirl of dust and pain.

The camp of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was still at a distance, and the soldiers of the opposing army quickly closed in around Muhammad ibn Sa'id.

Moments later, Muhammad ibn Sa'id collapsed upon the burning earth, his blood mingling with that of the martyrs who had fallen before him.

Thus, another radiant soul from the household of Aqil ibn Abi Talib departed from this world. The plains of Karbala bore silent witness as his life reached its noble end, joining the ranks of those who had given everything for the sake of truth.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Muhammad ibn Abi Sa'id ibn Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

The offspring of Aqil ibn Abi Talib now stood amongst the most devoted defenders of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Their sacrifices were extraordinary, foremost amongst them in sacrifice was the valorous and estranged Muslim ibn Aqil.

After Muslim ibn Aqil came his son Abdullah ibn Muslim, and his brothers Jafar ibn Aqil, Abdullah ibn Aqil, Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil, and then Muhammad ibn Sa'id ibn Aqil.

One after another, these valiant sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib stepped forward into the furnace of battle and surrendered their lives in defence of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}.

The sacrifice of the family of Aqil left an enduring mark upon the memory of Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s}. It is reported that after Karbala, the Imam ^{a.s} showed a particular affection and tenderness toward the descendants of Aqil ibn Abi Talib.

Their devotion had been written in the most painful chapter of his life. Whenever Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} was asked, "Why do you display greater affection for the sons of your uncle Aqil than for the sons of Jafar?"

Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} would reply,

"Verily, I recall the day when they stood in support of my father, al Hussein ibn Ali, and I feel great affection for them."

THE VALIANT SONS OF IMAM AL HASAN {a.s}

THE MARTYRDOM OF AL QASIM IBN AL HASAN

The valiant warriors of the house of the Hashemites who had once surrounded Imam al Hussein {a.s} had now been reduced to only a few.

The sons of Aqil ibn Abi Talib had already been martyred, along with many of the young men of the house of Hashim earlier in the day.

The sun burned without mercy. Its fierce glare fell upon the open plain, where the sand shifted beneath the pounding hooves of horses and the relentless movement of armed men.

Dust hung heavily in the air, stirred into thick clouds of dust as ranks of soldiers manoeuvred across the field. Their numbers were vast and numbered in the thousands, as they moved like a tightening ring, circling once more toward the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, seeking to close the distance and extinguish the final resistance that stood before them.

Within the encampment of the Imam {a.s}, grief had already carved deep wounds into the hearts of those who remained. The companions had fallen one after another, and with each martyrdom the number of defenders within the camp diminished.

The silence between the tents carried the weight of loss, broken only by the distant clash of steel and the cries that rose from the battlefield.

It was then that a young figure emerged from among the tents of the family of the Imam {a.s}.

The youth had been seen moving frequently between the tents. Time after time, he approached the tent of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, entering briefly before withdrawing again. This happened repeatedly, as though the youth carried a request.

At last, he stepped out once more from the tent of the Imam {a.s} and hurried toward another tent nearby, where the women of the family were gathered.

Humayd ibn Muslim later recalled the sight with painful clarity. The young man wore a simple cloak and shirt, and a waistcloth tied around his trousers. Upon his feet were sandals, though the strap of the left sandal had broken.

The image fixed itself deeply within the memory of Humayd ibn Muslim: a small and seemingly ordinary detail, yet one that carried within it an unbearable weight of tragedy.

A short while later, Humayd ibn Muslim states, the youth emerged once again from the tent of the women.

The worn sandals remained upon his feet, but now he had also put on armour. In his hand, he carried a sword whose blade caught the harsh sunlight and gleamed as he walked.

The youth moved slowly at first toward the tent of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. After a short time, he emerged once more, now accompanied by the Imam {a.s} himself.

With gentle care, Imam al Hussein {a.s} assisted this youth onto a steed.

The horse was then guided forward at a measured pace as the young rider left the shelter of the encampment and stepped into the vast arena of hostility that surrounded the Imam {a.s}.

Abul Faraj, Shaykh Mufid, and Tarikh al Tabari relate from Abu Mikhnaf, who reports from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that the face of this youth shone as though it were a fragment of the radiant moon.

Amid the swirling dust and the blinding sunlight, his countenance appeared soft and luminous, a calm serenity resting upon his young features.

This youth was al Qasim ibn al Hasan, the beloved son of Imam al Hasan {a.s} and the nephew of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

According to al Khawarizmi, al Qasim had not yet reached the age of adulthood. Lubab al Ansab reports that al Qasim was around sixteen years old at the time of Karbala.

Tasliyat al Majalis recounts that it was al Qasim who had relentlessly frequented the tent of Imam al Hussein {a.s} seeking permission to go to the battlefield.

His persistence in seeking permission demonstrated the depth of his awareness, the clarity of his understanding, and the courage that resided within his young heart.

When Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw his nephew so determined to proceed to battle, the sight stirred powerful emotions within him. The Imam {a.s} drew al Qasim into his arms, embracing him tightly. The memories of his brother, Imam al Hasan {a.s}, flooded back into his heart, for the features of al Qasim closely resembled his father.

Tasliyat al Majalis narrates that both uncle and nephew wept together in that embrace. Their weeping was deep and soul-wrenching, pouring forth from the depths of their grief.

It is narrated that such was the intensity of their sorrow that both of them nearly lost consciousness. When they regained their composure, al Qasim ibn al Hasan once again pleaded for permission to enter the battlefield. Still, the Imam {a.s} hesitated.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} knew well what granting this request would mean. To permit the boy to depart was to send him toward certain death, and the Imam {a.s} could not bear the thought of losing another prince of the Hashemites, one so beloved as al Qasim.

Tasliyat al Majalis relates that al Qasim remained gentle in his insistence.

His fortitude never wavered. With tears flowing from his eyes, al Qasim continued to return to the tent of his uncle. Each time, al Qasim would greet Imam al Hussein {a.s} with reverence, then bend to kiss the blessed hands and feet of the Imam {a.s}. His tears fell upon them, dampening the dust that clung to them after hours upon the battlefield.

Then al Qasim would repeat his request, and repeatedly the Imam {a.s} would turn it down.

But the tears of al Qasim, his humility, and his unwavering determination gradually softened the hesitation of the Imam {a.s}. At last, moved by the insistence of his nephew, the noble Imam al Hussein {a.s} granted al Qasim consent to go forth.

With permission granted, al Qasim emerged from the tent of the Imam {a.s}. His heart was filled with joy, and upon his radiant face was a faint, eager smile.

The yearning to attain martyrdom in defence of his Imam {a.s} had overcome every other thought within him. To al Qasim, the path that lay ahead was indeed ‘sweeter than honey.’

Imam al Hussein {a.s} stood watching in silence as his nephew rode further away.

Sensing the gaze of his uncle behind him, al Qasim gently pulled upon the reins of his horse and brought it to a halt.

Slowly, al Qasim turned his head and looked back one final time toward the camp.

There stood Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The Imam {a.s} was now a solitary figure upon the edge of the encampment. The winds of Karbala lifted dust across his cloak as it fluttered around him.

Raising his hand to his brow, the Imam {a.s} shielded his eyes from the blazing sun while he watched his beloved nephew ride toward the field of death.

Al Qasim cast one final look toward his uncle, standing almost alone amid the swirling dust. Tears filled his eyes, for the loneliness of Imam al Hussein {a.s} pierced his heart.

Among the soldiers of the opposing army, Humayd ibn Muslim watched the youth with astonishment. The bearing of the young Hashemite was marked by a dignity that seemed far beyond his years. His composure, even in the midst of the storm of war, left the seasoned observer deeply impressed. Turning to those beside him, Humayd asked quietly, seeking to understand who this fearless boy could be.

Someone answered Humayd ibn Muslim, "He is al Qasim ibn al Hasan."

By that moment, al Qasim had already advanced before the opposing ranks. Tears still glistened in his eyes, traces of the farewell he had taken from his uncle and the family within the tents. Yet there was no hesitation in his stride.

The young Hashemite stood before the multitude of enemies and raised his voice.

The eloquence of his words was such that those who heard them felt as though the voice of Imam al Hasan {a.s} had returned once more to the earth. His voice echoed upon the plains:

"If you do not know me, I am the son of al Hasan,

The grandson of the Prophet, the chosen one, the confidant!

This is al Hussein, like one held captive by a mortgager,

In the midst of a people who have been deprived of rain."

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq relates that after declaring his lineage, al Qasim steadied himself upon his steed and then urged it forward into a canter.

As the horse began to move, the young warrior repeated:

"Do not be uneasy, O self, for everyone shall perish,

For today you shall meet the dwellers of Paradise."

With a swift pull upon the reins, the Hashemite prince urged his steed forward, and the horse surged beneath him toward the ranks of the enemy.

The distance between al Qasim and those who stood before him vanished in an instant. With the point of his sword directed toward them, al Qasim advanced with the courage of one far beyond his years, his youthful frame now carried into the heart of battle by faith, lineage, and devotion. In a moment, al Qasim was upon the enemy.

The young son of Imam al Hasan {a.s} had entered the battlefield.

What followed astonished even the hardened soldiers who stood against the Imam {a.s}. Al Qasim crashed through the midst of the enemy ranks with a courage that seemed to defy his youth. His sword flashed again and again, moving with astonishing speed and precision.

Those who confronted al Qasim fell one after another beneath the strikes of the young warrior. The son of Imam al Hasan {a.s} fought with a ferocity that scattered the men before him. In the midst of the chaos of the battlefield, al Qasim cut his way through the ranks, striking down thirty-five men, according to Tasliyat al Majalis.

Horses reared, shields splintered, and the cries of wounded men rose into the burning sky.

It is related in Medinatul Maajiz that after some time, al Qasim returned briefly toward the camp. The young warrior, now worn by wounds and thirst, approached his uncle.

"O dear uncle, thirst, quench my thirst with water."

Imam al Hussein {a.s} urged al Qasim to remain patient, for there was no water left to give. The Imam {a.s} then removed a ring from his finger and placed it into the hand of the boy.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} instructed al Qasim to place it in his mouth so that the moisture upon it might ease the dryness of his thirst. Strengthened by the encouragement of his uncle, al Qasim returned once more to the battlefield.

Al Manaqib records that as al Qasim rode forward again, the eloquence of the valourous Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s} seemed to thunder within his voice.

Amid the roar of battle, his declaration rang out once more:

"Verily I am Qasim, from the progeny of Ali!

By the Lord {AZJ} of the Kaaba!

We possess superiority through our relation to the Prophet, rather than Shimr ibn Ziljawshan, and the sons of the illegitimate!"

Imam al Hussein {a.s} now stood mounted upon his steed, his hand raised to shield his eyes from the glare of the blazing sun.

The gaze of the Imam {a.s} remained fixed upon the prince of the Hashemites. His heart overflowed with love for al Qasim, yet his hands tightened upon the reins as the Imam {a.s} watched the youthful boy ride deeper into the battle.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} watched al Qasim as a father watches his own child, his heart lurching with every flash of the boy's sword.

Dust billowed across the plain, stirred by the galloping of horses and the movement of battalions that shifted in panic before the assault of the young warrior. The air thickened with sand, obscuring the forms of men and mounts. It became difficult for the eye to follow what unfolded upon the field.

Yet even through the storm of dust, the Imam {a.s} did not lose sight of al Qasim.

Such was the radiant presence of al Qasim that the Imam {a.s} followed him like a moon moving through the clouds of the battlefield, its pale glow piercing the swirling veil of sand raised by the fleeing ranks of thousands of enemies in fear and dread.

The formation of the enemy had begun to fracture beneath the relentless courage of the youth. Their lines buckled and wavered.

Men recoiled before the astonishing bravery of this boy who pressed forward without fear.

But thirst and wounds soon began to weaken the attacks of al Qasim, and the opposing army recovered its composure.

The commanders shouted directives, and the soldiers tightened their formation once more. From every side, they surged toward al Qasim, their numbers closing inward like a tightening ring of iron. Swords were raised as riders pressed forward to surround al Qasim.

A bead of sweat appeared upon the brow of Imam al Hussein {a.s} as the Imam {a.s} watched the ring of enemies forming around his nephew. His eyes strained across the field as the noble Imam {a.s} saw the circle narrowing around his tender-aged nephew.

The heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s} now tightened within his chest.

Among the hostile ranks, Amr ibn Sa'd ibn Nufayl al Azdi shifted in his saddle. His envious and hate filled eyes burned with envy as they fixed upon the prince of the Hashemites, the moon of Imam al Hasan {a.s} whose courage had shaken the army.

Tarikh al Tabari records that Humayd ibn Muslim continued to watch in amazement as the youth fought with extraordinary skill. Amr ibn Sa'd turned toward Humayd and declared with bitter determination, "By Allah {AZJ}, I will attack him."

Humayd ibn Muslim, captivated by the swordsmanship of the boy, replied with disbelief,

"Glory be to Allah {AZJ}! What will you gain by that? By Allah {AZJ}, even if he attacked me, I would restrain my hand from him. Those whom you see surrounding him are sufficient." But Amr ibn Sa'd's expression hardened.

"No, by Allah {AZJ}," he said, "I will attack him."

Amr ibn Sa'd drove his heels into the flanks of his horse.

The animal surged forward as sand erupted beneath its hooves. Amr ibn Sa'd rode through the dust of the battlefield with his sword raised high, the blade angled toward al Qasim.

From across the battlefield, the gaze of Imam al Hussein {a.s} fell upon the rider racing toward his nephew. The heart of the Imam {a.s} skipped a beat.

The steed of the Imam {a.s} stepped forward instinctively, as though sensing the danger descending upon the young warrior.

The eyes of the Imam {a.s} moved again and again between the advancing sword of Amr ibn Sa'd and the boy who was now surrounded, fending off attacks from every side.

The distance between Amr ibn Sa'd and al Qasim shrank with terrifying speed.

The urge within the Imam {a.s} to rush forward and rescue his nephew grew almost unbearable. But al Qasim was locked in combat with those before him.

The dust of Karbala swirled violently around the young Hashemite as al Qasim struggled against the men pressing upon him from every side.

Before al Qasim could turn toward Amr ibn Sa'd advancing from behind, the blow had already descended.

The sword of Amr ibn Sa'd came crashing down with brutal force.

The blade struck the head of al Qasim with such violence that it split it open. Blood burst forth, and the radiant moon of Imam al Hasan {a.s} was now eclipsed in crimson. The force of the strike made the boy sway upon his steed for a brief moment, his small body struggling to remain upright. Then al Qasim collapsed from the saddle, falling upon the scorching sands.

From the ground, wounded and fading, his voice rose in a final cry that tore through the battlefield: "O dear uncle! Come to my aid!"

That call ignited a storm of fury within the heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Dust erupted as the steed of Imam al Hussein {a.s} as it surged forward with terrifying speed. Humayd ibn Muslim relates that the Imam {a.s} charged like a 'falcon plunging from the heavens', like a lion in uncontrollable fury. His advance was so swift and relentless that within moments, the Imam {a.s} had torn through the enemy ranks and reached Amr ibn Sa'd, who was now at a distance from the writhing body of al Qasim.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} was ablaze with wrath. His sword flashed as the Imam {a.s} struck at Amr ibn Sa'd. Only then did Amr realise that the Imam {a.s} had descended upon him with startling speed. In desperate panic, Amr raised his forearm to shield himself, but the blow fell with such force that it severed the arm at the elbow. The limb hung uselessly at his side.

Al Irshad relates that Amr ibn Sa'd let out a scream that echoed across the battlefield. The soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd, witnessing the fury of the Imam {a.s}, were seized by panic.

Fear rippled through their ranks as they saw the son of Sayyidah Fatimah {s.a} advancing upon them with immense rage. But the Imam {a.s} was not concerned with finishing Amr ibn Sa'd or engaging further in battle. He had already turned away and was rushing to his nephew.

Tasliyat al Majalis reports that the Kufan soldiers attempted to rescue Amr. Yet their horses, terrified by the chaos and violence before them, bolted wildly.

In their blind flight, they trampled over the fallen bodies scattered upon the field, crushing Amr ibn Sa'd beneath their hooves until Amr was killed.

Some maqtals mention that al Qasim himself may also have been struck by the hooves of the terrified horses during his final moments, and Allah {AZJ} knows best.²⁰⁰

When the dust began to settle, the prince of the Hashemites lay upon the earth.

Bihar al Anwar relates that al Qasim was still convulsing upon the sand, his legs moving faintly, his breaths shallow and strained. Imam al Hussein {a.s} collapsed beside al Qasim, his heart shattered and burning with grief.

²⁰⁰ The earliest maqatal sources consistently state that the man who struck al Qasim, Amr ibn Sa'd al Azdi, was himself trampled to death by the advancing cavalry of Umar ibn Sa'd as they attempted to rescue him. Some later devotional works reverse this detail and claim that al Qasim was crushed beneath the hooves of the horses. This version appears to originate from a textual reading in Bihar al Anwar, where the phrase 'until the youth was killed' is likely the result of a scribal or typographical alteration. Earlier authorities such as Muqatil al Talibiyyin, al Irshad, and al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub clearly indicate that the one trampled was Amr, not al Qasim, and that al Qasim was still alive when Imam al Hussein {a.s} reached him. And Allah {AZJ} knows best.

Tasliyat al Majalis relates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} knelt beside the boy and gathered al Qasim close. Tears fell upon the blood-stained face of his nephew.

Sand, blood, and tears mingled together as the Imam {a.s} lamented:

“Away with the people who killed you! They will stand accused by your grandfather and your father on the Day of Judgement!”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} sobbed and lamented loudly,

“By Allah {AZJ}! It is grievous for your uncle that you called him, but he was unable to respond, or that he responded to you but was unable to help you!”

Al Malhuf also preserves the lament as Imam al Hussein {a.s} looked upon the dying boy:

“By Allah {AZJ}! This is a day in which those who have gathered to kill him are many, and those who would aid him are few! Woe be unto your killer!”

These laments begin to convey the immeasurable grief that filled the heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s} as he looked upon the injured and mutilated state of al Qasim.

The heart of the Imam {a.s} was torn apart, just as the body of al Qasim upon the battlefield. The radiance of al Qasim was no more.

May Allah’s {AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon al Qasim ibn al Hasan ibn Ali.

Then, with a tenderness that pierced through the savagery of the battlefield, the Imam {a.s} lifted the frail body of his nephew.

Humayd ibn Muslim witnessed the moment and later recalled the haunting image. The boy’s chest rested against the chest of his uncle, while his feet trailed upon the ground, drawing two faint lines in the dust of Karbala as Imam al Hussein {a.s} carried al Qasim back toward the camp. Humayd ibn Muslim wondered to himself,

“What does al Hussein intend to do with him?”

Humayd observed as Imam al Hussein {a.s} walked back with great difficulty through the field of carnage, step by step. When the Imam {a.s} reached the place where the bodies of his family lay, the Imam {a.s} gently placed al Qasim beside his son Ali al Akbar and the other martyrs of his household.

Al Khawarizmi and Bihar al Anwar relate that Imam al Hussein {a.s} then raised his gaze toward the heavens. Tears flowed down his face and beard as he spoke with immense grief:

“O Lord {AZJ}! Include them all in Your reckoning!

Do not spare any one of them, and do not ever forgive them!”

Through tear-filled eyes, Imam al Hussein {a.s} scanned the horizon. His blurred vision moved across the army that stood before him, and the Imam {a.s} extended his blessed hand toward them as if addressing his fallen martyrs:

“Patience, O sons of my uncles! Patience, O members of my household!

You will never experience any distress after today!”

Thus fell al Qasim ibn al Hasan, the prince of the Hashemites and the valorous lion of Imam al Hasan {a.s}. His story remains forever etched on Ashura, a testament to the courage and sacrifice of a young warrior who gave his life for Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN AL HASAN IBN ALI

After witnessing the martyrdom of his noble brother al Qasim, the tide of treachery now swept toward another son of Imam al Hasan ibn Ali {a.s}. This was Abdullah ibn al Hasan, whose kunya was Abu Bakr. ²⁰¹ Abdullah was the elder brother of al Qasim, both born of the same mother, and within the hearts of the two brothers, the longing for martyrdom burned with equal intensity. Abdullah ibn al Hasan is reported to have been thirty-five years old.

The loss of al Qasim had not doused the courage of the others; rather, it seemed only to deepen the determination that stirred within the sons of Imam al Hasan {a.s}, who stood upon the battlefield with the legacy of their father and grandfather upon their shoulders.

Like al Qasim brother before him, Abdullah ibn al Hasan took a sword firmly into his hands and advanced toward the ranks of the enemy. Abdullah stood before them unflinching, a warrior descendant of the Household of the Prophet {saws} facing an army.

Nafasul Mahmoom attributes the following prosody to the sons of Imam al Hasan {a.s}, words that echoed the courage inherited from the Commander of the Faithful:

“If you do not know me, I am the son of Haydar!

I am a lion of the thicket, and a raging wind against the enemies!”

With this, Abdullah ibn al Hasan plunged into the heart of the battle.

The clash of steel rang across the field as he fought among the enemy ranks with bravery, and by then Abdullah ibn al Hasan had killed fourteen men.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates that Abdullah ibn al Hasan continued to fight valiantly for some time, striking and resisting amidst the chaos of the struggle, until fate overtook Abdullah in the midst of combat. Likewise to his younger brother al Qasim, he was also fearless in battle.

From among the enemy ranks, a man named Abdullah ibn Uqbah al Ghanawi ²⁰² raised his bow and loosed an arrow toward the valiant warrior.

The shaft flew with fatal precision and struck its mark, embedding deep within the body of Abdullah ibn al Hasan.

The wound was grievous. Already weakened by the blows of battle and the wounds he had sustained, his strength began to fade. For a moment, Abdullah ibn al Hasan struggled against the force pulling him toward the earth. Then Abdullah fell from his mount onto the sands, where this noble son of Imam al Hasan ibn Ali {a.s} was martyred.

May Allah’s {AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah ibn al Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

²⁰¹ In al Irshad, Shaykh al Mufid occasionally refers to him as Amr. It is therefore possible that his name was Amr and his kunyah was Abu Bakr. However, Abu Mikhnaf also narrates that Amr ibn al Hasan was another son of Imam al Hasan {a.s} who was deemed too young to fight and was taken captive on Ashura.

²⁰² Abu Mikhnaf reports that Abdullah ibn Uqbah al Ghanawi had previously been among those who joined the revolt of al Mustawrad ibn Ulfah in 43 AH during the governorship of al Mughirah ibn Shubah over Kufa, where Abdullah ibn Uqbah served as a scribe. After the failure of that uprising, Abdullah ibn Uqbah sought and received amnesty through al Mughirah. Al Tabari also transmits from Abu Mikhnaf that after Karbala, Abdullah ibn Uqbah fled from al Mukhtar and aligned himself with Musab ibn al Zubayr, later escaping to al Jazirah. Thus, Al Mukhtar instead demolished his house.

Uqbah ibn Bashir al Asadi also narrates from Imam al Baqir {a.s} that the accursed Abdullah ibn Uqbah al Ghanawi was the one who shot Abu Bakr ibn al Hasan ibn Ali with an arrow, thus killing him. This report is also transmitted by Abu al Faraj from al Mada'ini, from Abu Mikhnaf, from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, and from Umayr and Ibn Shimr, from Jabir, from Imam al Baqir {a.s} in Muqatil al Talibiyyin, all affirming that the fatal arrow was loosed by Abdullah ibn Uqbah al Ghanawi.

Abu al Faraj also narrates the account of the martyrdom of Abu Bakr ibn al Hasan, though he places it before that of al Qasim.

However, Tarikh al Tabari, Ibn al Athir, Shaykh al Mufid, and others relate that his martyrdom occurred after the martyrdom of al Qasim. And Allah {AZJ} is the Best Knower.

Abu Mikhnaf further narrates that, as for the other sons of Imam al Hasan {a.s}, Amr ibn al Hasan was deemed too young and was therefore not killed, but taken captive.

Al Hasan ibn al Hasan was wounded on the day of Ashura, yet his life was spared through the intercession of one of his maternal relatives. After recovering from his injuries, Al Hasan ibn al Hasan eventually returned from Kufa to Medinah.



THE TWO MUHAMMADS, THE SONS OF IMAM ALI {a.s}

THE MARTYRDOM OF MUHAMMAD AL ASGHAR IBN ALI

The camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had grown silent and desolate. One by one, now the Hashemites had fallen upon the plain of Karbala, and the circle of devotion that had once surrounded the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} had gradually narrowed.

Where once stood loyal companions, there now remained only the sons of Ali ibn Abi Talib, standing as the final shield between the enemy and their Imam {a.s}.

The shadow of death that had long hovered over Karbala now drew ever nearer to Imam al Hussein {a.s}, yet the sons of Imam Ali {a.s} remained steadfast before him, resolved that no harm should reach their Imam {a.s} while strength still remained in their bodies.

Al Khawarizmi states that among the first of them to step forward toward the embrace of battle was Muhammad al Asghar ibn Ali, who was also known by the names Abu Bakr and Abdullah. The historians and genealogists have preserved brief notices concerning his lineage.

According to the majority of biographers, including Shaykh al Tusi and Ibn al Jawzi, the mother of Muhammad al Asghar was Layla bint Masud al Darimi.

Ibn Sa'd records in al Tabaqat al Kubra that Abu Bakr ibn Ali left behind no children, and thus his noble line would end with him on that day.

The Day of Ashura had now advanced beneath a sun that scorched the earth and a heat that seemed to press down upon every living thing.

The winds carried the dust of the battlefield through the camp, and the cries of thirst from the tents drifted faintly across the plain. Around Abu Bakr ibn Ali lay the bodies of Hashemite warriors who had already fulfilled their covenant with Allah {AZJ}.

Some reports relate that Abu Bakr ibn Ali was the first of the sons of Imam Ali {a.s} to receive permission from Imam al Hussein {a.s} to advance into the battlefield.

When permission was granted, Abu Bakr ibn Ali prepared his steed and armour and bid farewell to his brothers who remained behind him.

The day had already taken its toll upon the surviving members of the household of the Imam {a.s}, for they had spent the hours of Ashura defending the camp, resisting the repeated assaults of an army that vastly outnumbered them.

It is related in al Manaqib that when Abu Bakr ibn Ali rode forth, he raised his voice and recited words of proud declaration upon the battlefield:

“My master, Ali, is the possessor of numerous excellences!

He was from the progeny of Hashim, the gracious, the beneficent, the pre-eminent!

And now, this is al Hussein, the son of the Messenger of Allah {saws}!

We defend al Hussein with our sharpened swords,

May my life be your ransom, O honourable brother!”

The enemy ranks stirred as Abu Bakr ibn Ali approached. Their battalions moved to tighten the circle around Imam al Hussein {a.s}, seeking to close the distance and overwhelm the small remnant that remained. Dust rose in heavy clouds as Abu Bakr ibn Ali urged his mount forward and plunged into the ranks of the opposing army.

Surrounded on all sides by soldiers who outnumbered him many times over, Abu Bakr ibn Ali fought with the courage that had long marked the sons of Imam Ali {a.s}.

Each stroke of his sword reflected the legacy of his father, whose strength and mastery in battle had become legendary among the Arabs.

Though pressed from every side, Abu Bakr ibn Ali refused to yield. He struck with determination, holding the enemy at bay for as long as the strength of his body allowed.

Al Khawarizmi relates that Abu Bakr ibn Ali fought valiantly until he was finally overcome and martyred by Zahr ibn Qays al Nakhai. Another report, attributed to Imam al Baqir {a.s} and also transmitted in Tarikh al Tabari, states that a man from the tribe of Hamadan was responsible for his martyrdom. Other traditions report that it was Abdullah ibn Uqbah al Ghanawi who struck Abu Bakr ibn Ali with an arrow that caused his death.

May Allah's {AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abu Bakr ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

According to al Mada'ini, the body of Abu Bakr ibn Ali was later discovered in a creek upon the battlefield, leaving uncertainty regarding the identity of the one who delivered the final blow. The precise hand that ended his life may have remained disputed among the historians, yet the essence of his sacrifice is beyond dispute.

Abu Bakr ibn Ali fought until the strength of his body could no longer sustain the struggle. At last, Abu Bakr ibn Ali fell upon the burning sands of Karbala, his blood joining that of his brothers and kinsmen who had preceded him in martyrdom.



THE MARTYRDOM OF MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB

After the killing of Muhammad al Asghar, Abu Bakr ibn Ali, the battlefield seemed to fall into a momentary stillness. The first of the sons of Imam Ali {a.s} had now been slain upon the scorched plains, and the sorrow of that loss spread like a shadow across the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Around them, the forces of the enemy tightened their encirclement, their hostility unrelenting, their numbers pressing ever closer to the tents.

The support of the Imam {a.s} had been routed, and the ranks that had once stood with the Imam {a.s} had thinned until only a handful of riders remained beside him.

From within the camp, another figure now emerged, a warrior whose heart had been seared by the tragedies unfolding throughout the day.

It was Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. The deaths of his brothers and kinsmen had carved deep wounds within his soul, and the grief that filled his chest now burned like a fire that compelled him toward the battlefield.

According to some reports, his mother was Lady Asma bint Umays al Khathami, whilst others state it was Layla bint Masud ibn Khalid. On the day of Karbala, Muhammad ibn Ali was twenty-two years of age, a young man who carried within him the courage of his father, Imam Ali {a.s}, and the steadfast loyalty that defined the household of Banu Hashim.

Ibn Atham in his al Futuh and some other sources refer to him as Amr ibn Ali.

Within the tents, the sorrow of the household broke forth anew. As Muhammad ibn Ali entered to bid farewell, the voices of the women rose in anguished lament.

Their cries pierced the heavy air of the camp, calling out with grief and longing,
"Wa Aliya!" - O Ali!

It was a cry laden with memory and loss, echoing the name of the Commander of the Faithful, whose sons now stood upon the brink of annihilation. Muhammad ibn Ali emerged from the tents clad in armour, the reins of his steed grasped firmly in his hands. Muhammad ibn Ali approached the edge of the camp and mounted.

The image of his fallen brother weighed heavily upon his heart. The sight of Abu Bakr ibn Ali lying lifeless upon the sand remained fixed within his memory.

Tightening his grip upon his sword, Muhammad ibn Ali urged his steed forward and rode out into the open field, advancing toward the ranks of the enemy. Bihar al Anwar relates that his voice rose in defiance, directing his challenge toward those who had shed the blood of his brother, and in particular toward Zahr:

"I strike you, yet I do not see Zahr among you,
That wretched one who has disbelieved in the Prophet {saws}!
O Zahr! You are condemned before me!"

The cowards who had just moments ago brutally murdered his brother, refused to come forth or reveal those guilty of killing Abu Bakr ibn Ali, scared that they be cut down by the rage of the son of Imam Ali {a.s}. The steed of Muhammad ibn Ali veered beneath him in anticipation.

Again, Muhammad ibn Ali shouted loudly towards the enemy, the sound of his verses rolled across the plain, carrying with it the defiance of a Hashemite. His gaze fixed upon Zahr, the man responsible for the killing of his brother.

“O Zahr! Perhaps today you will dwell in Saqr of Hell, an evil abode of blazing fire and fury! For you are a rejecter, O vile one!”²⁰³

With a sudden surge, Muhammad ibn Ali spurred his horse forward and charged.

Their swords rang out against one another in a brief and violent contest. Yet the encounter was short-lived. With a decisive stroke, Muhammad ibn Ali struck down his opponent, and Zahr fell dead beneath the blow.

But the vengeance of Muhammad ibn Ali did not end with the death of his brother’s killer. Bihar al Anwar narrates that Muhammad ibn Ali raised his voice once more, calling out with renewed ferocity:

“Keep away, O enemies of Allah {AZJ}! Keep away from me!

Keep away from the stern and fearsome lion!

He will strike you with his sword and never turn in flight,

Nor is he like the coward who seeks refuge!”

Turning again toward the surrounding ranks, Muhammad ibn Ali drove himself deeper into the enemy lines, striking down those who dared to confront him.

Dust rose around Muhammad ibn Ali as the clash of weapons and the thunder of hooves shook the ground. Yet the tide of battle was merciless.

In the midst of the struggle, his horse faltered, weakened either by wounds it had sustained or by a sudden stumble upon the uneven ground of the battlefield. The steed collapsed beneath him, casting Muhammad ibn Ali from the saddle onto the sand.

In that moment, the enemy seized their opportunity.

They rushed upon Muhammad ibn Ali from every side, surrounding him as he rose to continue the fight on foot. Alone amid the encroaching ranks, Muhammad ibn Ali continued to strike, his sword rising and falling with the same courage that had carried him into the field. Yet the circle of enemies tightened around Muhammad ibn Ali.

Blades pressed in from every direction, and the weight of their numbers began to overwhelm Muhammad ibn Ali.

Among those who advanced against him was al Iyadi al Darimi. In the chaos of the assault, al Iyadi delivered the fatal blow, and Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib fell upon the battlefield of Karbala, joining the martyrs who had preceded him that day.

May Allah’s {AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

²⁰³ Al Manaqib relates that Umar ibn Ali entered the battlefield reciting these verses and killed Zahr, the murderer of his brother. However, historians and biographers generally agree that Umar ibn Ali was not present at Karbala with Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Umdat al Talib concludes that Umar ibn Ali did not accompany the Imam {a.s}, and rather he later died in Ta'sa at the age of seventy five or seventy seven. For narrative continuity, these verses are therefore attributed here to Muhammad ibn Ali.

THE HOUSE OF LADY UMM AL BANIN

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB

The shadow of death spread across the battlefield of Karbala, claiming every companion and the men of Banu Hashim who had stood beside Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

One after another, the loyal had fallen, their blood sanctifying the parched earth of that desolate plain. The voices that had once filled the camp with resolve, prayer, and devotion had grown silent, until the stillness of loss hung heavily over the tents of the Imam {a.s}.

Now only the sons of Lady Umm al Banin remained beside Imam al Hussein {a.s}:

al Abbas ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn Ali, Jafar ibn Ali, and Uthman ibn Ali.

Four brothers, bound by loyalty and devotion to the cause of the Imam {a.s}, stood shoulder to shoulder before the encroaching enemy. They were the final living barrier between the camp of the Imam {a.s} and the army that had come to extinguish the light of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}. Their banner remained raised in the burning air, while their swords glimmered beneath the pitiless sun of Ashura.

From the earliest hours of that dreadful day, the sons of Lady Umm al Banin had laboured in every way possible in defence of their Imam {a.s}. They had repelled the enemy when the tents were threatened, shielding the women and children from the advancing soldiers.

These brothers had ventured repeatedly onto the battlefield to retrieve the bodies of the fallen companions. Now, wearied by the relentless struggle yet unbroken in spirit, they possessed nothing left to offer except their lives.

Their hearts longed for the embrace of martyrdom, yet the thought of leaving the estranged Imam al Hussein {a.s} behind to face the final and most bitter trials weighed heavily upon them.

As taught by their mother, the noble Lady Umm al Banin, their loyalty bound their very existence to the protection of the Imam {a.s} of their time.

At a short distance from the tent of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, al Abbas ibn Ali turned toward his brothers. His voice carried immense sorrow:

“O sons of my mother, go to the battlefield before me and sacrifice your lives, so that I may witness your sincerity in relation to Allah {AZJ} and His Prophet {saws}.”

The brothers looked to one another, discussing among themselves which of them should be honoured to go first. Each desired the same end: to be the first to offer his life in defence of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Al Irshad narrates that al Abbas then turned specifically to Abdullah ibn Ali and said:

“Go forth before me, so that I may watch you fight and bear witness to your sacrifice, for you have no children.”

For al Abbas, it was an honour that his brothers should offer their lives before him, laying themselves down in defence of their master. Such was the bond that united the sons of Imam Ali {a.s}, and such was the unparalleled devotion that al Abbas bore toward the Imam {a.s}.

Abdullah ibn Ali then made his way toward the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. His kunyah was Abu Muhammad al Akbar, though he was also known as Abdullah al Asghar. Abul Faraj records that Abdullah ibn Ali was twenty-five years of age on Ashura.

Abdullah ibn Ali offered his greetings to the Imam ^{a.s} and was invited inside. Shortly thereafter, he emerged, his face bearing the quiet satisfaction of one who had received permission to meet his Lord ^{AZJ}. The Imam ^{a.s} granted Abdullah leave to advance to the battlefield.

His brothers awaited Abdullah ibn Ali outside, and beside them stood his steed. They quietly embraced Abdullah one by one, exchanging farewells. Soon after, Abdullah ibn Ali was mounted on his steed and began to advance toward the enemy.

The horse moved slowly across the scorched plains of Karbala.

Al Abbas stood upon a small mound of sand, raising his hand to shield his eyes from the glare of the sun as he watched his brother ride forward. Before Abdullah ibn Ali stretched the roaring ranks of the army of Kufah, a vast sea of hostility. Yet Abdullah stood alone before them, a solitary figure whose courage dwarfed the multitude that faced him.

Al Manaqib states that Abdullah ibn Ali raised his voice so that it echoed across the battlefield, proclaiming his lineage and allegiance to the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s}:

“I am the son of a noble one, Ali, the doer of excellent deeds.

He is the sword of the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, the avenger.

Through his sword, might was made manifest day after day.”

Abdullah ibn Ali now spurred forward into the ranks of the enemy, the courage his valorous father Imam Ali ^{a.s} flowing through his veins.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that Abdullah ibn Ali fought with relentless ferocity against the opposing ranks. Again and again, Abdullah charged into the enemy, striking down those who dared stand before him. Abdullah ibn Ali refused to retreat even as the weight of the battle pressed upon him from every side. Blades struck Abdullah ibn Ali, spears tore at his body, and wounds began to cover him, yet still Abdullah fought.

Exhaustion gradually overcame Abdullah ibn Ali as the enemies closed in.

Abu Mikhnaf reports that during one of the final clashes, Abdullah ibn Ali encountered Hani ibn Thubayt al Hadrami. Amidst the turmoil of battle, the two warriors exchanged sword blows. Hani ibn Thubayt struck Abdullah ibn Ali upon the head with a brutal blow, the force of the strike staggering the young son of Ali upon his horse.

As Abdullah ibn Ali hunched forward, wounded yet still clinging to his saddle, the accursed Hani ibn Thubayt delivered another treacherous strike, driving his sword deep into the back of Abdullah. Thus, the first of the brothers fell upon the plains, offering his life in defence of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Abdullah ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

For this reason, Abdullah ibn Ali is remembered in Ziyarat al Nahiyah al Muqaddasah as the one who ‘was struck in the front and the back.’

THE MARTYRDOM OF JAFAR IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB

The brothers at the camp saw Abdullah ibn Ali fall amidst the enemy ranks. A cloud of dust rose where his body had struck the ground. For a moment, the tumult of the battlefield obscured Abdullah from sight. When the dust slowly settled, the soldiers who had surrounded him moved away, and the body of Abdullah ibn Ali remained lying still upon the earth, unmoving. At that sight, the brothers knew that Abdullah ibn Ali had attained martyrdom.

The terrible vision of Abdullah ibn Ali’s slaughter still burned within their hearts. Yet there was no time to mourn Abdullah. Even this fresh and piercing grief seemed small beside the heavier calamity that had descended upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The tragedy of the noble Imam ^{a.s} overshadowed every sorrow, for all grief was gathered beneath this vast catastrophe.

Al Abbas ibn Ali now descended from the mound upon which he had been standing and walked toward his brothers, Jafar ibn Ali and Uthman ibn Ali. His eyes were moist with tears, and al Abbas placed his hand gently upon the shoulder of Jafar ibn Ali.

One after another, they would go forth in defence of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Pride stirred within Jafar ibn Ali, for though he was the youngest among the brothers present, his heart burned with the desire to hasten toward the battlefield and embrace martyrdom in the cause of Allah ^{AZJ}. Without hesitation, Jafar ibn Ali turned and walked toward the tent of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. As his brother Abdullah ibn Ali had done before him, Jafar ibn Ali sought the permission and blessing of the Imam ^{a.s} before entering the field of battle.

Sayyid Muhsin al Amin relates in Ayan al Shia that Jafar ibn Ali was nineteen years of age at the time of his martyrdom. ²⁰⁴ Imam Ali ^{a.s} had named him ‘Jafar’ in honour of his brother, Jafar ibn Abi Talib, the great martyr of the Battle of Mu'tah.

Thus, the son of Lady Umm al Banin carried both a noble lineage and the echo of a revered name. Soon, Jafar ibn Ali returned to his brothers, holding the reins of his steed. Al Abbas ibn Ali and Uthman ibn Ali helped Jafar ibn Ali prepare for battle. They fastened his armour upon him and steadied the saddle as Jafar mounted his horse.

The moment was heavy. Each brother knew that the path before Jafar ibn Ali led only to martyrdom. They bid him farewell and watched as Jafar rode away from the camp toward the waiting ranks of the enemy now emboldened by the lack of support of the Imam ^{a.s}.

From the mound of sand, al Abbas now stood again. It was reminiscent of where al Abbas had watched the fall of Abdullah ibn Ali. But now, it was the time for his beloved younger brother, Jafar ibn Ali, to proceed towards the baying crowds of thousands of enemy swords and spears. With every step of the horse, the figure of Jafar ibn Ali grew smaller in the distance.

²⁰⁴ Most sources mention that at the time of his martyrdom he was nineteen years of age. Others say he was seventeen. However, considering that Imam Ali ^{a.s} was martyred in the year 40 AH, he must have been at least twenty years old and, if conceived shortly before the Imam’s ^{a.s} martyrdom, the age of nineteen may be acceptable. Lubab al Ansab, vol. 1; Muqatil al Talibiyin.

The blazing heat of the desert caused the air to shimmer, and the rising haze slowly obscured his silhouette as Jafar advanced toward the battlefield. Al Khawarizmi records that the young warrior halted before the ranks of the enemy and raised his voice in bold verse:

“Indeed, I am Jafar, the possessor of noble traits.

I am the son of Ali, the good and the generous.

The successor to the Prophet ^[saws], a senior and a master.

I defend al Hussein with a swift spear and a burnished sword.”

The words rang out across the battlefield as Jafar ibn Ali urged his steed forward and plunged into the ranks of the enemy.

The clash of steel soon filled the air. Swords struck, and the thunder of hooves churned the dust of Karbala. Jafar ibn Ali fought with fierce determination. Many fell before Jafar as he cut his way through the hostile ranks, his sword rising and falling with relentless force.

For a moment, the enemy line wavered beneath the power of his assault.

Yet among the soldiers were those who watched carefully, seeking any means to halt the advance of the heroic son of Imam Ali ^[a.s.].

Seeing the relentless assaults of Jafar ibn Ali, Umar ibn Sa'd ordered one of his most skilled archers to step forward. Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub identifies this archer as Khawli ibn Yazid al Asbahi. Umar ibn Sa'd had watched the fierce advance of the young warrior and understood that confronting Jafar in close combat would bring further losses upon his ranks.

Khawli ibn Yazid studied the movements of Jafar ibn Ali as he fought among the soldiers. Khawli waited patiently for the precise moment when the warrior was surrounded on every side and engaged in combat. Khawli pulled the bowstring taut and released the arrow.

The shot was accurate and merciless. The iron-headed shaft tore through the air and struck Jafar ibn Ali with devastating force. It pierced his eye and drove deep into his temple.

In an instant, the young warrior's head snapped backward under the violence of the blow. His sword slipped from his grasp as strength left his hand, and blood surged forth, flowing across his face and armour.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that as Jafar ibn Ali staggered in the saddle, dazed and reeling from the arrow's strike, his steed circled in confusion. The enemies of Allah ^[AZJ] rushed toward him. Among them was Hani ibn Thubayt al Hadrami, who advanced swiftly and struck the wounded son of Imam Ali ^[a.s.], dragging Jafar ibn Ali down from his steed.

The enemy converged upon him. Dust rose again from the ground as the soldiers surrounded Jafar ibn Ali. Wounded and unable to defend himself, his vision shattered by the arrow that had pierced his eye, Jafar ibn Ali lay upon the earth while the swords of the enemy fell upon him repeatedly. Thus, the blessed soul of Jafar ibn Ali departed from this world.

May Allah's ^[AZJ] mercy and blessings be upon Jafar ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

In Lubab al Ansab, it is reported that Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan was the one who slew Jafar ibn Ali. However, Abul Faraj transmits from Imam Muhammad al Baqir ^[a.s.] that it was Khawli ibn Yazid who killed Jafar ibn Ali.

THE MARTYRDOM OF UTHMAN IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB

Uthman ibn Ali and al Abbas had stood watching the battle of their younger brother. When the martyrdom of Jafar ibn Ali unfolded before their eyes, Uthman ibn Ali turned toward al Abbas, his gaze clouded with tears and grief.

The moment had come. Now it was his turn to advance toward the battlefield.

Just as his brothers had done before him, Uthman ibn Ali walked toward the camp of the Imam ^[a.s.]. Uthman approached with reverence, conveyed his greetings and salutations, and requested permission to advance toward the enemy. The Imam ^[a.s.] granted him leave.

Nafasul Mahmoom states that Uthman's kunyah was Abu Amr and that he was twenty-one years of age. Bihar al Anwar relates from Imam Ali ^[a.s.] that he once said,

“I have named him after my believing brother, Uthman ibn Mazun, the great companion of the Prophet ^[saws].”

Al Abbas now prepared the steed for the last of his brothers. When Uthman ibn Ali returned, having obtained permission, al Abbas embraced Uthman tightly and bid him farewell. It was the farewell of a brother who knew he was sending the last of his blood toward certain death. Al Abbas assisted Uthman ibn Ali in mounting the steed. When the young warrior settled into the saddle, al Abbas stepped back slowly.

Now alone, al Abbas turned and walked once more toward the mound from which he had watched the fall of his brothers.

From there, al Abbas would witness the fate of the last of them.

Al Abbas raised his hands to shield his eyes from the relentless sun and followed the advancing figure of Uthman ibn Ali as he rode forward across the burning plain. The horse slowed as it approached the swelling ranks of the enemy. Dust drifted across the battlefield while the cries and insults of the soldiers rose into the scorching air.

Uthman ibn Ali lifted his hand, commanding them to silence.

The tumult quieted as the young Hashemite warrior prepared to speak. His voice rang out, clear and steady, across the battlefield:

“I am Uthman, the possessor of glory. My master is Ali, the doer of virtuous deeds.

This is al Hussein, the best of the best, the chief of elders and the young,

After the Prophet ^[saws], and then his successor, Ali.”

The eloquence of the Hashemites echoed across the plains.

Having spoken, Uthman ibn Ali urged his steed forward. The hooves struck the hardened earth as he plunged directly into the enemy ranks.

Nafasul Mahmoom relates that after fighting fiercely, Uthman ibn Ali soon found himself surrounded by the enemy from every side. Just as had occurred with his brother Jafar ibn Ali, the soldiers hesitated to confront Uthman directly.

The bravery of the sons of Lady Umm al Banin had already shaken their courage, and few wished to meet them face to face.

Just as they had done against his brother Jafar ibn Ali moments earlier, the commanders once again turned to archery. Umar ibn Sa'd again summoned his most reliable archer to step forward: Khawli ibn Yazid.

Khawli had already struck down Jafar ibn Ali, and now he sought to extinguish yet another flower from the house of Lady Umm al Banin. Abul Faraj narrates that Khawli ibn Yazid drew his bow slowly. Khawli inhaled deliberately as the bowstring tightened beneath his fingers. The arrowhead was drawn back into place. Then the arrow was released.

It tore through the air with lethal speed and struck Uthman ibn Ali as he fought amidst the surrounding enemy. The arrow slammed into his flank with brutal force, and a searing burst of agony surged through his body.

Al Manaqib states that the arrow ripped through the side of Uthman ibn Ali, tearing through flesh as it drove deep into his body.

The impact forced the breath violently from his chest. Pain flooded through Uthman ibn Ali, and the strength that had held him upright began to fail.

His hands still clutched the reins, but they slowly weakened. Warm blood poured from the wound in his side, soaking the garments of the young warrior.

Moments later, his body slipped from the saddle. Uthman fell upon the dust of Karbala.

As Uthman ibn Ali writhed upon the burning sands, al Irshad states that a man from the clan of Bani Aban ibn Darim approached him.

With ruthless cruelty, the man hacked repeatedly at the wounded son of Imam Ali ^[a.s] until he killed him. Then he began to saw at the neck of Uthman ibn Ali until the head was severed from the body. Different sources record varying reports regarding the killer.

Al Akhbar al Tiwal relates that it was Yazid al Asbahi who had loosed the fatal arrow and then advanced to strike him down before severing his head.

The murderer lifted the head of Uthman ibn Ali and carried it away.

May the mercy and blessings of Allah ^[AZJ] be upon Uthman ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

In vile haste to secure his reward, the killer grasped the noble head of Uthman by the hair and carried it toward Umar ibn Sa'd, who stood among his commanders upon the battlefield.

Back at the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], al Abbas remained upon the mound.

Al Abbas watched as the man hacked upon his fallen brother. Then al Abbas saw this man walking toward the line of horsemen gathered around Umar ibn Sa'd, holding the severed head of his brother Uthman by its hair. Blood dripped slowly from the head as it swung from the man's grasp. Al Abbas followed every movement.

The man halted before the commanders. The soldiers around them fell silent, eager to hear what would be said. The murderer lifted the severed head of Uthman ibn Ali high and displayed it proudly before them. The head jerked violently as it was held aloft by the hair.

Al Irshad states that the man called out before Umar ibn Sa'd, holding up the head of Uthman ibn Ali and shouting, "Reward me!"

Laughter, jeers, and crude cheers erupted from the enemy soldiers.

Umar ibn Sa'd raised his hand, clearly pleased by the spectacle. Ibn Sa'd answered coldly, "Go and ask for a reward from your commander, Ubayd Allah. The reward is with him."

The soldiers roared again with cruel amusement.

With the fall of Uthman ibn Ali, the line of the sons of Lady Umm al Banin had been broken. Abu Mikhnaf records the martyrdom of the sons of Lady Umm al Banin with poignant brevity, "It is claimed that they went forth and fought fiercely until they were killed."

Back at the camp of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], al Abbas lowered his gaze toward the sands. Slowly, al Abbas stepped down from the mound.

Now only two figures remained in the camp: al Abbas ibn Ali and Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

Al Abbas turned toward the tent of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], intending to inform the Imam ^[a.s] of the martyrdom of his brothers. But before al Abbas could reach the entrance, he saw that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was already standing there, waiting for his grief stricken brother.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] stood at the doorway of the tent, holding onto the peg for support. Grief was also written upon his face, and tears filled his eyes.

Al Abbas approached the Imam ^[a.s]. Without words, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] drew al Abbas into a deep embrace. The sorrow and grief between them so immense and boundless.

The backbone of al Abbas had been broken. Every one of his brothers had now fallen, gladly sacrificing their lives for the honour and protection of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s].

With each brother's martyrdom, a quiet sigh had escaped their lips. Now the weight of sorrow had grown almost unbearable. The two brothers remained standing together at the entrance of the tent. Before them stretched the battlefield, a raging sea of swords that thirsted for their blood. From the enemy lines came taunts, laughter, and cruel insults.



THE LAST SONS OF IMAM ALI {a.s}

THE PATH TO THE EUPHRATES

The two brothers exchanged a glance that needed no words.

Around them stretched the desolate horizon of Karbala, its sands now darkened by blood and grief. The once-proud company that had stood beside them was gone.

Sons, brothers, and loyal companions lay butchered across the plain, their lifeless forms a testament to their supreme sacrifices.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} and al Abbas stood side by side in solemn reflection, pondering the fate that awaited their camp once their own martyrdom would come to pass.

Al Abbas had already sent all of his brothers to the battlefield before himself, until every one of them had fallen as a martyr.

The army of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was routed.

Nafasul Mahmoom relates that al Abbas possessed a face of striking beauty, noble and radiant in appearance. Al Abbas was broad-chested, powerfully built, and possessed arms of remarkable strength. His stature was so tall that when al Abbas mounted a strong horse, his feet would nearly touch the ground.

Among his most well-known kunyahs was Qamar Bani Hashim, the Moon of the Hashemites, for his luminous countenance distinguished al Abbas even among the noble members of the tribe of Bani Hashim.

The noble mother of al Abbas, as well as of his brothers Uthman, Jafar, and Abdullah, was Lady Umm al Banin, Fatimah bint Hizam ibn Khalid. His grandmother, Lady Layla, was the daughter of al Suhayl ibn Malik, the son of the renowned warrior Ibn Abi Barrah.

The religious devotion and firmness of faith of al Abbas were such that none was more deserving to bear the standard of Imam al Hussein {a.s} on the day of Ashura.

The sincerity of al Abbas in serving his Imam {a.s} was beyond question, and his faith and virtue were unmatched among men. Al Abbas became the very symbol of loyalty and self-sacrifice, the embodiment of chivalry, sincerity, and dignity.

Al Abbas stood as the living image of courage, valour, and nobility, and words fall short in attempting to convey the majesty of his character.

From his earliest years, al Abbas regarded Imam al Hasan {a.s} and Imam al Hussein {a.s} not merely as elder brothers but as his Masters. In obedience to the teachings of his noble mother, Lady Umm al Banin, al Abbas considered it an honour to present himself as their servant and devoted his life entirely to their protection and servitude. His upbringing had prepared him for sacrifice, and his entire being was shaped by the resolve to defend them with his life.

Abu Hanifah Dinawari records that al Abbas accompanied Imam al Hussein {a.s} everywhere, remaining beside the Imam {a.s} 'like a shadow' that never departed from his side.

Sirr al Silsilat al Alawiyyah records that al Abbas was around thirty-four years old on the day of Ashura. Now, on Ashura, it is related from Imam Jafar al Sadiq {a.s}:

“Al Hussein had arrayed his troops and entrusted his standard to al Abbas.”

Behind them rose the heart-rending cries of thirsty orphans. Their frail voices trembled under the torment of days without water.

From the tents drifted the smoke of burning fabric and scorched earth, while the harsh wind of the desert carried the scent of destruction across the battlefield.

Shaykh al Mufid records in al Irshad that their thirst had now grown unbearable. With the camp brought to the brink of collapse, Imam al Hussein {a.s} mounted his steed and rode toward the ridge in search of a path to the Euphrates.

Ahead of Imam al Hussein {a.s} rode his brother al Abbas, cutting through the dust of Karbala and shielding the Imam {a.s} with the full measure of his body and soul.

Shaykh al Tabarsi recounts in I'lam al Wara that when the cavalry of Umar ibn Sa'd saw the two brothers advancing, they quickly spurred forward to intercept them.

Yet Imam al Hussein {a.s}, with his standard-bearing valiant brother at his side, pressed onward, their horses galloping toward the Euphrates.

The army of Umar ibn Sa'd hastily closed ranks to block their path to the river.

Among the enemy commanders, the order was shouted from rank to rank:

“Block their path to the Euphrates and do not let them reach the water!”

Similarly, al Tabari relates from Hisham, who reports from his father Muhammad ibn al Sa'ib, from Qasim ibn Asbagh ibn Nabatah, that a man present in Karbala said that when the army of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was decimated, the Imam {a.s} mounted his horse and rode toward the Euphrates. At that moment, a man from Bani Aban ibn Darim rushed toward the riverbanks and cried out to the soldiers around him:

“Woe unto you! Stand firm and block him from reaching the Euphrates.

Do not allow him access to the water!”

From the narration of ibn Nima, it is stated that the name of this man was Zar'ah ibn Aban ibn Darim. Zar'ah ibn Aban spurred his horse forward, and the soldiers rushed after him, cutting off Imam al Hussein's {a.s} path to the river.

Large battalions now reinforced the banks of the Euphrates. When Imam al Hussein {a.s} witnessed these amassed ranks of the enemy, it became clear that the path to the river had been sealed. The hope of obtaining water for the camp faded before his eyes.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} reined in his steed, raised his hands toward the heavens, and cursed Zar'ah ibn Aban, saying:

“O Allah {AZJ}! Let him always remain thirsty!”

The enemy of Allah {AZJ}, Zar'ah ibn Aban, now stood mounted near the Euphrates.

Hearing the curse of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, it filled Zar'ah with rage vengeance.

Lacking the courage to confront the Imam {a.s} or al Abbas directly, Zar'ah ibn Aban nocked an arrow into his bow and aimed it toward the Imam {a.s}.

Zar'ah ibn Aban released the arrow. It struck Imam al Hussein {a.s} while his arms were still raised in supplication to his Lord {AZJ}. The sudden impact caused the Imam {a.s} to break off his supplication and look toward where the arrow had struck his chin. The Imam {a.s} removed it with his own hand, and blood appeared upon his blessed palm. The Imam {a.s} cast the shaft aside with disdain and looked upon the enemy ranks, who celebrated the strike against him.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} then lifted his gaze once more toward the heavens and cast the blood from his palm upward, complaining loudly to his Lord {AZJ}:

“O Allah {AZJ}! I complain to You about what is being done to the son of the daughter of Your Prophet {saws}!”

An alternative report by Hasan ibn Ali al Tabarsi states that the arrow of the accursed man from Bani Darim struck the forehead of the Imam {a.s}, and it was al Abbas who removed it.

The ranks of the enemy at the Euphrates began to shift again. Reinforcements advanced rapidly, and the soldiers moved to encircle the two lions of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}.

Al Irshad states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} then pulled the reins of his steed and turned away from the Euphrates, directing his horse back toward the camp.

The enemy forces were multiplying and closing their ranks, seeking to trap the Imam {a.s} and his brother al Abbas between the river and the advancing cavalry.

As Imam al Hussein {a.s} spurred his horse toward the camp, al Abbas followed behind him, positioning himself between the Imam {a.s} and the pursuing enemy.

With fierce strikes of his sword, al Abbas sought to disrupt the advancing soldiers and delay their pursuit, shielding the Imam {a.s} with the full measure of his strength.

Yet the pressure of the enemy increased with every passing moment. More horsemen poured into the field, surrounding the two brothers from different directions. Amid these fierce clashes, the distance between them gradually widened, as al Abbas continued to hold back the attackers and repel the advancing ranks.

I'lam al Wara states that soon the enemy attempted to close in around al Abbas as he lagged behind. Still, al Abbas continued to repel them from the path of the Imam {a.s}. In the chaos of the battlefield, al Abbas was cut off from the direct route back to the camp.

Turning toward the enemy ranks, al Abbas confronted them head-on, wielding his sword with relentless fury and dispersing them from before him.

The commander of Imam al Hussein {a.s} fought his way through the dense ranks of the enemy and succeeded in breaking through and returning to the camp.

When the sons of Imam Ali {a.s} arrived back among the tents, the thirst within the camp had grown even more severe. The orphans gathered anxiously around them, their small faces filled with hope that water had been brought for them.

But there was no water. Their cries of thirst rose once again from the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, piercing the hearts of the Imam {a.s} and his loyal brother al Abbas.

“The accursed one, Umar ibn Sa'd, commanded his soldiers, and thus, they prevented you from reaching or receiving water.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE MARTYRDOM OF AL ABBAS IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB

A group of children clutched desperately at the cloak of al Abbas ibn Ali, their small hands grasping at the folds of his garment as their cries of thirst rose again. Their voices were thin with weakness, and they gnawed at the heart of al Abbas.

Al Abbas ibn Ali was the most courageous commander of Imam al Hussein {a.s} and the standard bearer of the Imam {a.s} on the Day of Ashura.

The flag of the Hashemites had rested in his capable hands, and as long as it stood upright, the camp of the Imam {a.s} had found reassurance in his presence, knowing that the mighty son of Imam Ali {a.s} still stood to defend them. Al Abbas ibn Ali was an army in it of himself.

Al Abbas ibn Ali cast his gaze upon the desperate state of the camps before him. The army whose banner he had carried and whose ranks he had commanded now lay shattered upon the sands of Karbala. One by one, the noble companions had fallen, and the once vibrant camp of the Hashemites had been reduced to silence and grief.

It is related in Bihar al Anwar that al Abbas found himself utterly alone. The hum of his Hashemite entourage had faded into stillness and eerie silence.

The tents of the companions of the Imam {a.s} lay scorched and abandoned. Before al Abbas remained only the parched and fearful women and children, and beyond them the solitary yet steadfast figure of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

As instructed, al Abbas ibn Ali rode forth toward the enemy ranks and addressed them with counsel and warning. Perhaps, even now, there might remain some trace of conscience within them. Al Abbas reminded them of the gravity of their crime and the sanctity of the blood they were about to shed. Yet the enemy remained hardened in their insolence and heedlessness.

Their faith had become sealed against truth. The enemy refused to relent, and they refused to open a path to the Euphrates.

Al Abbas ibn Ali returned to Imam al Hussein {a.s} and informed the Imam {a.s} of their refusal. As they stood within the tent, the silence of the camp was broken once more by the desperate, relentless voices of the children: “O thirst.”

It was unceasing. The cries and anguish of the children relentless.

Grief pressed heavily upon al Abbas. His head was lowered, and his broad shoulders bent beneath the crushing weight of sorrow. His eyes remained fixed upon the ground as al Abbas searched within himself for the right words.

Again and again, al Abbas turned the thought within his heart, considering how he might ask his Imam {a.s} the most difficult question of all: permission to go forth to the battlefield.

Al Abbas ibn Ali knew the magnitude of what he was about to ask, and al Abbas knew the wound such a request would carve into the heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, who had already lost nearly everyone who stood beside him.

Yet the hour had arrived, and the burden within Al Abbas could no longer be contained. The angst within his chest was immense and crushing, even for a warrior such as him.

With reluctant steps, Bihar al Anwar records that al Abbas ibn Ali approached the estranged Imam al Hussein {a.s}. His head remained bowed, and his voice choked with sorrow.

Al Abbas greeted the Imam {a.s}, and then spoke only a few words:

“Do you permit me?”

Nothing remained for al Abbas to offer his master except his own life. All that al Abbas had loved had already been sacrificed in the path of Allah {AZJ}. Out of reverence and humility, al Abbas could not bring himself to look upon the blessed face of Imam al Hussein {a.s} as he asked to depart. Al Abbas ibn Ali remained motionless, awaiting the response.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} wept bitterly as the Imam {a.s} looked upon the brother who had followed him throughout his life like a faithful shadow. Before the Imam {a.s} stood the mighty commander of his army, the pillar of strength upon whom the entire camp had relied.

Now that same colossal warrior stood broken beneath the weight of grief.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} lifted his hand and gently placed it upon the shoulder of al Abbas.

His gaze rested upon the bowed head of his brother al Abbas, from which tears fell silently upon the sands below.

With a voice heavy with anguish, it is narrated that Imam al Hussein {a.s} said:

“O dear brother, you are my standard bearer. If you go away, my army will be scattered.”

Such were the words of Imam al Hussein {a.s} regarding al Abbas ibn Ali.

Though Imam al Hussein {a.s} knew well that his army had already been routed, the noble Imam {a.s} still regarded al Abbas as an army in himself.

Al Abbas ibn Ali remained silent, for he understood the depth of loneliness that now surrounded the Imam {a.s}. His spirit shuddered at the thought of the Imam {a.s} standing alone upon the battlefield against this vicious enemy.

Yet the grief within al Abbas ibn Ali had grown too immense to restrain.

The words of Imam al Hussein {a.s} revealed the sorrow of a brother who did not wish to part with his most steadfast support. The Imam {a.s} looked beyond the figure of al Abbas before him, and then through the swaying fabric of the tent stirred by the desert wind.

A thought passed before Imam al Hussein {a.s}. His army had already been scattered.

No longer remained the hum of loyal companions or the caravan of the Hashemites who had once travelled beside him, seeking the blessing of serving the Imam {a.s}.

For a moment, the silence between them lingered.

The two sons of Imam Ali {a.s} had shared a lifetime together. Through every hardship and every trial, they had remained side by side. The thought that this moment might be their final farewell settled heavily upon them both.

At last, al Abbas ibn Ali let out a deep sigh. Bihar al Anwar relates that the sorrow within al Abbas had grown too great to contain.

“My heart has become constricted, and I am weary of life.”

Another moment of silence passed before al Abbas ibn Ali spoke in a lowered voice:

“And I desire to avenge the blood of my brothers from these hypocrites.”

These words pierced the heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Before him stood his most valiant brother, the one the Imam {a.s} had nurtured and raised with his own hands, now so burdened with grief that even life itself had become heavy upon him.

The tragedy of Ashura had truly devastated and crumbled his most firm support.

As the elder brother, Imam al Hussein {a.s} understood the depth of the suffering that had overcome al Abbas ibn Ali.

Though al Abbas sought permission to enter battle, Imam al Hussein {a.s} knew well that this request was, in truth, a request for martyrdom, a departure from which al Abbas could never return. Resigned to the inevitability of his sacrifice, the Imam {a.s} accepted the plea of his brother. Bihar al Anwar states that tears filled the eyes of the Imam {a.s}.

Yet, seeking to alleviate some sorrow from within al Abbas, Imam al Hussein {a.s} gave him one final command: “Then bring water for these children.”

At these words, al Abbas ibn Ali leaned forward and kissed the blessed hand of the noble Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Tears flowed from his eyes and fell upon the hand of his master.

Few words passed between them; the heartbreak of their impending separation was too great. Al Abbas ibn Ali raised his head and gazed upon the blessed face of his master.

Both brothers understood that this could be their final meeting.

Tears streamed down the face of al Abbas as he slowly withdrew his gaze from the noble countenance of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. The moment of parting had arrived.

The Imam {a.s} also stood, admiring his valiant brother, the Moon of the Hashemites, as al Abbas rose, took hold of his standard, and stepped out from the tent.

Taking up a water skin, al Abbas mounted his horse and set forth toward the Euphrates.

Four thousand men had earlier gathered to prevent access to the water of the Euphrates.

They stood along the banks in tight formations, guarding the river that shimmered in the distance. From afar, they saw a lone figure approaching, its silhouette gradually taking shape through the heat haze rising from the ground, sand kicked up by the hooves of the charging steed. Above the rider, a banner moved in the wind.

It dawned upon the enemy that it was al Abbas ibn Ali advancing toward them.

A ripple of alarm spread through their ranks. The soldiers hastily reformed their lines, tightening their formations as they prepared to repel al Abbas.

Orders rang out across the banks of the river. Archers were commanded to nock their arrows and ready their bows, preparing to unleash a volley before al Abbas drew near.

Yet the valiant al Abbas ibn Ali approached them without hesitation.

Al Abbas came forward until he stood before the army assembled along the Euphrates, firm and immovable like a mountain.

The archers released their arrows, and a rain of shafts descended toward him. But al Abbas ibn Ali did not retreat. He remained where he stood, unmoved as the arrows fell around him.

When the volley ceased, al Abbas was still there. Raising his voice, he called out to them,
“I do not fear death, even if it comes upon me!”

Al Abbas pulled gently upon the reins of his steed and urged it forward once more toward the ranks that guarded the river.

The enemy stalked him closely, their hearts trembling as they tried to anticipate his next movement. Unsure whether he would launch an assault, they tightened their formations.

Again, al Abbas ibn Ali stopped. His horse shifted beneath him, swaying slightly to the right and left as the desert wind stirred the banner above his head.

Al Manaqib records that al Abbas now raised his voice to proclaim:

“I am not panicked by death,

Nor when death beckons and leaves me lifeless beneath a blanket of swords.

My life is ransomed for the one who is the pure soul of Mustafa {saws}.

Verily, I am al Abbas, the bearer of water,

And I fear no evil on the Day of Gathering.”

Now al Abbas ibn Ali spurred his horse forward deliberately. Dust burst from beneath its hooves as al Abbas charged into the ranks before him. With a ferocity that shook the battlefield, al Abbas attacked the enemy. One after another, they fell beneath his blows.

It is reported in Bihar al Anwar that eighty men were cut down by his hand as al Abbas ibn Ali tore through their formation.

The force of four thousand soldiers recoiled before al Abbas. Panic spread through their lines as they scattered in dread at the sight of his advance. Battalions broke apart and fled from his path, seeking refuge from the fury of al Abbas ibn Ali.

Breaking through their formations, al Abbas rode onward until the palm groves along the banks of the Euphrates appeared before him. The waters shimmered beneath the blazing sun, cool and glimmering against the dry horizon of the desert.

Reining in his steed, al Abbas ibn Ali dismounted. Calmly, al Abbas took hold of the water skin in his hands while gathering his banner beside him. With measured steps, al Abbas walked toward the riverbank and entered the waters of the Euphrates.

From the distant camp, Imam al Hussein {a.s} watched. The Imam {a.s} raised his hand to shield his eyes from the burning sun as he tried to follow the movements of his brother across the battlefield. However, the haze of thirst blurred his sight, while grief and loss had drained the strength from his body.

The sand stirred by battle and fleeing cavalry made it difficult to distinguish figures from such a distance. Yet the gaze of the Imam {a.s} remained fixed upon a single point amidst the chaos of war: the standard of al Abbas ibn Ali.

Soon, that banner appeared upon the banks of the Euphrates. Its movement cut clearly through the haze, and when the eyes of Imam al Hussein {a.s} fell upon it, his heart stirred with renewed hope.

The standard was flying high and proudly. Al Abbas ibn Ali was alive.

Upon the parched lips of Imam al Hussein {a.s} appeared the faintest trace of a smile, a brief and fragile moment of relief, as the Imam {a.s} witnessed the courage and ferocity of his father Imam Ali {a.s} renewed by his fearless brother.

Back at the Euphrates, al Abbas ibn Ali had waded ankle-deep into the waters of the river. Only moments earlier, four thousand men had stood before him guarding its banks.

Yet now it was al Abbas ibn Ali who stood within the Euphrates itself, the cool currents flowing around his blessed feet.

Al Abbas ibn Ali bent down and gathered water in his noble palm. The clear surface of the river glistened beneath the bright sky.

But this moment revealed the true measure of his loyalty to his master, Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Though the water rested in his hand, though thirst had tormented him for days, al Abbas cast the water back into the river without drinking a single drop.

Instead, al Abbas ibn Ali turned to fill the water skin for his camp and for the children.

How could al Abbas permit himself to drink while his master, the children of the Imam {a.s}, and the women of the camp remained parched beneath the scorching sky?

In the code of devotion that bound al Abbas to his Imam {a.s}, such a thing was inconceivable.

The enemy did not dare approach al Abbas, even as he collected water in the waterskin.

It was as though al Abbas wished to show them that the water they had withheld with such arrogance had never been beyond his reach. Al Abbas ibn Ali had broken through their lines whenever he wished. Their barriers could not restrain him, nor could their numbers hold him back. Yet the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had submitted willingly to the decree and command of the almighty Allah {AZJ} for a higher purpose.

Al Abbas ibn Ali lifted his gaze toward the enemy.

Their ranks had broken before him and scattered beneath the fury of his charge. Turning away from the river, al Abbas walked calmly back to his mount.

From the camp, the vigilant eyes of Imam al Hussein {a.s} caught the movement of the standard once again at the bank of the Euphrates. His brother al Abbas was returning.

The banner had veered from the Euphrates and was now advancing back toward the camp. A deep yearning rose within the heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. With every passing moment, his longing to see al Abbas grew stronger.

But then, the gaze of the Imam {a.s} shifted. A cloud of sand was rising across the plain.

The enemy forces were gathering again. Those who had fled before the first assault of al Abbas were now rallying in far greater numbers.

Horses thundered across the earth as soldiers rushed back toward the Euphrates, their hooves churning the ground.

The tips of their lances flashed beneath the blazing sun. The swords glinting,

The heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s} tightened within his chest. His eyes followed every movement upon the field, shifting between the advancing enemy and the lone banner that still rose defiantly. The standard of al Abbas continued to move, unwavering and proud.

Back at the Euphrates, al Abbas ibn Ali had hoisted the filled water skin upon his right shoulder and turned his steed toward the tents. The enemy, seeing his purpose, rushed forward once more to block his path. They surrounded al Abbas ibn Ali from every side, seeking to trap him before al Abbas could return to the camp.

But al Abbas ibn Ali met them with relentless fury. His sword flashed once more, and wherever al Abbas struck, the ranks of the enemy broke apart before him.

Again, al Abbas ibn Ali forced his way through their lines, scattering them across the plain and driving them back with the ferocity of his charge.

The standard of al Abbas now moved more urgently toward the camp.

Among those observing al Abbas was an enemy of Allah {AZJ} named Zayd ibn Warqa al Juhani. Zayd perceived that the purpose of al Abbas was to return with water to the camp of the Imam {a.s}, yet Zayd ibn Warqa lacked the courage to face al Abbas in open combat.

Instead, Zayd ibn Warqa conceived a treacherous plan. Zayd resolved to lie in wait along the path, concealed behind the palm trees, and strike al Abbas by ambush as he returned toward the tents. This would be his method of halting the advance of al Abbas.

Al Manaqib relates that Zayd ibn Warqa hid himself behind a palm tree along the route back to the camps of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, waiting silently for his moment.

Soon, the sound of approaching hooves grew nearer across the desert plain. The steed of al Abbas ibn Ali was advancing swiftly toward the camp.

Suddenly, Zayd ibn Warqa leapt from his hiding place. His sword flashed in a vicious arc.

The blow landed with terrible force, slicing deeply into the flesh of the right arm of al Abbas. The impact caused the mighty warrior to jolt violently upon his steed, and his sword slipped from his grasp, though his fingers still struggled to hold it.

In that instant, al Abbas seized the hilt with his left hand, for his right arm had been grievously struck and could no longer serve him.

Al Abbas ibn Ali had barely secured the sword in his left hand when Zayd ibn Warqa rushed forward again. Seeing the wound he had inflicted, Zayd struck once more before al Abbas could turn to confront him.

The second blow fell with savage force, severing the right arm of al Abbas from his body. From the edge of the camp, Imam al Hussein {a.s} strained to watch through the heat haze.

The heart of the Imam {a.s} trembled as the standard of al Abbas, which had been pressing toward the tents, suddenly halted in its movement. The hope that had begun to stir within the Imam {a.s} faltered.

Yet the banner of al Abbas was still aloft, though it now swayed uncertainly in the air.

Back away from the banks of the Euphrates, blood flowed freely from the terrible wound. Al Abbas pulled the waterskin from his right shoulder and secured it upon his saddle.

Once more, Al Abbas ibn Ali urged his mount forward toward the camp, and the loyal steed responded immediately. Dust rose beneath its hooves as it pressed onwards again.

Al Manaqib states that in that moment al Abbas ibn Ali raised his voice and recited:

“By Allah {AZJ}! Even if you cut off my right arm,
I will always defend my religion and the truthful, rightful Imam,
The Imam who is the son of the Prophet {saws},
The one who is pure and trusted.”

Al Abbas ibn Ali continued forward, the sword now in his left hand. Blood spurted heavily from his right side as the enemy forces once again closed around him, pressing in from every direction. Though his right arm had been severed, al Abbas continued to repel their attacks with the same unmatched courage, now fighting with his left.

Yet without his right arm to defend himself fully, the blows that rained upon his exposed right flank cut deeply into his body. The frame of al Abbas, already weary and bleeding, grew heavier with exhaustion.

Seeing how effective the ambush had been, another enemy prepared to strike in the same treacherous manner.

Al Manaqib states that Hakim ibn al Tufayl rode ahead of the fighting and concealed himself behind another palm tree further along the path, certain that al Abbas would pass that way on his return toward the camp of the Imam {a.s}.

By now, al Abbas ibn Ali had repelled those who dared approach him, and he urged his steed onwards more toward the tents.

From afar, Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw the banner moving once more, advancing toward the camp. A spark of hope rose again, and his longing to embrace his brother al Abbas grew stronger with each passing moment.

But Hakim ibn al Tufayl lay hidden behind a palm tree, waiting for his moment.

As the steed of al Abbas approached the place of concealment, Hakim ibn al Tufayl suddenly sprang forth from behind the tree and struck with a ferocious blow.

His sword landed with devastating force, cleaving through the flesh and bone of the left arm of al Abbas. The sheer power of the strike shook the warrior upon his steed, bringing al Abbas ibn Ali to an abrupt halt.

The sword slipped from his grasp and fell to the blood-soaked sands, and with it fell the severed left arm of al Abbas ibn Ali. Shaykh al Mufid states that it was Nawfal who severed the left hand of al Abbas from the wrist.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} now stared as the standard of al Abbas, which had been advancing steadily, suddenly faltered and came to a halt once again. Deep worry overtook the Imam {a.s}, even if the banner still remained raised above the haze of dust.

Back at the Euphrates, now, al Abbas did not turn back to confront the pursuing enemy.

The brief moment in which al Abbas ibn Ali had paused had allowed the enemy to close the distance. Now, deprived of both arms, al Abbas could no longer turn to fight them.

There were no hands with which to wield a sword, no arms with which al Abbas ibn Ali could defend himself from the blows that pursued him.

Instead, al Abbas ibn Ali leaned forward over his saddle and held the waterskin firmly between his teeth, pressing it tightly against his chest. Al Abbas urged his horse into a swift gallop, racing once more toward the tents of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The world around al Abbas ibn Ali had narrowed to that solitary mission. As the pain of his wounds surged through his body and the sounds of the pursuing enemy echoed behind him, Al Manaqib recounts that al Abbas raised his voice once more and proclaimed:

“O my soul, do not fear the unbelievers.

Receive glad tidings of the mercy of the All-Powerful,

In the company of the Prophet {saws}, leader of the chosen.

They have severed, in their wickedness, my left hand,

So consign them, O Lord {AZJ}, to the heat of the fire of Hell.”

The gaze of al Abbas was fixed upon a single purpose: to deliver the waterskin to the camp.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} continued to watch. Once more, the standard of al Abbas, still raised, advanced across the field, though now it swayed heavily. This was not the manner in which al Abbas usually rode upon his steed. Something had happened near the riverbank.

The heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s} grew uneasy as he watched from afar.

Al Abbas ibn Ali rode away again from the Euphrates, passing through the remaining thickets of palm trees that lined the riverbank.

Beyond the palm trees stretched the open plain leading back to the camp. Suddenly, the archers, who had remained in wait for al Abbas to emerge, loosed a fierce volley of arrows.

The air filled with the sharp hiss of their flight as the shafts cut through the desert wind. Several arrows struck their mark, driving deep into the body of al Abbas and piercing the flesh of his loyal steed. One arrow struck the waterskin itself, tearing through the leather before driving into the chest of al Abbas ibn Ali.

The waterskin burst open. Water and blood spilled together upon the ground.

As the precious water drained away, the final hope of al Abbas ibn Ali seemed to slip from him with it. Alas, water would not reach the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The steed of al Abbas ibn Ali slowed beneath him and then came to a halt.

From a distance, the brow of Imam al Hussein {a.s} tightened. The standard of al Abbas had come to an abrupt stop. The banner lurched violently amid the swirling clouds of sand.

The pursuing enemy had overtaken his brother al Abbas.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw as al Abbas was surrounded by the enemy. The multitude of forces descended upon al Abbas ibn Ali from every side. Every blow now found its mark, for the valiant son of Imam Ali {a.s} had no hands with which to defend himself.

This time, Imam al Hussein {a.s} stood aghast as clouds of dust rose upon the battlefield, streaked with bursts of red mist surrounding his brother, al Abbas.

Through the haze, swords and lances flashed beneath the blazing sun. Steel rose and fell again and again upon the body of al Abbas. Each strike returned with blood spraying from its edge as the attackers struck relentlessly at the defenceless warrior.

The hope of reaching his brother, of embracing him once more, faded before the eyes of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Overcome by grief, the Imam {a.s} collapsed upon the sands where he stood, his gaze still fixed upon the terrible scene unfolding in the distance.

Bihar al Anwar narrates from Turayhi that every form of savagery was now directed at al Abbas. He swayed upon his horse, pierced by arrows and stripped of both arms, his body bearing countless wounds. His once powerful frame had begun to bend beneath the weight of exhaustion and injury, increasing by the moments as swords struck him repeatedly.

At that moment, one of the enemies seized his opportunity. Advancing swiftly, Nafasul Mahmoom relates that an accursed enemy raised an iron mace high above his head and brought it crashing down upon the crown of al Abbas ibn Ali.

The brutal blow split flesh and bone. The force of the strike was so violent that al Abbas was thrown backward upon his steed. Realising that the final moments of his life had arrived, the valiant son of Imam Ali {a.s} sent one last salutation to his master:

“O Aba Abdillah, my salutations upon you.”

Then the towering figure of al Abbas began to fall. With no arms left to shield himself, the lion of Imam Ali {a.s} crashed face-first from his horse onto the scorching sands of Karbala.

Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates that the accursed Hakim ibn al Tufayl al Tai was the one who struck al Abbas with the iron mace. The sickening impact of the blow carried across the plain and reached the ears of Imam al Hussein {a.s} even from the camp.

Then came a terrible silence, broken only by the mocking jeers of the enemy.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} could no longer see the standard of al Abbas.

A searing pain tore through the heart of the Imam {a.s}, for the most grievous blow had now struck his soul. His brother al Abbas had been cut down before his eyes.

The voices of the enemy rose louder around the fallen al Abbas. The swords that had moments earlier been raised against his body now lifted again and again in celebration. Their blades still glistened with his blood as they shouted with cruel triumph over the fallen hero.

At that sight, the heart of Imam al Hussein {a.s} blazed with fury.

Mounting his steed, Imam al Hussein {a.s} drove it forward toward the place where his brother al Abbas lay surrounded by the enemy. Sword in hand, sand clinging to his hair and streaked across his tear-stained face, the Imam {a.s} charged toward the battlefield, desperate to reach al Abbas before his final breath left his brother.

When the attackers saw the dust rising beneath the hooves of the charging horse, terror seized them. The cowards recoiled and fled. They retreated quickly rather than face the wrath of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

Now the body of al Abbas ibn Ali barely moved after the relentless assault he had endured. Overwhelmed by wounds, al Abbas had suffered blow after merciless blow. Imam al Baqir {a.s} relates that al Abbas ibn Ali had been so grievously wounded by the hacking of swords that he no longer possessed the strength even to writhe upon the ground.

Sensing that the blows had suddenly ceased, al Abbas ibn Ali forced his eyes half open. Before al Abbas stood two of the enemies who had attacked him and now prepared to murder him. It was Zayd ibn Warqa al Hanafi and Hakim ibn al Tufayl al Sanbasi. Al Irshad and I'lam al Wara narrate that Zayd ibn Warqa and Hakim ibn al Tufayl were among the most prominent assailants who struck the fatal blows upon al Abbas, and thus he was martyred.

May Allah's {AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon al Abbas ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Imam al Baqir {a.s} affirms that Zayd ibn Waqad al Jahni, also referred to as ibn Warqa al Hanafi, together with Hakim ibn Tufayl al Tai, jointly killed al Abbas after inflicting multiple wounds upon al Abbas ibn Ali at a time when al Abbas no longer possessed the strength to move. Sayyid Ibn Tawus narrates a similar account.

By now, Imam al Hussein {a.s} had closed much of the distance between himself and the place where al Abbas had fallen. The Imam {a.s} rode fiercely toward his brother, every fibre of his being driven by the desperate hope of reaching al Abbas before the enemy hacked him to death. The advance of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was filled with immense urgency.

The jubilant enemy, who moments earlier had crowded around the fallen hero, now fled further across the plain. Seeing Imam al Hussein {a.s} advancing with such ferocity, they scattered backward in fright.

Al Manaqib relates that at last Imam al Hussein {a.s} reached the place where al Abbas lay. The Imam {a.s} dismounted hurriedly and rushed toward al Abbas. But the sight that met the eyes of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was one of sheer brutality.

There lay al Abbas upon the burning ground near the banks of the Euphrates. His body had been torn by the blades of his enemies. The man who had been the shining moon of the Hashemites now lay eclipsed beneath dust and blood. His tall frame had been hacked apart, and his arms were gone. His head had been split open, and his body was overwhelmed and torn apart by wounds from swords and arrows.

Bihar al Anwar records that the scene before Imam al Hussein {a.s} was so grievous that even the Imam {a.s}, the embodiment of masterful patience and restraint, could no longer contain the anguish that surged within him.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that, turning toward the enemy, the Imam {a.s} raised his voice in bitter lament and condemnation, for the calamity that had befallen him was too immense:

“O wretched people, by this act you have transgressed all bounds and opposed the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad {saws}!

Did not the best of Messengers {saws} bequeath to you regarding us?!

Are we not from the progeny of the righteous Prophet {saws}? Is not al Zahra {s.a} my mother, from amongst you all?! Is not Ahmad {saws} the best of creation, from amongst all creation?!

Curse befell you, and you were humiliated on account of what you did, and very soon you will face the scorching fire of Hell!”

Al Malhuf relates that after uttering these words, Imam al Hussein {a.s} now grasped his blessed beard in his hand and wept bitterly. His intense weeping witnessed by the masses.

Again, Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the master of forbearance and patience now collapsed beside the body of al Abbas, hunched over in a grief that words could scarcely contain.

The Imam {a.s} gathered the lifeless form of his brother al Abbas into his embrace.

Yet the arms that had once wrapped around the Imam {a.s} in devotion and loyalty were no longer there. The mighty warrior who had stood as the shield of the camp and the pillar of his cause now lay broken before him.

For a while, Imam al Hussein {a.s} remained to grieve beside the body of al Abbas.

At last, Imam al Hussein {a.s} attempted to rise from the side of his brother. Yet when the Imam {a.s} tried to stand, his back would not bear him.

The strength of Imam al Hussein {a.s} seemed to have drained from his spine. It was as though the very backbone of the Imam {a.s} had been broken with the martyrdom of al Abbas. This loss had carved such devastation upon the heart of the Imam {a.s}.

It is recorded in Bihar al Anwar that Imam al Hussein {a.s} declared in anguish:

“Now my back has bent, and my movement has lessened.”

Likewise, al Khawarizmi and al Futuh report that the Imam {a.s} would lament repeatedly,

“Now my back is broken and my options reduced!”

From the distant tents, the voices of the women and children began to rise, their cries carried upon the desert wind. The anguished Imam {a.s} summoned within himself the strength of his father Imam Ali {a.s}. Leaning heavily upon the hilt of his sword, the Imam {a.s} forced his trembling body upright from beside the fallen hero.

The blood of al Abbas clung to his cloak and stained his noble face and beard.

Slowly, Imam al Hussein {a.s} began to labour back toward his steed, yet each step was heavy, burdened by grief.

After only a few paces, the Imam {a.s} turned and looked back, his gaze drawn helplessly toward the motionless body of al Abbas ibn Ali.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} laboured painfully to walk a few steps again, then turned once more to look behind him. It was as though his soul refused to leave his brother al Abbas behind. Tears streamed continuously down the cheeks of the Imam {a.s}.

Bent beneath the weight of sorrow, Imam al Hussein {a.s} gathered what strength remained within him. With immense effort, the Imam {a.s} mounted his steed once more and turned toward the camp.

But the further that Imam al Hussein {a.s} moved away from the body of al Abbas, the nearer the enemies crept toward it. Like vultures circling their prey, they began to gather around the fallen standard bearer al Abbas ibn Ali, drawn by greed and malice.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw them edging closer, yet the tragic reality of his situation forced the Imam {a.s} onward to the camp. The women and children awaited his return, and their protection now rested upon the Imam {a.s} alone.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} cast one final lingering gaze upon the body of his brother al Abbas.

Countless memories flooded before his eyes: the years of loyalty, the unwavering companionship, the supreme brother who had stood beside him through every trial.

Lifting his tear-filled eyes toward the heavens, Imam al Hussein {a.s} raised a silent plea. Then, turning toward the camp, the Imam {a.s} rode onward.

We shall forego narrating the harrowing wails that ascended from the tents of Imam al Hussein {a.s} as the Imam {a.s} returned from the banks of the Euphrates, alone and without his brother al Abbas ibn Ali. The hopes that the Ahlul Bayt {a.s} had bestowed upon al Abbas were immense, as truly merited by his character, but this made his tragedy all the more painful.

With the Imam {a.s} gone, the enemies descended upon the body of al Abbas ibn Ali with savage revulsion and cruelty. Even in death, their hatred had not been satisfied.

They hacked at his body, striking again and again, pouring their venom upon the fallen hero. They plundered whatever they could seize, stripping al Abbas of his belongings and garments.

Al Manaqib wa al Matalib records that the brutality did not cease until even the legs of al Abbas ibn Ali were hacked away from his blessed body.

Ibn Nima reports that Hakim ibn al Tufayl stripped the garments from al Abbas, while Sharh al Akhbar records that his weapons and armour were likewise taken by Hakim ibn al Tufayl al Tai. From the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the cruel jeers of the looters could be heard, along with the sickening thud of blades hacking upon the lifeless body of al Abbas.

Now, Imam al Hussein {a.s} was truly alone. The Imam {a.s} was now the only barrier for the vulnerable members of his household that desperately required his protection.

Soon thereafter, the hacking sounds from the killing fields ceased somewhat, as a rapture of celebration descended upon the desert. The mighty standard bearer of the Imam {a.s}, the moon of the Hashemites, the brother of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had been slain.

The body of al Abbas ibn Ali now lay torn and mutilated upon the sands, butchered by the very enemies who had feared him while he yet lived.

In the words of the infallible Imams {a.s}, al Abbas ibn Ali was highly praised for his selflessness, his foresight, his unwavering faith, his unmatched courage in battle, and the penetrating insight with which he served his Imam {a.s}. His merits are immeasurable.

Bihar al Anwar and Al Amali narrate from Thabit ibn Abi Safiyyah that after Ashura, whenever Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} saw Abdullah ibn al Abbas, the son of al Abbas, tears flowed from his eyes. Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} would then repeatedly say,

“May Allah {AZJ} have mercy upon al Abbas ibn Ali.

Al Abbas preferred others over himself and endured severe trials. He sacrificed himself for his brother al Hussein until both his arms were severed.

Allah {AZJ}, the Mighty and Sublime, has granted al Abbas two wings with which he flies in Paradise among the angels, just as Allah {AZJ} granted to Jafar ibn Abi Talib.

Al Abbas holds such an elevated station with Allah {AZJ} that on the Day of Resurrection, all the martyrs will envy his rank.”

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS OF THE IMAM {a.s}

Al Mufid narrates in al Irshad that Imam al Hussein {a.s} sat within his camp, weary, pain-stricken, and utterly alone. His companions had been martyred, his noble brothers cut down, and the standard of his cause had fallen with al Abbas ibn Ali.

Within the camp itself there remained only grief. The stillness was broken only by the cries of thirsty children and the soft, aching sobs of the bereaved women of his household.

The hour of Karbala’s final tragedy had now descended upon the best of creation, Imam al Hussein {a.s}. The battle had raged since the early morning of Ashura, and the weight of those long hours had settled upon his body.

The limbs of Imam al Hussein {a.s} were heavy with fatigue from relentless combat. Slashes from earlier engagements marked his blessed frame, and the thirst imposed upon the noble Imam {a.s} by the blockade of water had left his lips cracked and his strength diminished.

Yet even in this state, with great effort, Imam al Hussein {a.s} stood slowly.

His back had begun to stoop beneath the burden of injuries, sorrow, and the unbearable losses that had unfolded before his eyes. Blood still flowed from the injuries the Imam {a.s} had sustained, and the dust of the battleground clung to his body.

The sight of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had grown dim from intense fatigue and thirst.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} glanced around him. He turned to his right, but there was no one there. He turned to his left, yet again he saw no soul remain beside him.

The circle that had once surrounded the Imam {a.s} had vanished. The camp that had once been filled with voices of courage and companionship had fallen into a terrible stillness, and the air itself seemed to tighten around the Imam {a.s} in that heavy silence.

Earlier, during the final stage of the battle, when only three loyal companions still remained beside him, Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned to them with a request that revealed the depth of the tragedy unfolding. Al Malhuf narrates that the Imam {a.s} said to them,

“Bring me a garment which no one would desire, for I shall wear it beneath my clothes so that the enemy do not plunder my body.”

The savagery that had been unleashed upon his loyal companions had revealed the nature of the army that stood before the Imam {a.s}. They had not been satisfied with killing the righteous; they had begun to strip the fallen of their garments and possessions.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} knew well that the cowardly hordes assembled against him would show no reverence even for his sacred body.

These words themselves unveil the depth of his tragedy. That the blessed grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} should be forced to consider how his body might be protected from desecration at the hands of the wicked was itself a catastrophe beyond words.

“Peace be upon the one whose rights and dignity were violated.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub states that someone hurried forward carrying breeches. Yet Imam al Hussein {a.s} guarded the dignity that Allah {AZJ} had bestowed upon him.

The Imam {a.s} looked at the garment and gently shook his head. His voice was sombre.

“No. This is a garment of the non-Muslims, the Ahl al dhimmah.

This is a garment of humiliation, and it is not appropriate for me to wear it.”

Then they brought the Imam {a.s} something longer, it is reported that it was ‘not as long as trousers and not as small as shorts’, and the Imam {a.s} put that on.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that the Imam {a.s} then called for his fine Yemeni long-fringed shirt, a garment so radiant that its beauty drew the gaze of those who beheld it.

Tarikh al Tabari and Ibn Athir similarly report that Imam al Hussein {a.s} took this garment into his hands and began to cut it apart. With his own blessed hands, the Imam {a.s} tore it and pierced holes through it, altering its appearance so that it would no longer be desired.

Similarly, Al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had called for a pair of Yemeni cotton trousers, called ‘hibarah’, which the Imam {a.s} ripped before putting them on.

Other narrations report that Imam al Hussein {a.s} also called for a worn and simple shirt, which he likewise tore and wore beneath his clothes. Abu Mikhnaf records that the Imam {a.s} did this so that the garment would not be taken from him after his martyrdom.

In all of these reports, the intention of the Imam {a.s} was the same. He wished the garment to appear worthless and undesired, something that no plunderer would bother to take from his sacred body. When the Imam {a.s} had finished preparing it, he wore the garment beneath his outer clothes. Soon after this moment, the remaining companions who still stood beside him were also martyred one by one.

Now, Imam al Hussein {a.s} stood within the emptiness of his camp in complete estrangement. The weight of Karbala pressed upon that lonely moment.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} now prepared himself for the final moments that lay ahead.



THE FINAL FAREWELL OF THE IMAM {a.s}

Imam al Hussein {a.s} arose from his seating place, and turned toward the tents of his family. Having made his final preparations for the trial that lay ahead, the Imam {a.s} emerged from his tent and began to walk slowly toward the cluster of tents where the women and children of his household remained.

His steps were measured and heavy, weakened by the marks of battle, thirst, and the crushing fatigue of the long and terrible struggle. Dust and sweat clung to his body, and the marks of combat were visible upon his torn garments.

As Imam al Hussein {a.s} approached, small groups of orphaned children gathered around him. They pressed close to the Imam {a.s} anxiously, seeking comfort in his presence.

These were the orphans whose fathers and brothers had already fallen upon the plain of Karbala, and now they clung to the last remaining refuge they knew.

When Imam al Hussein {a.s} drew near to the tents, his pace slowed even further.

The Imam {a.s} paused for a moment, drawing a deep breath through the pain that gripped his chest. Raising his blessed hand, the Imam {a.s} wiped away the blood and dust that had settled upon his honoured face. With quiet effort, the Imam {a.s} concealed what he could of the injuries that marked his body, straightening his garments so that the severity of his wounds would not be immediately visible.

The sight of Imam al Hussein {a.s} at that moment was harrowing beyond measure. His body bore the clear traces of combat and fatigue, and yet the Imam {a.s} sought to conceal what he could of his suffering. He did not wish the women of his household to witness the full severity of his injuries, and so he composed himself before entering their sight, shielding their hearts from further distress during the few remaining moments they had together.

Nafasul Mahmoom relates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} then turned his face toward the tents of his family and called out softly, though the strain of pain trembled within his voice,

“O Sukaynah, O Fatimah, O Umm Kulthum. My salutations be upon you all.”

For a brief moment, the camp fell still. Those within the tents recognised the tone of his call and understood its meaning. The realisation spread quickly among them that the estranged Imam al Hussein {a.s} had come to bid them farewell.

A low murmur of anguish rose, and soon the stillness was broken by the sound of weeping and lamentation. The curtains of the tents were drawn aside, and they beheld the heartbreaking scene before them. Their Master, Imam al Hussein {a.s} now stood alone.

The courageous companions and noble youths of Banu Hashim who had once surrounded him like a shield were no longer there. The defenders who had stood before the Imam {a.s} upon the battlefield had all fallen.

Around the Imam {a.s} now remained only distressed women and orphaned children, their faces marked by sorrow as they gathered around the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

“Peace be upon the defender who had no helper, the loneliest of the lonely.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE FINAL ADVICE OF THE IMAM {a.s}

Having heard the solemn tone in her father's voice, a small figure emerged from the tent and hurried toward Imam al Hussein {a.s}, surrounded by the orphaned children who rushed forward to greet the Imam {a.s}.

It was the beloved daughter of the Imam {a.s}, Sayyidah Sukaynah bint al Hussein.

Throughout the long hours of that day, Sukaynah had watched the noble youths of Banu Hashim depart one after another. Each had come to bid farewell before riding out to the battleground, and yet none had returned.

The painful pattern of those partings had settled heavily upon her young heart. Now, as Sukaynah heard the same tone of farewell in her father's voice, a sudden dread seized her.

With hurried steps, Sukaynah reached the Imam {a.s} and grasped the edge of his cloak with her small hands, clinging tightly. When Imam al Hussein {a.s} felt the delicate tug upon his cloak, he stopped and glanced down with tenderness. Before the Imam {a.s} stood the small figure of his daughter, her eyes filled with fear and sorrow. Imam al Hussein {a.s} lowered himself to the ground, resting upon one knee so that he could lovingly attend to her words.

Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub records this tender exchange.

Sayyidah Sukaynah spoke, her voice trembling with innocence,

“O dear father, have you resolved to die?”

The question was simple, yet profoundly sorrowful. Imam al Hussein {a.s} extended his blessed hand and wiped a tear from his daughter's face. A faint smile appeared upon the face of the Imam {a.s}, and he answered her with deep gentleness, concealing the storm of sorrow that lay within his own heart.

“How could the one who has been bereaved of his friends and helpers not resolve to die?” Sayyidah Sukaynah listened to the words of her father in silence. Slowly, Sukaynah raised her hand and placed it upon the face of the Imam {a.s}, matted with sand and blood.

“O dear father,” she said with quiet desperation,

“then return us back to the sanctuary of our grandfather in Medinah.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} looked into the eyes of his daughter, his gaze lingering upon her face with a tenderness filled with love and sorrow. In that brief moment, the heart of a father silently embraced what words could not express. This would be the last time the Imam {a.s} would behold his beloved daughter in this world. Then the Imam {a.s} replied with a quiet epithet, heavy with meaning.

“Alas, if a sand grouse were released at night, it would sleep in peace.”

With these words, Imam al Hussein {a.s} tenderly released his daughter and gathered the strength to rise once more to his feet. The women of the household stood nearby, having listened to the exchange between father and daughter. When they heard these words, they understood their meaning. Imam al Hussein {a.s} had decided upon martyrdom.

At once, their voices rose in anguish and lamentation.

Despite the immense sorrow that weighed upon him, the Imam {a.s} turned toward the women of his household with patience and compassion, seeking to calm their anguish even while his own heart was torn with pain.

While Sayyidah Sukaynah still clung to the edge of his cloak, Nafasul Mahmoom relates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} addressed his sister, Sayyidah Umm Kulthum {s.a}, saying,

“I enjoin you toward goodness in matters concerning yourselves. I am now proceeding toward the battlefield amongst these enemies.”

Allamah al Majlisi relates in Jilaul Uyun that Imam al Hussein {a.s} once more bade farewell to his household. The Imam {a.s} urged them to remain steadfast and patient, promising them reward and recompense. The Imam {a.s} then said:

“Wear your veils and prepare yourselves for trials, and know that Allah {AZJ} is your protector and supporter. He {AZJ} will deliver you from the evil of the enemies and will make your end a noble one. His {AZJ} wrath will seize your enemies with many afflictions, while Allah {AZJ} will grant you blessings and wonders in place of these hardships.

Therefore, do not complain, nor utter anything that would diminish your rank.”

Having understood this to be the last farewell, Sayyidah Sukaynah now began to weep bitterly. Her small hands gripped the garment of her father as though refusing to release him.

The Imam {a.s} glanced down once more at the small figure beside him. One of her hands held tightly to his cloak while the other wiped away her tears. At the sight of his daughter's anguish, the eyes of the Imam {a.s} filled with tears.

Moved by the sorrow of his daughter, Imam al Hussein {a.s} drew her once more into his arms upon the burning sands of Karbala. Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub relates that the Imam {a.s} embraced her deeply, pressing her gently against his chest and wiping away her tears with tenderness. Then the Imam {a.s} spoke to her with words meant to soothe her.

Holding his daughter close, the Imam {a.s} spoke softly to her, saying,

“You should know, O my dear Sukaynah, that after me your weeping will be prolonged. Very soon you will weep after me when death has surrounded me. But until then, do not burn my heart with your tears of anguish while my soul still resides in my body.

When I am killed, you will have more right to weep over me, O the best of women.”

Within the warmth of her father's embrace, Sayyidah Sukaynah found a brief moment of solace. Her sobbing quieted as she listened to his gentle words, and for a short while, the noble Imam {a.s} remained there with Sukaynah.

But the moment could not endure. The time for farewell had come, and the estranged Imam al Hussein {a.s} now prepared himself to depart once more toward the battleground.

Slowly, the Imam {a.s} rose to his feet, steadying himself as he stood. Around him, the small hands of children still clung to his cloak, unwilling to release the last protector they had left.

Their sobs echoed throughout the camp, mingling with the lamentations of the women as their voices rose together in desperate anguish.

“O thirst! O thirst!”

THE FINAL WILL OF THE IMAM {a.s}

Before returning to the battlefield, one final and sacred duty remained for the valorous Imam al Hussein {a.s}. The divine trust of the Imamate had to be secured so that it would endure beyond the tragedy of Karbala. That trust now rested with his son, Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}. Within the quiet shelter of the tent, the young Imam {a.s} lay weakened by illness on the day of Ashura, his frail body confined to the bedding upon which he rested.

It is related from Imam al Baqir {a.s} that when Imam al Hussein {a.s} resolved to embrace martyrdom, the Imam {a.s} summoned his eldest daughter, Lady Sayyidah Fatimah. To her, the Imam {a.s} entrusted a sealed envelope together with an open testament. Placing these into her care, he instructed that they be delivered afterwards to Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}, thereby ensuring that the sacred inheritance would pass safely to him.

Ithbat al Wasiyyah of Masudi, narrate that the Imam {a.s} himself entered the tent of his ailing son. Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} lay stricken with illness, his body too weak to rise.

There, Imam al Hussein {a.s} spoke to Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} and made known to him the final bequests of the Imamate. Among these were the disclosure of the ‘Greatest Name of Allah {AZJ}’, ‘al ism al a'dham’, and the entrusted heritage of the prophets.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} informed Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} that certain works of knowledge, manuscripts, divine scriptures, and sacred armaments had already been deposited with Lady Umm Salamah, and that she had been instructed to deliver these trusts into his hands.

When these affairs of the Imamate had been placed securely in their proper order, Imam al Hussein {a.s} gazed tenderly toward his son. The traces of combat had begun to show upon his sacred body, and fatigue weighed heavily upon the Imam {a.s}.

Leaning with care toward Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}, the Imam {a.s} drew him close and embraced him with the tenderness of a father’s final farewell. That embrace carried a profound meaning, for within it lay the transmission of trust, knowledge, and patience that would sustain the household of the Prophet after Karbala. ²⁰⁵ Imam al Hussein {a.s} said to him,

“O dear son, memorise the supplication which Sayyidah Fatimah received from the Prophet of Allah {saws}, who in turn received it from Jibrail and which was handed down to me. It is beneficial for the fulfillment of all desires, in important matters, anxieties, harsh circumstances, and vital tasks.” ²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Al Kafi, quoting Abu Hamzah al Thumali, preserves this moment from Imam al Baqir {a.s}: “When death approached my father Ali ibn al Hussein, he hugged me to his chest and said, ‘O son! I leave to you what was bequeathed to me by my father in his last moments, and the knowledge that his own father had passed on to him.’ Then he said, ‘O son, beware lest you behave unjustly with someone who has no supporter against you except Allah {AZJ}.’”

²⁰⁶ This embrace left an indelible mark upon Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}, a memory he recalled after the tragedy of Karbala had passed. Qutb al Din al Rawandi records in his Dawat that Imam {a.s} would lament, “On the tenth of Muharram, my father pressed me to his heart while blood was flowing from him, and he said, ‘O dear son! Memorize the supplication which Sayyidah Fatimah received from the Prophet of Allah {saws}, who in turn received it from Jibrail and which was handed down to me. It is beneficial for the fulfillment of all desires, in important matters, anxieties, harsh circumstances, and vital tasks.’”

Then Imam al Hussein {a.s} removed his signet Imamate ring, a ring that had been handed down through the blessed lineage of the Imams {a.s}.

It had passed from the noble Messenger of Allah {saws} to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali {a.s}, then to Imam al Hasan {a.s}, and from him to Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Now, the Imam {a.s} placed it softly into the hand of his son, Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}, another trust to show that the guardianship of the divine trust would continue through him.

With this final responsibility fulfilled, Imam al Hussein {a.s} prepared to depart once more. The Imam {a.s} stepped out from the quiet shelter of the tent and returned once more to the open plain of Karbala. Sayyid Ibn Tawus narrates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} stepped out from the tent and took hold of the reins of his horse.

Having already bid farewell to the camp and to his son, the noble Imam {a.s} walked forward a short distance across the burning sands of Karbala.

As he moved, the contrast with the early hours of that same morning came vividly before him. Only a few hours earlier, whenever the Imam {a.s} had approached his steed, eager hands would rush forward for the honour of helping him mount. Loving companions and devoted kinsmen would gather around him, each one hoping to serve the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}. But now the battlefield had fallen silent around him in a different way.

Those loyal hands had been severed from this world. Those noble companions had attained martyrdom one after another. And the Imam {a.s}, now left without helper or supporter, stood beside his horse alone.

Memories passed before the Imam {a.s}: his brother al Abbas, the standard-bearer of loyalty; Ali al Akbar, who resembled the Messenger of Allah {saws}; al Qasim, the beloved son of Imam al Hasan {a.s}; and the other youths of his household, along with his most faithful companions.

Only hours earlier, they had stood around the Imam {a.s} with devotion, each one ready to sacrifice his life before him. Now their bodies lay scattered upon the plain of Karbala, struck by swords, pierced by arrows, and torn by lances.

The sight of their wounds and mutilated bodies was seared into the memory of the noble Imam {a.s}. To recall the state of his loved ones, struck down, hacked, and butchered before his eyes, bore devastation upon his heart. In those final moments of solitude, each remembrance of theirs added grief upon grief, the weight of their loss was devastating upon him.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned his gaze back toward the camp one final time.

Smoke rose faintly above the tents. The sobs of orphaned children pierced the still air of the desert, and the women of the household stood watching in stunned silence, their eyes fixed upon him as he prepared to depart.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned his face away and drew a long and heavy breath. Summoning all of his strength, he gathered the reins and, with effort, lifted himself onto his steed.

This time, Imam al Hussein {a.s} emerged from the camp alone, the desert wind rising around him, and rode out to make his final stand.

THE FINAL SERMON OF THE IMAM {a.s}

Imam al Hussein {a.s} rode forward across the plain of Karbala until the Imam {a.s} reached the vast ranks of the enemy assembled before him. There, the Imam {a.s} halted his steed and drew himself upright upon the saddle. His body bore the wounds and fatigue of the long struggle, yet his bearing remained filled with dignity.

Within Imam al Hussein {a.s} burned the most intense love of Allah {AZJ}; upon his tongue was the eloquence of the Messenger of Allah {saws}; and in his presence shone the courage of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s} and his brother Imam al Hasan {a.s}.

Tadhkirat al Khawass, quoting Hisham ibn Muhammad, relates that even in this final hour, the merciful Imam al Hussein {a.s} did not abandon his call to guide those who had gathered to shed his blood. Though they had surrounded the Imam {a.s} with swords and spears, he still opened before them a path toward salvation.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} took a copy of the Qur'an, opened it, and placed it upon his blessed head. Then the Imam {a.s} called out to them, his voice strained by thirst:

“The Book of Allah {AZJ}, and my grandfather Muhammad {saws}, the honourable Messenger of Allah {saws}, stand as a judge between me and you.

O people, why do you consider my blood lawful to shed?!”

His words carried across the plain of Karbala. Yet the formations before the Imam {a.s} remained unmoved. Al Malhuf relates that this moment completed the proof against them, the ‘itmam al hujjah’, so that none among them could later claim ignorance. Even now, the mercy of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had not faded. Raising his voice again, the Imam {a.s} called out,

“Is there anyone who will defend the family of the Prophet of Allah {AZJ}?

Is there any monotheist who will fear Allah {AZJ} with regard to our rights?

Is there any helper who will come to assist us for the sake of Allah {AZJ}?

Is there any helper who desires Allah’s {AZJ} reward for supporting us?”

The appeals of Imam al Hussein {a.s} rang across the battlefield, but no voice answered him.

The vast army that stood before the Imam {a.s} remained silent, and none stepped forward to defend the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

Bihar al Anwar relates that the Imam {a.s} then cast his gaze across the battleground, searching among the ranks for any soul who might answer his call. But none came forward.

Those who had gathered against him believed that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had been left entirely alone. The sounds of their horses grew louder, and the metallic clatter of armour and weapons crept steadily closer toward the camp.

Muthir al Ahzan, quoting from Humayd ibn Muslim, relates that when the voice of the Imam {a.s} carried across the open plain and reached the tents of his household behind him, the women and children heard the desperation of his call and realised that no one had answered the Imam {a.s}, and grief spread anew through the camp.

Hearing their cries, Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned his steed and looked back toward the tents.

Within those tents remained the most precious trust of the Imam {a.s}: the continuation of the Imamate itself. As the clamour of the enemy drew nearer, Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}, though weakened by severe illness and scarcely able to stand, emerged from his tent.

His heart was seized with anguish as he beheld the loneliness of his noble father.

Sayyidah Umm Kulthum {s.a} followed after him and called out, “O dear son, return back.”

But the young Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} replied with determination,

“O dear Aunt, leave me, so that I may strive for the son of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.”

When Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s}, his heart was moved with compassion and concern. Bihar al Anwar states that the Imam {a.s} commanded,

“O Umm Kulthum, take him and return him to the tent, lest no successor from the household of Muhammad {saws} remain alive upon this earth.”



THE MARTYRDOM OF ALI AL ASGHAR IBN AL HUSSEIN

Al Ihtijaj narrates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned his face away from the heedless ranks of the enemy and walked slowly toward the entrance of the tents. His body had been worn by the trials of the day, and the strain of combat had left his sacred frame weakened.

As Imam al Hussein {a.s} approached the camp, he heard the cries of a baby. Standing at the threshold of the tents, the Imam {a.s} called for Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}, saying, “Bring me my young son, so that I may bid him farewell.”

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that a nursing child, wrapped softly in cloth, was brought forth to Imam al Hussein {a.s}. This infant was Abdullah ibn al Hussein, known as Ali al Asghar, the youngest son of the Imam {a.s}, born to Lady al Rabab, the daughter of Imru al Qays al Kalbi.

They placed the child into the arms of his father. Imam al Hussein {a.s} held the infant close to his chest and began to kiss him with paternal gentleness.

Looking upon the small face of his child, Imam al Hussein {a.s} said, “O my dear child, woe be unto these people on the day when their accuser will be your honourable grandfather, Muhammad {saws}.”

Tadhkirat al Khawass relates that the Imam {a.s} then turned toward the enemy and addressed them. His voice, though softened by grief and weakened by thirst, carried:

“O people! Even if in your eyes I am guilty, surely this baby has committed no crime. Grant him a sip of water.”

The thirst had weakened the baby severely. The long deprivation of water had drained the small body of strength. The lips of the child opened and closed faintly, as though desperately searching for a drop of water, while only the lightest breaths escaped from his mouth.

“Peace be upon the parched lips. Peace be upon the suckling infant.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Imam al Hussein {a.s} glanced upon Ali al Asghar with compassion. The infant’s eyes peered back toward his father, faintly glistening beneath the harsh light of the desert. His tiny hands moved weakly within the folds of the cloth, reaching toward the Imam {a.s}. The Imam {a.s} now lifted the child slightly, drawing him nearer so that he might kiss his parched lips.

In that very moment, the accursed Harmalah ibn Kahil al Asadi released an arrow toward the Imam {a.s}. Before Imam al Hussein {a.s} could raise the child further, the arrow struck the tender neck of Ali al Asghar. A sudden stream of blood burst forth from the throat of the infant. His small body jolted violently in the arms of his father, as the arrow tore through the delicate neck that had been dried by thirst and weakened by the heat of Karbala.

The child, who had been brought before them only so that water might be requested for him, was met not with compassion, but with the sharpness of an arrow.

The enemy had not even the faintest trace of mercy. Some narrations report that the force of the strike was so severe that Ali al Asghar was cast from the arms of Imam al Hussein {a.s} onto the ground, while others describe that the arrow nearly severed the head of the child.

May Allah’s {AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Ali al Asghar ibn al Hussein ibn Ali.

Shaykh al Mufid similarly relates in al Irshad that while Imam al Hussein {a.s} sat near the tents holding the infant, a man from the Bani Asad shot an arrow that killed the child.

There, upon the burning sands of Karbala, the smallest body among the martyrs lay drenched in blood. Imam al Hussein {a.s} bent down and gathered the small form with both hands, lifting Ali al Asghar from the ground and drawing him close to his blessed chest.

The blood from the torn neck flowed upon the hands of the Imam {a.s}, staining his garments and darkening the sands beneath them.

Yet even in that crushing moment, Imam al Hussein {a.s} remained composed. He placed his hand beneath the gushing wound, and his palm quickly filled with the blood of Ali al Asghar, the youngest of the martyrs. The Imam {a.s} looked upon the warm blood gathered in his hand and cast it toward the heavens, saying:

“Whatever hardship is easier for me to bear when Allah {AZJ} is the Beholder.”

Azdi narrates from Aqabah ibn Basheer al Asadi that Imam al Baqir {a.s} relates that now Imam al Hussein {a.s} again placed his hand beneath the flowing blood from the child’s neck.

By then, it flowed more slowly, for much of it had already left the little body.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} cast it toward the heavens. Al Malhuf and Bihar al Anwar narrate that not a single drop fell back to the earth.

Tarikh al Ya'qubi further narrates that the Imam {a.s} removed the arrow from the throat of the infant and carefully spread the blood upon the child’s body, saying:

“By Allah {AZJ}, you are more honorable in the sight of Allah {AZJ} than the she-camel of Prophet Salih, just as Prophet Muhammad {saws} is more honorable in the sight of Allah {AZJ} than Prophet Salih.”

Al Irshad narrates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} then gazed toward the heavens and said:

“O Allah {AZJ}! If You have withheld help from the heavens, then bring forth from this a greater good, and take vengeance for us upon these oppressive people.”

Tarikh al Tabari narrates from Ammar al Duhni that Imam al Baqir {a.s} recounts that the Imam {a.s} wiped the blood of Ali al Asghar upon his own body while saying:

“O Allah {AZJ}! Judge between us and those who invited us, pledging to support us, but then turned against us and killed us.”

The tragedy of Ali al Asghar was so immense that Tadhkirat al Khawass narrates that a voice was heard from the heavens calling out to the Imam {a.s}:

“Leave him, O Hussein, for Ali al Asghar has a maid awaiting to nurse him in Paradise.”

A silence fell upon the awestruck enemy formations as they witnessed the supreme patience of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. With tears in his eyes and the blood of his child upon his hands, the Imam {a.s} stood upon the plain holding the lifeless body of Ali al Asghar.

Throughout that day, Imam al Hussein {a.s} had carried the bodies of his sons, his companions, and his brothers. Yet the small body of this infant was the heaviest burden of them all.

Turning away from the battlefield, the Imam {a.s} walked slowly back toward the camp, clutching the bloodied bundle against his chest.

Al Ihtijaj narrates that after walking some distance toward the camp, the Imam {a.s} stopped. There, upon the sands of Karbala, Imam al Hussein {a.s} placed the tiny body upon the ground. Using the sheath of his sword, the Imam {a.s} began to dig a small grave in the earth.

Mohammad ibn Talha quotes in his Matalib al Su'ul, from the book Al Futuh, that with trembling hands the Imam {a.s} prepared a resting place for his child.

For the last time, Imam al Hussein {a.s} gazed upon the face of Ali al Asghar. The radiant eyes that had looked toward him moments before were now still. The small hands that had reached toward him no longer moved. The faint breaths of the infant had ceased.

Bihar al Anwar states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} then placed the small body tenderly into the grave and buried his moon-like baby beneath the sand.

Then Imam al Hussein {a.s} rose slowly from the grave. Dust and blood clung to his garments, and his cloak had grown dark with the blood of his infant son, Ali al Asghar.



THE LONE BATTLE OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

The long ordeal that had carried Imam al Hussein {a.s} from Medinah to the desolate plains of Karbala had now reached its final and most tragic moment. His beloved sons had been slain before his eyes. His steadfast brothers had fallen upon the battlefield.

The loyal companions of the Imam {a.s} had given their lives one after another in his defence.

Now, Imam al Hussein {a.s} was truly alone.

“Peace be upon the defender who had no helper, the oppressed one.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Nafasul Mahmoom and al Ihtijaj narrate that the lonely Imam {a.s} now mounted and rode forth toward the battleground, the last defender of the household of the Prophet {saws},

The claws of Banu Umayyah had already gnawed deep into his flesh. The traces of combat marked his blessed body, and every wound bore witness to the struggle the Imam {a.s} had endured since the morning of Ashura. The burning thirst that had tormented the camp since the river was seized pressed ever more fiercely upon him, drying his lips.

Yet though fatigue had begun to weigh upon his sacred frame, the dignity of the Imam {a.s} remained unbroken. His bearing was upright, his faith unshaken, and the light of certainty shone from his countenance.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} guided his steed steadily forward until the Imam {a.s} stood before the vast host. Before him stretched the formations of the enemy, their numbers swelling to nearly thirty thousand men, their banners crowding the horizon with spears. Their voices rose in jeers and shouts of mockery, for they sensed that the combat was nearing its conclusion.

The Imam {a.s} reined in his horse and cast his gaze across the army.

His eyes moved slowly over the sea of faces, men who thirsted for his blood and hoped to earn the reward promised for his murder. Yet when Imam al Hussein {a.s} raised his voice above the tumult of the battlefield, a strange stillness fell upon them.

The clamour faded, and the gathered ranks listened, struck silent by the force of his words and the majesty of his speech. Al Ihtijaj relates that the Imam {a.s} declared:

“The nation has disbelieved and turned its face away from the reward of the Lord of the worlds; the nation killed Ali and his son al Hasan, the excellent, the son of esteemed parents.

They were filled with hatred and rancour, and they called upon people and have now gathered to fight Hussein.

Woe be to the ignoble nation that assembled in groups to fight the people of the Two Sacred Sanctuaries!

Thus they departed while inviting others towards obedience to the apostates, opposing Allah {AZJ} to shed my blood for the sake of Ubayd Allah, from the progeny of the polytheists!

The son of Sa'd has killed me aggressively with the help of an army like torrential rain, and all this was not in retribution for any crime committed by me, except that my pride is in the two stars: Ali, who was the best after the Prophet {saws}, and the Prophet {saws}, who was the son of Qurayshite parents!”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} glanced at the hordes of baying enemies before him, and said:

“My father is the best among men, and I am the son of the two best ones, silver that has emerged from gold. I am the silver, the son of the two golden ones.

Is there among men anyone whose grandfather is like my grandfather, or whose father is like my father? I am the son of the two best ones. My mother is Fatimah al Zahra {s.a}.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} continued to proclaim his lineage before the enemy, reminding the gathered army of the house whose blood they had resolved to shed:

“My father, Ali, is the one who shattered the ranks of the polytheists in the battles of Badr and Hunayn, and who worshipped the Lord {AZJ} from childhood while the Quraysh worshipped idols, ‘al Lat’ and ‘al Uzza’.

My father, Ali, is the one who prayed facing the two Qiblahs.

My father is the sun, my mother is the moon, and I am the star, the son of the two luminous ones. He displayed such wonders on the day of Uhud that warded off envy, splitting the armies, and likewise in the battle of Ahzab and the conquest of Mecca, where death prevailed among the forces, all in the way of Allah {AZJ}.

Yet how has this debased nation dealt with the two children, the progeny of the righteous Prophet {saws} and of Ali, like red roses on the day when the armies clashed?”

No answer came from the enemy ranks before the Imam {a.s}.

Muhammad ibn Abi Talib records that Abu Ali al Salami relates in his history that then Imam al Hussein {a.s} recited words of reflection:

“Although this world is considered pleasant, the reward of the most glorious Allah {AZJ} is greater and more enduring.

If the body is created for death, then martyrdom in the way of Allah {AZJ} is best for man.

If sustenance is apportioned and assured, then man should not exhaust himself in seeking it.

If the gathering of wealth ends in leaving it behind, then why should man be consumed by greed and amassing of it in this world?”

Yet no voice rose among the enemy in answer; their hearts were hardened, and their courage diminished before the Imam {a.s}.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} was clothed in the cloak of his grandfather, Muhammad {saws}, the Messenger of Allah {saws}. Upon his blessed body rested the garment of prophecy, a reminder to the gathered enemy of the noble house against which they had raised their swords.

The Imam {a.s} then drew forth the sword of his father, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}, the very blade that had once struck terror into the armies of disbelief and had defended the truth in the most decisive battles of Islam. Before them now stood the inheritance of prophethood and Imamate combined: wounded, thirsty, and bereaved, yet still unbroken.

The legacy of his courage stood embodied before the gathered enemy, an army assembled for his death. The moment for which Karbala had been destined had now arrived. Like his brother al Abbas before him, the Imam {a.s} appeared wearied of the world itself.

Nafasul Mahmoom states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} urged his steed forward into the formations of his enemies, his sword raised high, proclaiming:

“I am the son of Ali, the chaste, from the progeny of Hashim, and this honour is sufficient for me whenever I take pride!

My grandfather is the Messenger of Allah {saws}, the most eminent among all.

We are the lanterns of Allah {AZJ} among His creation.

My mother is Sayyidah Fatimah al Zahra, the daughter of Ahmad {saws}.

My uncle Jafar is known as the possessor of two wings.

Among us is the Book of Allah {AZJ}, revealed in truth.

Within us lies lawfulness, and the revelation proclaimed with goodness.

We are the trusts of Allah {AZJ} among mankind, and we declare openly and in secret that we hold authority at the spring of Kawthar.

We shall give our followers to drink from the cup of the Prophet {saws}, a drink that cannot be denied. Our followers are the most eminent of followers, and whoever bears enmity toward us shall be doomed on the Day of Qiyamah.”

According to al Malhuf, with the sword unsheathed in his hand, Imam al Hussein {a.s} then summoned the enemy to single combat, as was the custom of the Arabs.

No one dared face the Imam {a.s}. They had settled to shed his blood.

The final battle of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had now begun.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} spurred his horse into the mass of soldiers that surrounded him. His assault was ferocious. Whoever dared draw near to strike the Imam {a.s} was cut down instantly. Blow after blow fell from the sword of the Imam {a.s}, and men who moments before had roared with arrogance now fell lifeless upon the dust. Imam al Hussein {a.s} carved through them at will, striking and withdrawing, until the bodies of the slain began to heap one upon another.

“You (al Hussein) stood firm to spear and strike.” Ziyarat Nahiya



THE KUFAN ARMY BUCKLES

As Imam al Hussein {a.s} beheld the enemy gathering in force upon the right flank, he would then circle his steed and drive forward into their ranks, as narrated by Nafasul Mahmoom. The dust of the battleground rose around the Imam {a.s}, mingling with the heat of the day, and the clash of steel rang out across the plain of Karbala.

Though the body of the Imam {a.s} already bore the marks of combat, and though the strain of the day had begun to weigh upon him, the Imam {a.s} advanced deeper into their formations.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} struck fiercely at the right wing of the army and declared:

“Death is better than submission to humiliation,
And humiliation is better than entering the fire of Hell!”

By this assault, the right wing of the army of Umar ibn Sa'd buckled beneath the fury of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Cavalry and foot soldiers alike faltered before him.

Their formation collapsed as men dispersed in fear, their ranks torn apart by the relentless assault of the Imam {a.s}. Horses reared, shields were cast aside, and the soldiers fell back in confusion as their flank crumbled and gave way.

No sooner had the right wing been shattered than Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw the foe attempting to gather again upon the left flank. Without pause, the Imam {a.s} turned his steed and drove toward them, spurring forward into their formations.

His sword rose and fell as the Imam {a.s} struck at the left wing of the army and declared:

“I am al Hussein ibn Ali! I have sworn never to surrender to the enemy!
I am the defender of the family of my father,
And I shall remain so until I die upon the path of the Prophet {saws}!”

The left flank of the army of Umar ibn Sa'd now faltered beneath the unyielding assault of the Imam {a.s}, whose advance showed no sign of retreat.

Al Irshad narrates that Humayd ibn Muslim witnessed the supreme combat of Imam {a.s},
“By Allah {AZJ}, I have not seen a more valorous man like al Hussein, one who has been struck by the loss of his sons, his household, and his companions.

Whenever the foot soldiers attacked him, al Hussein drove them back with his sword, scattering them to the right and left like a wolf attacking goats.”

Another narrator in al Malhuf states:

“Al Hussein continued charging their ranks, and although they numbered thirty thousand, they dispersed before him as though they were scattering locusts.”

Another narrator in al Tabaqat al Kubra states:

“Al Hussein withstood the enemy alone for a portion of the day. We had never seen such determination. He fought with immense courage, attacking them like a valiant knight; wherever he charged, he scattered them like a lion attacking goats.”

“The enemy rushed to engage you in combat, descended swiftly upon you, showering you with arrows and stones, and moving towards you with uprooting hands.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Such was the spectacle witnessed upon the field of Karbala.

The army of thousands fled from the might of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, and the Imam {a.s} pressed the attack again and again, striking first one formation and then another.

Yet wherever Imam al Hussein {a.s} advanced, they recoiled and fled before him.

“You were in the front line of the storm of battle, enduring afflictions.” Ziyarat Nahiya

The dust of the battlefield clung to the garments of the Imam {a.s}, and sweat ran across his face beneath the blazing sun. Small wounds marked his body, and the edge of fatigue had begun to touch his limbs. Yet the force of his advance did not diminish.

Still now, wherever the Imam {a.s} drove his horse, the enemy formations crumpled.

It is related in Isbatul Wasiyyah that the Imam {a.s} slew more than one thousand eight hundred warriors in the course of his assaults. Other traditions, cited in Bihar al Anwar from Ibn Shahr Ashub and Muhammad ibn Abi Talib, place the number closer to one thousand nine hundred and fifty, excluding the injured.

Likewise, Matalib al Su'ul and al Futuh record that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had slain many of the enemy, including several of their notable warriors.

Another witness of the battleground, Abdullah ibn Ammar al Bariqi, recounts that the infantry regrouped and again rushed toward Imam al Hussein {a.s}, seeking to attack the valiant Imam {a.s} from his right and from his left.

Al Bariqi himself was overcome with awe at the combat of the Imam {a.s}.²⁰⁷ He later declared:

“By Allah {AZJ}, I have never seen a man broken, whose sons, family members, and companions had all been slain, more composed in heart, stronger in spirit, and bolder in his advance than al Hussein.

By Allah {AZJ}, I have not seen the like of him before nor after. The infantry would scatter from his right and his left like goats fleeing when a wolf charges into them.”

From his position behind the lines, the accursed Umar ibn Sa'd watched in growing fury as his army was torn apart before his eyes. The commanders of his right and left flanks had been broken, and the very core of his forces had been dispersed before a single warrior.

Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub states that Umar ibn Sa'd, enraged and humiliated by what he saw, shouted to his soldiers and attempted to provoke them by insulting the exalted father of the Imam {a.s}, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}. The cowardly Umar ibn Sa'd barked:

“Woe be to you! Do you know with whom you fight?!”

Umar ibn Sa'd then sought to incite them further with vile insults:

“This is the son of the bald, pot-bellied one! He is the son of the killer of the Arabs! Attack him from every direction!”

²⁰⁷ That Abdullah ibn Ammar should bear such witness carries immense weight. He was the very narrator who transmitted the account of the Imam Ali {a.s} ordering the building of the bridge over the Euphrates during his march to Siffin in the year 26 AH. He had witnessed the battles of Imam Ali {a.s} and the campaigns of Imam al Hasan {a.s}, and he had seen the clash of armies more than once, and many notable warriors. Yet even then, Abdullah ibn Ammar confessed that nothing he had ever witnessed resembled the defiance of Imam al Hussein {a.s} amidst such merciless estrangement and brutality.

At this command, the soldiers abandoned any attempt to face the Imam {a.s} in open combat. Nafasul Mahmoom and al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub narrate that four thousand archers surged forward, accompanied by one hundred and eighty lancers.

They advanced together and loosed volleys of arrows and hurled lances toward the noble Imam al Hussein {a.s}, seeking to prevent him from advancing.

Using the arrows as cover, the armies that had fled before the Imam {a.s} regrouped once more. Their positions tightened as they attempted to mount an assault upon him from every direction. The path toward the tents narrowed as the soldiers pressed forward, seeking to surround Imam al Hussein {a.s} and overwhelm him with a storm of arrows.

“Hence, you stood firm to spear and strike, pulverized the soldiers of the transgressors, and stormed courageously into the dust of the battle, fighting with ‘Dhulfaqr’ as if you were Ali, the chosen one. You pursued the path of your grandfather and your father.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

THE ATTEMPTS TO REACH THE EUPHRATES

The anguished cries erupted from the camps of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

“O thirst! O thirst!”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} sought to relieve their thirst and thus turned his steed toward the Euphrates. Upon its banks stood a vast contingent of four thousand soldiers, the very same force that had mercilessly butchered his beloved brother al Abbas.

Hisham relates, through Amr ibn Shamir from Jabir al Jufi, that the Imam {a.s} himself was overcome by such intense thirst that it became unbearable for him and for those who remained in the camp. The Imam {a.s} spurred his steed forward and fought his way through the thickets of the enemy formations, striving to reach the waters of the Euphrates.

It is narrated in Bihar al Anwar that Abul Faraj relates that as Imam al Hussein {a.s} advanced further toward the Euphrates, the Imam {a.s} struck down those who stood before him until he drew near to the river. Though his strength had been worn by combat and his movements had grown slower beneath the burden of thirst, the courage that burned within the Imam {a.s} had not diminished. The enemy scattered once more before the force of his assault.

Bihar al Anwar states that then a familiar voice rang out from behind their ranks. It was the cruel Shimr: “You shall not go toward the river! Rather, you shall go toward the Fire!”

Al Futuh states that every time Imam al Hussein {a.s} attempted to force his way to the Euphrates, the soldiers descended upon him and drove him back, denying the Imam {a.s} access to the water. Surrounded on all sides, the Imam {a.s} stood once more, his chest rising with each breath, the torment of thirst pressing upon him.

His blessed frame, though weakened, remained unbowed before the adversary.

Some narrations relate that Imam al Hussein {a.s} was repeatedly driven back from the river, while other reports record that through the force of his assault the Imam {a.s} briefly broke through the guard and reached the banks of the Euphrates.

Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub records from Abu Mikhnaf, who narrates from Jaludi, that Imam al Hussein {a.s} launched an assault upon Aawar Salami and Amr ibn Hajjaj Zubaydi, along with the four thousand men who guarded the banks of the Euphrates.

Though the foe closed around him, the Imam {a.s} cut through them with unyielding valor until he finally reached the banks of the river.

As his brother al Abbas had once defied these same guards of the Euphrates, so too did the Imam {a.s} now force his way through them toward the river.

Abu Mikhnaf further recounts from Jaludi that the Imam {a.s} entered the river upon his steed. When the horse lowered its mouth toward the water, Imam al Hussein {a.s} addressed his loyal companion:

“O my horse! You are thirsty, and so am I. Until you drink, I shall not quench my thirst.”

In that moment, the enemies beheld once again that their claim of controlling the waters had been shattered before them, for the Imam {a.s} had forced his way through their formations and reached the banks of the Euphrates.

Even the steed of the Imam {a.s} stood distinguished among the beasts that encircled the camps of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}, for it recognized the authority of its master.

Nafasul Mahmoom relates that when the loyal horse of the Imam {a.s} heard these words, the parched and weary animal lifted its head from the water and refrained from drinking, as though it had understood what its master had said.

By now, the encircling army, unable to overcome the Imam {a.s} or force him away from the river, resorted to deceit. Ibn Shahr Ashub relates that Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Jaludi that one of the enemy called out:

“O Aba Abdillah! You drink water in ease while your tents are being plundered!”

Hearing this cry, Imam al Hussein {a.s} immediately turned his steed away from the river and rode back toward the camps, cleaving through the ranks that closed before him.

The cry had been a deceitful stratagem, and as the Imam {a.s} battled through them to return toward the tents, an adversary from among them named Hussein ibn Tamim loosed an arrow that struck the mouth of the Imam {a.s}.

Tadhkirat al Khawass, quoting Hisham ibn Muhammad, states that blood flowed from the mouth and lips of the Imam {a.s}. The Imam {a.s} pulled the arrow free, gathered the gushing blood into his palm, then cast it toward the heavens.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} then supplicated against the opponent before him:

“O Allah {AZJ}! I complain to You {AZJ} regarding how they have dealt with me, my brothers, my sons, and my family.”

The enemy saw that they could not halt the advance of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Unable to overcome the Imam {a.s} upon the battlefield, they turned instead toward a more cowardly design. Though overcome by fatigue, Imam al Hussein {a.s} now charged toward them with such ferocity that the enemy resorted to increasingly treacherous tactics.

THE ASSAULT ON THE TENTS

Tarikh al Tabari relates, through Abu Mikhnaf, that when the opponent beheld how fiercely Imam al Hussein {a.s} had torn through their ranks, the accursed Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan realised that so long as the Imam {a.s} remained engaged upon the battlefield, the army of Kufah would continue to crumble before him.

Thus, Shimr devised a plan to strike terror into the camp of the Imam {a.s}. Unable to overcome Imam al Hussein {a.s} directly on the battlefield, and seeing how his presence alone unsettled the ranks of the enemy, Shimr turned his malice toward the tents, where the women and children of the household of the Prophet {saws} remained.

If fear and alarm could be raised among the tents, Imam al Hussein {a.s} would be compelled to turn back toward his family. His attention would no longer remain fixed upon the battlefield alone, but would be torn between confronting the army before him and protecting the sanctuary of his household behind him. The cries of the children, the distress of the women, and the threat against the camp would weigh upon the heart of the Imam {a.s}, forcing him to divide his strength between two fronts. In that moment of disruption, the forces of Umar ibn Sa'd might surround Imam al Hussein {a.s} and recover their shattered positions.

Al Fusul al Muhimmah states that Shimr therefore gathered about ten riders from among the Kufans, selecting hardened men from among their warriors, and drove them toward the camp of the Imam {a.s}, where his household and belongings remained, overcome in terror.

Their approach was sudden and deliberate. At once, shouts rose from the soldiers who stood before Imam al Hussein {a.s}. They jeered and mocked the Imam {a.s}, crying out that his camp and his family were under attack.

Hearing these calls, Imam al Hussein {a.s} immediately broke off his assault. He wheeled his steed sharply and rode back toward the tents. His movement was swift, yet the strain of the day had begun to weigh upon him. His body was already marked with wounds, his strength diminished by thirst and fatigue, yet the thought of danger approaching the women and children drove the Imam {a.s} forward.

But before Imam al Hussein {a.s} could reach the camp, the soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd surged forward and barred his path, preventing him from returning to the sanctuary of his household.

When Imam al Hussein {a.s} saw the enemy obstructing his path to the tents, he rebuked them loudly, as recorded by Muhammad ibn Abi Talib, Ibn Shahr Ashub, and ibn Tawus:

“Shame on you, O followers of the family of Abu Sufyan!

Stop your madmen from going toward the women and children, for they have not fought against you!”

Al Tabari states that when the enemy did not respond, the Imam {a.s} admonished them again:

“Woe unto you! If you have no religion, and you do not fear the Day of Return, then at least be free men in your worldly affairs, possessing a semblance of honour, if you are from the progeny of the Arabs! Keep your scoundrels and foolish men away from my household!”

The words of Imam al Hussein {a.s} struck at their cowardice, exposing the disgrace of men who would threaten the helpless rather than face him upon the battlefield.

The brute Shimr replied with contempt: “O son of Fatimah! What do you mean?”

Al Fusul al Muhimmah states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} was filled with righteous anger at their shamelessness. Before him stood men who called themselves warriors, yet their conduct had driven them not toward combat with the Imam {a.s}, but toward the tents of women and children. His voice rose once more in condemnation and rage.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} replied to Shimr:

“We should fight one another, while the women have not wronged you.

Keep your hands away from plundering my household so long as I am alive!”

As he spoke, the Imam {a.s} turned repeatedly between the enemy formations and the direction of the tents. Each movement revealed the strain upon his body.

The long hours of combat had drained his strength, and the wounds that covered him had begun to weaken the Imam {a.s} further. Yet despite his fatigue, Imam al Hussein {a.s} continued to stand as the final barrier between the advancing soldiers and the camp behind him.

The callous Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan heard the rebuke of the Imam {a.s} and replied:

“Indeed, that is so.”

Shimr had perceived the state of the Imam {a.s} before him. Sensing that the battle had reached its concluding phase, he barked at his men: “Desist, and go after al Hussein himself!

Withdraw from the tents and make him your target while he still stands!”

Thus the riders who had moved toward the tents now turned back, and once more the attention of the army was fixed upon the solitary figure of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, who again faced the gathered ranks alone. Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid also narrated this account in a manner similar to that reported by Hisham from Humayd ibn Muslim.

“Peace be upon him, whose tents were violated.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE EXHAUSTION OF THE IMAM {a.s}

Imam al Hussein {a.s} once more spurred his horse and charged into the swelling hordes of enemies who had drawn perilously close to the tents of his women and children.

Their ranks had tightened around the camp, emboldened by the passing hours and the wounds that now marked the body of the Imam {a.s}.

Yet when the grandson of the Prophet {saws} descended upon the enemy, their boldness faltered. With sword in hand, the Imam {a.s} cleaved through their formations, driving them back and forcing them away from the sanctuary of the tents. But exhaustion now gnawed at the Imam {a.s}. For brief moments, he drew back, seizing a fleeting pause to gather his breath.

The parched Imam al Hussein {a.s} heaved deeply, his chest rising and falling with heavy effort. Blood continued to flow from the wound that had pierced his blessed jaw, staining his beard and dripping upon his garments.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} struggled to remain upright, his gaze fixed upon the enemy who surrounded him. Bihar al Anwar narrates that amid the turmoil of battle, one of the soldiers stepped forward and raised his voice in mockery:

“O Hussein! Do you not see the Euphrates, its water flowing like the bellies of fish?

By Allah {AZJ}, you shall not taste of it until you perish from thirst!”

This taunt carried a bitter cruelty.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} lifted his noble face and fixed his gaze upon the man who had spoken. His lips were dry, his voice strained and weakened, yet his supplication rose as he complained of his suffering to his Lord {AZJ}: “O Allah {AZJ}, cause him to die of thirst.”

The words emerged as a rasp, faint and laboured, for the thirst of the Imam {a.s} had reached a terrible extremity. Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that the narrator later said that this same man, after the events of Karbala had passed, would be heard crying again and again,

“Give me water to drink.”

Water would be brought to him, yet whenever he drank from it he would vomit it forth. Again he would cry, “Give me water to drink, for thirst kills me!”

This continued without relief until he finally perished. Thus did Allah {AZJ} fulfil the supplication of the Imam {a.s}.

After this moment, the battle resumed with renewed ferocity.

Drawing in a deep breath, Imam al Hussein {a.s} steadied himself in the saddle and gathered what strength remained within him.

Nafasul Mahmoom states that the Imam {a.s} then charged against them like a ferocious lion. None dared come near him except that he struck him down and split him open beneath the force of his assault. Al Saqab ibn Zuhayr narrated to Abu Mikhnaf, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had fought with the courage of a valiant knight.

Though alone, wounded, and surrounded, his determination did not weaken.

Wherever the enemy pressed upon Imam al Hussein {a.s}, he turned against them with such strength that their ranks recoiled before him. The reports state that Imam al Hussein {a.s} would shield himself from the arrows that rained upon him, warding them off while striking with precision and cutting through the foe wherever the Imam {a.s} turned.

“Peace be upon whose blood was shed unjustly, the bereaved and patient one.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Al Hajjaj, from Abdullah ibn Ammar al Bariqi, further narrates that such was the ferocity of the Imam {a.s} in battle that he charged directly into the cavalry of the enemy, driving back the mounted ranks as though one man stood against them with the force of an army.

Al Bariqi relates that the infantry once again regrouped and surged toward the Imam {a.s}, but he turned upon them, and terror seized them, causing them to disperse before him.

None could match the defiance of Imam {a.s} on Ashura, encircled by enemies, wounded and tormented by thirst, yet advancing with unbroken tenacity amidst merciless cruelty.

“The enemy then surrounded you from all sides, weakened you by inflicting wounds, prevented you from taking any repose, and you had no helper remaining.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE WOUNDED IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

THE ARROW TO THE FOREHEAD

In the midst of the battle, Imam al Hussein {a.s} was now greatly drained of energy, and his need to pause and regain his breath had increased. At that moment, an enemy named Abu al Hutuf al Jufi drew his bow and released an arrow toward the Imam {a.s}.

The shaft cut through the air and struck the noble Imam {a.s} squarely upon the forehead. The blow landed with such violence that the sacred head of Imam al Hussein {a.s} snapped backward upon impact.

For a fleeting instant, the Imam {a.s} swayed upon his steed, the force of the strike threatening to unseat him. Yet the Imam {a.s} steadied himself, gathered his strength, and remained upright in the saddle. The shaft had buried itself deep within the bone of his blessed forehead.

Blood began at once to surge forth from the puncture, flowing down his face.

With composure, the Imam {a.s} raised his hand, seized the shaft of the arrow that protruded from his head, and wrenched it free. The motion drew fresh blood from the wound, and he cast the shaft aside upon the ground.

The blood coursed down his radiant face, soaking his beard and garments as it fell.

According to al Futuh, Imam al Hussein {a.s} then lifted his gaze toward the heavens and turned his face toward his Lord {AZJ}. Amid the dust and turmoil of the battlefield, the lonely Imam {a.s} spoke with solemn clarity, raising his voice in supplication before the Most Merciful:

“O Lord {AZJ}! You are witness to my plight at the hands of these disobedient and oppressive servants of Yours. O Lord {AZJ}! Call each of them to account, let them perish in desolation, leave none of them alive for long upon the face of the earth, and never forgive them!”

Though the wound was dire and the pain grew sharper with each passing moment, the Imam {a.s} did not falter. His vision dimmed beneath the veil of blood, yet his composure remained unbroken as he garnered all his remaining strength to remain upright on his steed.

THE ARROW TO THE CHEST

As the battle intensified, the relentless combat brought Imam al Hussein {a.s} to the limits of human endurance. For a brief moment, the Imam {a.s} paused again upon the battlefield, drawing breath with visible strain. Each inhalation was heavier than the last, as the wounds upon his body continued to bleed.

Al Khawarizmi relates that in that fleeting pause, while the dust of the battlefield swirled thickly through the air, a stone was hurled with violent force and struck the blessed forehead of the Imam {a.s}. The blow landed upon the very place where Imam al Hussein {a.s} had already been wounded, and the earlier injuries burst open once more under the crushing impact. Blood again flowed across his radiant face.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} lifted the front of his shirt to wipe away the blood that poured from his brow. At that very moment, as the Imam {a.s} sought to clear his sight, a sharp, poisoned, three-pronged arrow was loosed toward him. Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that the arrow crashed into the chest of Imam al Hussein {a.s} with devastating force.

The impact shook the noble frame of the Imam {a.s} and drove him backward upon his steed. His body lurched heavily, and the reins trembled in his grasp; yet once again, the Imam {a.s} barely steadied himself upon the saddle. The reins of his steed now more loose in his grip.

It is narrated that the shaft had lodged deep within his chest, close to his heart. The violence of the strike caused Imam al Hussein {a.s} to utter the prayer:

“In the name of Allah {AZJ}! By Allah {AZJ}! And upon the way of the Messenger of Allah {saws}!”

Muthir al Ahzan relates that, sensing the gravity of the wound, the Imam {a.s} lifted his sacred head toward the heavens while still mounted upon his steed, placing his hand upon his chest. Gathering his breath, the Imam {a.s} addressed his Lord {AZJ}, saying:

“O Allah {AZJ}! You know that they are killing a man, other than whom there is no son of a Prophet upon the face of the earth.”

The blow had struck with such force that it winded the Imam {a.s}.

His breathing grew laboured as the three-pronged arrow remained fixed within his chest. The cruel design of the shaft made it unbearable to pull it free from the front, for its barbed prongs had locked against the ribs and flesh. The wound was truly catastrophic.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} grasped the shaft of the arrow and wrenched it through until it emerged from his chest. The motion tore through flesh and sinew as the barbed head ripped its way free. Nafasul Mahmoom states that when the arrow was driven out, the blood began to flow ‘like a channel’ due to the severity of the puncture.

Another account of this moment is preserved in Tarikh Dimashq through the narration of Muslim ibn Ribah, the freedman of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib {a.s}. Muslim ibn Ribah was present upon the plains of Karbala and witnessed the suffering of the Imam {a.s} on that terrible day.

Muslim ibn Ribah relates that when an arrow had struck Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the blessed Imam {a.s} had turned to Muslim ibn Ribah and said:

“O Muslim, place your hands beneath the flow of blood.”

Muslim ibn Ribah did so, and when his hands were filled with the blood. He narrates that then, the Imam {a.s} said to him: “Pour it into my hand.”

Muslim ibn Ribah obeyed. The Imam {a.s} then cast the handful toward the heavens and supplicated: “O Allah {AZJ}, avenge the blood of the son of the daughter of Your Prophet.”

Muslim ibn Ribah later recounted that not a single drop fell back to the earth.

Al Khawarizmi similarly relates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} gathered the blood flowing from his wounds into his palm until it filled quickly, then cast it toward the heavens, and it was reported that not a single drop of his blood returned to the ground.

“When the enemy saw you firm, fearless, and courageous, they set up their most malicious deceptions against you, and fought you with their deceit and viciousness.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} then filled his other palm with the blood that still streamed from his chest and wiped it across his blessed head and beard, saying:

“By Allah {AZJ}, I shall remain in this state until I meet my grandfather Muhammad {saws}, while my hair is dyed with my blood, and I shall say:

‘O Messenger of Allah {saws}, such and such persons killed me.’”

When these words were heard, the accursed Haseen ibn Malik al Sakuni cried out mockingly in an attempt to belittle the declaration of the Imam {a.s}. Haseen ibn Malik taunted:

“O son of Fatimah! How shall Allah {AZJ} take revenge for you from us?!”

The opponents now jeered, yet still kept their distance from the wounded Imam {a.s}.

The Imam {a.s} answered Haseen ibn Malik with words that carried the weight of prophecy:

“Allah {AZJ} will engulf you in wars and cause your blood to be shed, and after that, a severe punishment shall overtake you.”

Imam al Hussein {a.s} now attempted to rally once more upon the battlefield.

Yet the intensity of his earlier charges had begun to fade. The terrible puncture to his chest was draining the strength from his body. Blood continued to flow heavily from the wound, and his breathing had grown increasingly arduous.

The enemy now began to perceive that exhaustion had overtaken the Imam {a.s}. They saw that the body of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} was torn by many injuries and weakened. Encouraged by this, they advanced upon the Imam {a.s} from every side, seeking to surround him and strike together, hoping at last to unseat Imam al Hussein {a.s} from his horse and bring an end to the resistance that had shattered their formations.

THE MASS BARRAGE OF ARROWS

Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan had witnessed with his own eyes the devastation that the valiant Imam al Hussein {a.s} had wrought upon the battlefield, and upon the enemy forces.

The repeated charges of the Imam {a.s} had torn through the ranks of the adversary and shattered the courage of those who had come to fight the Imam {a.s}. Now, seeing that the grievous wounds inflicted by the arrows to the forehead and chest had slowed the movement of the Imam {a.s}, the vile Shimr seized the moment and signalled to his archers.

Al Futuh narrates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} still spoke with the eloquence inherited from his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah {saws}. From his injured mouth, his voice rose once more, as the archers took aim and the bows were drawn back across the enemy lines:

“O evil nation, how badly you have treated the progeny of Muhammad after him!

After killing me, you will no longer fear the killing of any servant of Allah {AZJ}, and my death will make their slaughter easy for you.

I ask from Allah {AZJ} that, in exchange for this humiliation of yours, Allah {AZJ} grants me martyrdom, and that Allah {AZJ} seeks revenge for me upon you through a means that you could never have imagined.”

Humayd ibn Muslim recounts that Shimr called forth the cavalry and ordered them to station themselves behind the positions of the foot soldiers, forming a barrier that would prevent the Imam {a.s} from breaking through their lines once more.

At Shimr’s command, the archers loosed their arrows in unison against the Imam {a.s}, seeking to force Imam al Hussein {a.s} from his steed.

The enemy had seen enough to know that none among them could withstand him in single combat. Fear had taken hold of their hearts. From every side, a relentless storm of arrows descended upon the lone rider upon the plains of Karbala.

Many of the shafts found their mark, driving into the noble body of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The loyal steed of the Imam {a.s} struggled beneath the growing weight of the shafts. They struck both rider and mount, and the animal veered from side to side in agony, attempting in vain to evade the deadly barrage that poured down upon them.

Yet the arrows were too many, and the assault too relentless. At last, the horse could advance no further, its movement diminished beneath the overwhelming assault.

Upon the saddle, the wounded frame of Imam al Hussein {a.s} began to bend forward under the burden of fatigue and injury. His hands slowly released the reins as his body now leaned upon the saddle. Around the Imam {a.s}, the enemy formations finally began to close in.

Emboldened by the weakening of the Imam {a.s}, they advanced step by step, drawing nearer until they were within the distance of engagement.

Ibn Shahr Ashub records in al Manaqib that the shafts projected from the armour of Imam al Hussein {a.s} in such number that his blessed form resembled the spines of a porcupine.

It has also been reported that every arrow struck the Imam {a.s} from the front, for the valiant Imam al Hussein {a.s} never once turned his back to the opponent, nor did the Imam {a.s} retreat before them. The Imam {a.s} then drew a deep and laboured gasp.

Blood had begun to gather within his throat and chest, each inhalation drawn with greater effort than the last.

Blood now matted across the garments of Imam al Hussein {a.s} and upon the body of his steed, as the shafts remained embedded within his noble frame, now curved over by pain.

THE SWORD STRIKE TO THE HEAD

After the storm of arrows had subsided, Imam al Hussein {a.s} remained upon his steed, his honoured frame now hunched beneath the burden of fatigue and the agony of wounds. Blood had soaked his garments, and the shafts that protruded from his flesh weighed upon him. His breathing had grown arduous; each gasp came with mounting strain, and yet the Imam {a.s} remained scarcely upon the saddle amidst the encircling ranks of his enemies.

Seeing his weakened condition, the soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd pressed closer. Their fear of confronting Imam al Hussein {a.s} in open combat had not vanished, yet the sight of the Imam {a.s} bent over his saddle emboldened them, convincing them of his weakness.

They began to inch forward, step by step, hoping that together they might bring down the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}. Shaykh al Mufid relates that Shimr also advanced with a group of his men and that they surrounded the Imam {a.s} from every direction.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Humayd ibn Muslim, records that among those who had drawn near was a man from the tribe of Kindah named Malik ibn al Nusayr.²⁰⁸

This wretched man had already hurled vile abuse at the Imam {a.s} earlier upon the battlefield, revealing the depth of the malice that had consumed those who stood upon that field. Now, seeing the Imam {a.s} bent forward upon his horse and believing that the weight of his wounds had weakened him, Malik ibn al Nusayr crept nearer.

Step by step, Malik ibn al Nusayr approached until he had drawn close enough to strike. Imam al Hussein {a.s} was just about seated upon the saddle, his body heavy with wounds, his head lowered beneath the pain and wounds and paleness.

Seizing the moment, the cruel Malik ibn al Nusayr raised his sword high and rushed forward. With brutal force, Malik ibn al Nusayr brought the blade crashing down upon the head of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The blow was savage. The sword cut through the cloak and hood that the Imam {a.s} was wearing, the ‘burnus’ that had covered his head. The blade struck the blessed head of the Imam {a.s} with terrible force and split open the flesh.

Blood began to pour from the laceration, flowing freely and soaking the cloak until it became heavy and saturated. It ran down across the noble face of the Imam {a.s}, clouding his vision as it streamed into his eyes. His balance faltered upon the saddle as the horse beneath him shifted uneasily beneath the sudden vicious blow.

Al Irshad states that the severity of the strike caused Imam al Hussein {a.s} to turn toward the one who had dealt this treacherous blow, and he invoked a curse upon Malik:

“May you never eat or drink again with this hand of yours, and may Allah {AZJ} resurrect you in the company of the oppressors on the Day of Judgement.”

The brutality of the strike left the Imam {a.s} disoriented. Blood continued to flow from the slash upon his head, and the loss of strength caused his body to sway upon the saddle. Al Futuh relates that the blow was cruel and severe, and that the Imam’s {a.s} body lurched violently upon his steed as strength left his limbs.

Moments later, his balance gave way, and the Imam {a.s} fell from the back of the horse, crashing upon the sands of Karbala and landing upon his blessed left cheek.

As Imam al Hussein {a.s} fell to the ground, he proclaimed:
“In the name of Allah {AZJ}, by Allah {AZJ}, and upon the way of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.”

“You were bereaved yet patient, defending your women and children, until they caused you to fall from your horse.” Ziyarat Nahiya

²⁰⁸ This same Malik ibn al Nusayr was the very messenger of Ibn Ziyad who had once delivered his command to al Hurr upon the road, ordering him to halt the Imam {a.s} in Karbala.

THE COLLAPSE FROM THE HORSE

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq narrates from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} that his father, Imam al Hussein {a.s} now lay upon the burning sands on his left side, the lances and arrows that had struck the Imam {a.s} still protruding from his wounded body.

The heat of the earth pressed against the Imam {a.s}, while the shafts of the weapons that pierced him shook with the movement of his laboured breathing.

For a short moment, Imam al Hussein {a.s} remained upon the ground. His chest rose and fell with heavy breaths that had begun to slow, each pressed painfully against his chest. Blood flowed from the cut upon his head and from the many injuries that covered him.

Yet the spirit of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had not yet yielded.

Once more, air filled his lungs. Gathering what strength remained within his shattered body, Imam {a.s} reached for the hilt of his sword. Al Malhuf relates that, with trembling hands, the Imam {a.s} struggled greatly to attempt to rise onto his feet.

Slowly, the Imam {a.s} pressed himself upward from the ground, his limbs shaking beneath the weight of pain, until at last he stood again. Imam al Hussein {a.s} rose unsteadily, his steps heavy and slow, yet the sword remained firmly held within his right hand as the Imam {a.s} faced his enemies once more, now on foot.

Nafasul Mahmoom relates from Imam Jafar al Sadiq {a.s} that when Imam al Hussein {a.s} fell from his horse and lay upon the earth of Karbala, the enemies rushed forward, seeking to strike the Imam {a.s} while he was upon the ground.

They saw the Imam {a.s} wounded, and in their cruelty, they hastened toward him.

From the tents of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}, silence fell. A slow and sharp intake of breath passed through the women as their eyes beheld the unthinkable: Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the last protector of the camp, falling from his steed and crashing upon the burning earth of Karbala. The sight pierced their hearts, for with his fall the final barrier between the tents and the army of oppression appeared to have been broken. Sorrow surged through the tents, and one figure at the forefront could no longer contain her anguish.

Tarikh al Tabari narrates that Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} came forth from the tent as she cried out, “May the skies fall down to the earth!”

Her lament echoed across the plain of Karbala, carrying the grief of the tents into the heart of the battlefield. The enemy were now closing in upon the fallen Imam {a.s}, as though they were about to extinguish the light of the Household of the Prophet {saws}.

The camp of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s} saw a terrible sight before them. Nafasul Mahmoom relates that although the Imam {a.s} had fought upon the battlefield with a courage and endurance beyond the capacity of men. But now, the toll of the struggle had overtaken his exalted body. The Imam {a.s} was gasping heavily and with great difficulty, each breath shallow and strained.

“Peace be upon the cheek that struck the dust, the grey hair that was dyed with blood, and the one who was bathed in the blood of his wounds.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Arrows had newly pierced his body, their shafts still lodged in his flesh, and fresh sword wounds had torn open his flesh and skin. Upon the head of Imam {a.s} was the severe laceration struck by the sword of Malik ibn al Nusayr. The blow had split through the skin of his blessed head, leaving a deep and open wound from which blood poured without restraint.

The blood ran down across his forehead and over his noble face, passing into his beard and gathering upon the strands until they became darkened and heavy. It streamed further onto his neck and chest, soaking into his garments. Drop after drop then fell from the Imam {a.s} onto the burning earth of Karbala, staining the earth beneath his feet.

Nafasul Mahmoom further relates that the Imam {a.s} removed the burnus from himself. The cloak and hood had become heavy and torn, soaked through with his blood and clinging to his pierced body, it now weighed upon him as another burden.

Seeking to restrain the relentless flow, the Imam {a.s} took a cloth and bound his split head with it, striving to stem the blood that poured from the gash inflicted by the sword. Thereafter, the Imam {a.s} fashioned from a cloth a small cap, a qalansuwa, and placed it upon his head.

Over this, the Imam {a.s} wrapped a turban, tightening it carefully so that the bleeding from the wound might be somewhat contained. Even in that state, wounded and weakened upon the plain of Karbala, Imam al Hussein {a.s} gathered what strength remained and prepared himself for what viciousness was still to come. Tarikh al Tabari also records that the Imam {a.s} wore a burnus over a silk qalansuwa. Al Saqab ibn Zuhayr narrated to Abu Mikhnaf, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that the Imam {a.s} was wrapped in a turban placed over a black silk hooded cap made of khazz. Imam {a.s} also wore a shirt and cloak woven from the same fabric.

Humayd ibn Muslim reports that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had dyed his hair with wasmah, a dark indigo dye, though now that hair had become thickly matted with blood from the wounds upon his head. Humayd further relates that the Imam {a.s} was now fighting on foot. Yet even in this state, the chivalry of the Imam {a.s} astonished those who witnessed it.

Humayd ibn Muslim states that the Imam {a.s} ‘fought as if he were mounted, and defended himself from the arrows, while the cavalry were split from all sides.’

Abu Tahir Muhammad ibn Hasan al Barasi relates his book in Ma'alim al Din that Imam al Sadiq {a.s} related that when the matter of the Imam {a.s} reached this stage, the angels began lamenting before Allah {AZJ} and said,

“O Lord {AZJ}, this al Hussein {a.s} is Your guest. He is the grandson of Your Prophet {saws}.” Then Allah {AZJ} manifested an image of Imam al Qa'im {ajf} and said,

“I shall seek revenge for al Hussein from them through the Qa'im {ajf}.”

At this, as enemies advanced upon him, a voice was heard from the heavens proclaiming:

“O nation that has become obstinate and turned astray after the passing of its Prophet!

May Allah {AZJ} not grant you the blessing of fasting nor the Eid of Fitr!”

Then Imam Jafar al Sadiq {a.s} added, “By Allah {AZJ}, they have not prospered, nor shall they ever prosper, until the avenger, al Mahdi, rises for al Hussein.”

“The angels of the heavens were astonished by your patience and openly wept.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE LAMENT OF SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB {s.a}

Al Irshad states that the forces of the enemy had now closed in upon Imam al Hussein {a.s}. From every side, they pressed forward, tightening the circle around the Imam {a.s} as their commanders urged them on. Waves of men surged toward the Imam {a.s}, each rank pushing behind the next, until the battlefield around him became crowded with swords, spears, and the dust of advancing feet.

The circle tightened with each passing moment, yet the Imam {a.s} was still on foot and continued to resist them as much as his physical strength could muster. Though weakened by lacerations and exhaustion, the Imam {a.s} still struck at those who dared to approach him.

But the strain of the battle had begun to weigh heavily upon the Imam {a.s}.

The movements of his sword had grown slower, and the strength with which the Imam {a.s} met the attackers was no longer what it had been before. From the tents, the women of the camp watched in terror. Their eyes were fixed upon the battlefield, for before them unfolded the final stand of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, the last shield that remained between them and the merciless army that pressed in.

Among those who watched was his noble sister, Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}. Her gaze did not leave him for a single moment.

Each blade that descended toward Imam al Hussein {a.s}, and every blow that struck his body, deepened the anguish that overwhelmed the heart of Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}.

Al Irshad continues that as the assault intensified and the attackers pressed closer around the Imam {a.s}, Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} perceived among the ranks of the army a figure who had advanced toward the front of the forces.

It was Umar ibn Sa'd, the commander of the Kufan army, who had moved nearer to the forward ranks as the battle approached its dreadful conclusion.

Al Malhuf relates that when Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} beheld the scene before her and saw the multitude pressing upon her brother, she stepped forth from the tents and raised her voice in lamentation. The sight tore through her heart. With grief breaking through her voice, she called out before the enemy, "O my brother! O my leader! O my family!

I wish the skies would fall down to the earth, and the mountains would crumble and scatter across the desert!"

The cry of Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} then turned toward Umar ibn Sa'd, who stood among the commanders of the army directing the battle:

"O Umar ibn Sa'd! Will Aba Abdillah be killed while you look on?!"

Umar ibn Sa'd heard the anguished voice of Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}, yet Ibn Sa'd cowered away and turned his face away from her and gave no reply.

Al Irshad further relates that Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} raised her voice once more, now addressing the army that surrounded Imam al Hussein {a.s}:

"Woe be to you all! Is there not a Muslim among you?!" But again, none answered her.

Reports preserved in Al Tabari and other early historical works, including the narration of Abdullah ibn Ammar al Bariqi, relate that when these sorrowful words of Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} were heard, tears were seen flowing down the cheeks and beard of Umar ibn Sa'd.

Even now amongst this heartless enemy, their eyes filled with tears at the vicious and unbridled cruelty that they had inflicted upon the Imam {a.s}.

This was likewise narrated by al Mufid in al Irshad from Humayd ibn Muslim.

Yet the lure of worldly power had long taken hold of Umar ibn Sa'd and those who stood with him. Though tears fell from their eyes, they did not withdraw from the crime unfolding before them, and thus their role in the brutality inflicted upon Imam al Hussein {a.s} would remain forever recorded in history.

Meanwhile, the assault upon the Imam {a.s} did not cease. Within the camp, the women stood stricken, their eyes wincing at each blow that struck the weakened body of Imam {a.s}. The strikes of the swords and thrusts of spears drew gasps of horror from those who watched.

The most resolute among them was Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}. Yet even she could not conceal the pain that gripped her heart. Her eyes flinched with every strike that landed upon the noble Imam {a.s}, and with each deep cut upon his sacred body.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} now barely stood, visibly overwhelmed by the multitude of his bleeding wounds. His blessed body bore the marks of countless strikes, and the weight of exhaustion pressed tragically upon him.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ABDULLAH IBN HASAN IBN ALI

Al Mufid relates in al Irshad that a stir of movement arose among the women gathered at the entrance of the tents. Until that moment, they had remained frozen in shock, their eyes fixed upon the dreadful spectacle unfolding before them. They had witnessed the relentless butchery directed against the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}, and grief had rendered them motionless.

From the battleground, Imam al Hussein {a.s} repeatedly cast his gaze back toward the camp, fearing that the enemy, emboldened by their cruelty, might launch a cowardly assault upon the helpless women and children behind him, clenching and unclenching his blessed hands.

Meanwhile, the Kufan soldiers pressed in close, engaging Imam al Hussein {a.s} in close combat and raining down strikes upon him from every direction as they surrounded him.

As narrated by Abu Mikhnaf, and likewise by Abu al Faraj from al Mada'ini, at that moment the Imam {a.s} noticed a small figure emerging from among the tents.

A young boy from his own household had slipped past the women guarding the entrance. It was Abdullah ibn Hasan, the youngest son of Imam al Hasan {a.s}, his youthful face pale with anguish as his eyes fixed upon his uncle. The terrible sight before him had shattered the composure of the child. Abdullah ibn Hasan saw his beloved uncle standing alone amid a tightening ring of enemies, swords rising and falling upon him without mercy.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} called out urgently toward the camp, addressing the women and his noble sister Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a}: “Hold him back!”

Hearing this, Sayyidah Zaynab {s.a} rushed forward and seized the young Abdullah ibn Hasan in an attempt to restrain him. Yet the boy, overcome with distress, broke free from her grasp. Barefoot upon the scorching sands, Abdullah rushed forward, his eyes fixed upon the Imam {a.s}, who still stood beset by enemies attempting to strike at him from every direction. As Abdullah ibn Hasan ran, he cried out: “By Allah {AZJ}! I shall not part from my uncle!”

The Imam {a.s} saw the child rushing toward him and the terrible danger that awaited him. Though weakened by wounds and exhaustion after hours of relentless combat, he summoned what remained of his strength and charged forward to reach the boy before the enemy could.

His sword flashed once more as the Imam {a.s} carved a narrow path through the crowd of soldiers. Before his desperate onslaught, the attackers dispersed, and for a brief moment a passage opened between the Imam {a.s} and the child Abdullah ibn Hasan.

This scene did not escape the notice of one of the enemies of Allah {AZJ}, Bahr ibn Ka'b ibn Ubayd Allah, a man from the tribe of Banu Taym. Hisham narrates from Abu al Hudhayl, from a man who had witnessed the events of Karbala, that a young boy from the family of the Imam {a.s} had emerged from the tents holding a tent pole.

The boy wore a simple ‘izar’ and ‘qamis’, and terror was evident upon his face as he turned his head from side to side.

The narrator later said that the image remained vivid in his memory, recalling that two beads of earrings hung from the boy’s ears, swaying whenever he moved.

Bahr ibn Ka'b saw the child running toward the Imam {a.s} and seized the opportunity to strike while the Imam {a.s} was distracted. Spurring his mount forward, Bahr ibn Ka'b charged toward the boy with his sword raised.

Abu al Faraj narrates from Abu Mikhnaf, from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that Bahr ibn Ka'b galloped toward the boy, and when he reached him, Bahr ibn Ka'b dismounted and advanced toward the child with a drawn sword in his hand.

The young boy, despite his terror, confronted Bahr ibn Ka'b with astonishing courage, rebuking the attacker: “Woe unto you, O son of a vile woman! Do you seek to kill my uncle?!”

The insult enraged Bahr ibn Ka'b. Infuriated, he raised his sword and brought it down upon the defenceless child.

Abdullah ibn Hasan instinctively lifted his arm to shield himself, but the blade cut deep into his small limb, severing it until only a strip of skin held it attached. His arm hung loosely by the flesh as blood poured from the wound.

Bahr ibn Ka'b struck Abdullah ibn Hasan again with further blows of his sword. The child writhed in agony and cried out in desperation: “O mother! O Uncle! Come to my aid!”

Believing that he had mortally injured Abdullah ibn Hasan, Bahr ibn Ka'b quickly mounted his horse and rode away, unwilling to face the furious approach of the Imam {a.s}, who was now moving toward them.

Moments later, Imam al Hussein {a.s} reached Abdullah ibn Hasan. The boy lay upon the ground, writhing in pain, his small body drenched in blood, his arm nearly severed and hanging. The Imam {a.s} himself was exhausted, and his body shuddered under the weight of his injuries. Yet when the Imam {a.s} saw the boy’s condition, he rushed forward and gathered Abdullah into his arms. Drawing the suffering child close to his chest, the Imam {a.s} sought to comfort him, soothing him with gentle words as the young life faded from his fragile body.

Abu al Faraj narrates from Abu Mikhnaf, from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that Imam al Hussein {a.s} lamented:

“O my nephew, bear with patience what has happened to you, and try to see the good in it, for Allah {AZJ} will now unite you with your exalted forefathers.

You will be reunited with the noble Messenger of Allah {saws}, Ali ibn Abi Talib, Hamzah, Jafar, and al Hasan ibn Ali, may Allah’s {AZJ} blessings be upon them all.”

In al Malhuf, Sayyid Ibn Tawus relates that while Imam al Hussein {a.s} sat holding his wounded nephew in his arms, the accursed Harmalah ibn Kahil al Asadi prepared an arrow and released it toward them. The shaft flew through the air and struck the frail body of Abdullah ibn Hasan, whose life was already ebbing away from his wounds.

The Imam {a.s} heard the boy draw one final gasp as the arrow struck him. Abdullah ibn Hasan’s gaze remained fixed upon the noble face of his uncle.

Slowly, the light of life faded from his eyes, and his head fell backward, lifeless.

Thus, another youth of the Banu Hashim was slaughtered in the arms of the Imam {a.s}.

May the mercy and blessings of Allah {AZJ} be upon Abdullah al Asghar ibn al Hasan.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} himself was now drenched in blood, his strength nearly spent, and yet the Imam {a.s} remained standing amid the enemies who surrounded him.

The death of the child Abdullah carved yet another sorrow into his suffering heart.

This account is also supported by the narration attributed to Imam al Baqir {a.s}, preserved in Muqatil al Talibiyyin, which states that Harmalah ibn Kahil shot Abdullah ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib with an arrow that killed him.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates from Sulayman ibn Abi Rashid, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that the sorrows weighing upon Imam al Hussein {a.s} had now become unbearable.

Raising his hands toward the heavens, Imam al Hussein {a.s} spoke to his Most Merciful Lord {AZJ} in prayer and lament:

“O Allah {AZJ}! Withhold from them the rain of the sky and deprive them of the blessings of the earth. O Allah {AZJ}! If You let them enjoy life for a while, then disperse them in fragments and make them divided factions, and never let the rulers be pleased with them ever; for they invited us to support us, then turned against us and killed us.”

This lament of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was likewise narrated by Shaykh al Mufid in al Irshad.

“The sweat of death appeared on your forehead, and you continually clenched and unclenched your hands, secretly gazing upon your caravan and tents, while trapped by yourself away from your children and family.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE COLLAPSE OF STRENGTH OF IMAM {a.s}

The movement of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had now slowed. His steps, once firm upon the plain of Karbala, had become heavy and burdened. His breathing had grown strained, each breath drawn with pain. Blood continued to flow from his open lacerations. His sacred jaw had been torn by the arrow that struck his mouth. His noble head had been split by the sword. His blessed body was marked by the wounds of lances, blades, and arrows, each injury bearing witness to the cruelty that had surrounded him from every side.

“The enemy then surrounded you from all sides, weakened you by inflicting wounds, prevented you from taking any repose, and you had no helper remaining.” Ziyarat Nahiya

The earth beneath the Imam {a.s} had darkened with his blood, yet the noble grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} still stood upon the battlefield. The burning thirst of the day had drained what remained of his strength. The wounds that covered his body had torn into his flesh and weighed heavily upon him. From the morning of Ashura until this final hour, Imam al Hussein {a.s} had faced wave after wave of attackers. Again and again, they had rushed toward him, and again and again, his courage had driven them back.

The struggle of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had been supreme. Yet now, the toll of combat had become unbearable. His sight was blurred by blood. His breaths had grown faint. The sorrow of all that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had witnessed pressed upon his heart: the bodies of his companions, the youth of Banu Hashim, the cries from the tents, and the loneliness of this final stand. At last, the physical strength of Imam al Hussein {a.s} began to fade.

Al Saqab ibn Zuhayr narrated to Abu Mikhnaf, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that the voice of the Imam {a.s} rose above the roaring chaos of the battlefield. Though his body was wounded and his strength was failing, his voice still carried with authority:

“Is it upon my killing that you rush one another?!”

By Allah {AZJ}! You will not kill after me any servant of Allah {AZJ} whose killing will incur greater wrath upon you from Allah {AZJ} than mine!

By Allah {AZJ}! I hope that Allah {AZJ} will honour me through your disgrace, then take vengeance upon you from where you do not perceive!

By Allah {AZJ}! If you do kill me, Allah {AZJ} will cast enmity among you and cause you to shed one another’s blood, and He will not be satisfied with you until He doubles the painful punishment for you!”

Having spoken these words, Imam al Hussein {a.s} swayed as he struck with his sword against those who dared advance upon him. His blessed feet struggled to maintain their footing upon the dust of the battleground. His wounded frame leaned from side to side. At moments, his legs faltered beneath him, and his body bent forward from exhaustion.

Yet whenever the enemy thought his strength had finally left him, Imam al Hussein {a.s} would raise his sword again before them, his presence still filling their hearts with fear.

Tarikh al Tabari records that even in this weakened state the enemy continued to retreat before him, describing the Imam {a.s} as being ‘in a very bad state.’

Imam al Hussein {a.s} now staggered heavily beneath the weight of his injuries. His blessed body had been weakened by the wounds that covered him, and yet the Imam {a.s} remained upon his feet, barely standing amid the dust and blood of the battlefield.

Tarikh al Tabari further relates that during this prolonged struggle, the toll and exertion upon Imam al Hussein {a.s} became so severe that at times the Imam {a.s} would collapse upon the ground from the weakness caused by his wounds and exhaustion. Yet whenever Imam {a.s} fell, he did not remain upon the earth. Gathering whatever strength still remained within him, he struggled to rise once more, standing again before those who had surrounded him.

The adversary watched this scene with hesitation and dread. Though they were many and the Imam {a.s} stood alone, the memory of his assaults and the numbers he had already slain still evoked terror within them. None wished to be the one to step forward and face him alone.

At that moment, Shimr ordered the army to attack again.

Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan advanced with the infantry under his command toward the Imam {a.s}. Sensing that Imam al Hussein {a.s} was now gravely injured and weakened, al Irshad states that the vile Shimr called out to the horsemen and foot soldiers:

“Woe unto you all! Why are you hesitating with this man?”

May your mothers weep over you! Kill him!”

At his command, they pressed forward. Tarikh al Tabari states that with Shimr came other ruthless men, thirsting for the blood of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Among them were Sinan ibn Anas al Nakha'i, Khawli ibn Yazid al Asbahi, Salih ibn Wahab al Yazni, al Qash'am ibn Amr al Jufi, and Abd al Rahman al Ju'fi, who was the commander over Bani Madhhij and Bani Asad in the army of Umar ibn Sa'd. That such a gathering of men should descend upon Imam {a.s}, even in his state of utter exhaustion and grievous wounds, stands as proof to his unmatched valour. Even now, they did not dare to face the Imam {a.s} in single combat. Instead, they sought to overwhelm him by attacking from every side at once.

Still, Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan continued to drive them forward, shouting and urging them to close the circle around Imam al Hussein {a.s} and tighten the encirclement.

Gradually, the soldiers advanced and surrounded the Imam {a.s} from every direction.

Abu Mikhnaf relates that at one point Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan ordered a man named Abul Junub, who was well armed, saying: “Proceed further!”

Abul Junub replied sharply: “Why do you not proceed further yourself?”

Shimr barked back: “Do you answer me back?!”

Abul Junub retorted: “Then do you command me?!”

The two began enemies of Allah {AZJ} began to hurl insults at one another.

Abul Junub, known among them for his supposed bravery, said in anger:

“By Allah {AZJ}! How I wish to thrust this spear into your eye.”

Shimr lifted his hands and replied: “By Allah {AZJ}! I wish I could strike you with the sword.”

Such was the fear that had settled in their hearts that even as they hemmed in the noble Imam al Hussein {a.s}, they quarrelled among themselves, each reluctant to be the first to face him. Humayd ibn Muslim narrates that the torment endured by the Imam {a.s} was thus prolonged through a long portion of the day of Ashura.

Humayd states that the enemies before the Imam {a.s} were many, and the wounds upon his body were staggering. Had they truly wished, they could have slain the Imam {a.s} much earlier. Yet they hesitated. Each sought to shield himself behind another, hoping that someone else would bear the burden of striking Imam al Hussein {a.s} down.

For they feared two things: either to be cut down by Imam al Hussein {a.s} himself, or to bear forever the dark mark of the one who would strike the fatal blow against the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

THE SWORD STRIKE TO THE ARM

Imam al Hussein {a.s} rose once more, for the final time on Ashura.

Drawing upon what remained of his strength through the help of Allah {AZJ}, the Imam {a.s} pushed himself upright from the blood-soaked earth. His body trembled beneath the weight of his injuries, and he leaned heavily upon the hilt of his sword, using it to hold himself above the ground. The arm that supported the Imam {a.s} shook from exhaustion, while the multitude of deep cuts across his sacred body continued to bleed.

For the last time upon the land of Karbala, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} stood upon his feet. His blessed face was stained with blood. Streams ran down from the wound caused by the arrow that had pierced his honoured forehead, flowing into his eyes and clouding his sight. His body bore the marks of the long and merciless struggle of Ashura.

“Peace be upon him, who was saturated in his blood.” Ziyarat Nahiya

Al Sibt ibn al Jawzi reports that as many as one hundred and twenty arrow wounds had struck the body of the Imam {a.s}. Nearby stood the cruel Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan, delighted at the state of the Imam {a.s}. Shimr called out to the soldiers around him:

“Kill him! May your mothers be bereaved of you!”

Until that moment, many of them had hesitated, struck with dread at the courage and resilience of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}. But now, seeing the Imam {a.s} weakened and swaying beneath his wounds, they found the courage to advance and close in upon him. Al Irshad narrates that one such enemy, Zur'ah ibn Sharik al Tamimi, rushed forward and struck at the Imam {a.s} with his sword. The blade came down swiftly toward him.

Perceiving the strike, Imam al Hussein {a.s} raised his left hand in defence, placing it between himself and the descending blade. The sword cut deep into his palm, splitting through the flesh, and blood gushed forth from the wound. The injury was deep. The hand with which the Imam {a.s} had been warding off the blows of the enemy and steadying himself in the final moments was now gravely wounded.

Al Malhuf similarly states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} was by this time utterly exhausted. His strength had been nearly spent, and the weight of his injuries made every movement slow and painful. Still, despite the weakness that had overtaken his body, the Imam {a.s} countered the assault of Zur'ah ibn Sharik and struck Zur'ah down.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Humayd ibn Muslim, relates that the adversary now seized upon the Imam’s {a.s} increasingly helpless condition. Seeing that his retaliation had slowed and that his defence had weakened, another attacker stepped forward.

Drawing back his sword with force, he swung it powerfully toward the Imam {a.s}. The blade struck the blessed shoulder of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Several early sources, including al Muqarram and al Irshad, report that the sword lacerated deeply into the shoulder of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

The blow tore through flesh and bit into the bone, cutting savagely into his left shoulder.

The force of the blow caused Imam al Hussein {a.s} to stagger upon the burning sands of Karbala. His body swayed beneath the impact, and for a moment he struggled to keep himself upright, his wounded feet pressing into the blood-stained dust.

Blood burst forth from the fresh wound, flowing across his blessed side and soaking the earth beneath him in red. The pain of the strike added to the multitude of wounds already covering his sacred body, each one draining what little strength remained within him.

Now fresh blood streamed from both the wounded hand and the shattered shoulder of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. His body had been brought to the edge of collapse.

The sword in his grasp, which had struck fear into the hearts of the enemy throughout the day, now felt heavy in his weakened hand.

THE SPEAR TO THE CHEST

Nafas al Mahmoom and al Futuh relate that while Imam al Hussein {a.s} still stood upon the battlefield, an enemy of Allah {AZJ}, Salih ibn Wahab al Yazni, advanced toward him and thrust a lance into his flank. The blow was delivered with savage force. The iron head of the lance drove deep into the blessed body of the Imam {a.s}, tearing into his side.

The impact bent his wounded frame. His blessed torso was forced forward as the lance pierced his flesh and pressed hard against his ribs. For a moment, his body reeled beneath the strike, the pain of the wound passing through him while blood began to flow from his side.

Salih ibn Wahab had driven the lance with such violence that the Imam {a.s} staggered upon his feet. Salih attempted to pull the weapon free, but the iron had lodged itself deep within the ribs. When Salih ibn Wahab tugged at the shaft, the fragile frame of Imam al Hussein {a.s} swayed with it, dragged by each cruel pull. The jerking motion tore further into his flesh.

Seeing that the lance would not come free, Salih ibn Wahab thrust it forward again, forcing it deeper into the sacred body of the Imam {a.s}. The frame of Imam al Hussein {a.s} weakened beneath the blow as the weapon was driven further into him.

Al Malhuf states that Imam al Hussein {a.s} was now in the most grievous condition. His body was shattered by lacerations, his strength nearly spent, yet the Imam {a.s} remained hemmed in on every side by men thirsting for his blood.

At that moment, another enemy, Sinan ibn Anas ibn Amr al Nakha'i, rushed forward through the circle of attackers and drove a spear into the collarbone of the Imam {a.s}.

The weakened body of Imam al Hussein {a.s} jolted under the violence of the strike as the spear was forced deep into him. Sinan then wrenched the weapon back with brutal force, its withdrawal tearing flesh as it was dragged from the sacred body of the Imam {a.s}.

With blood clouding his vision, Imam al Hussein {a.s} glanced around him.

Everywhere the Imam {a.s} turned were the Kufan soldiers, their weapons raised, striking and hacking at his sacred body. The sword that had remained in his right hand now slipped slowly from his grasp. His blessed fingers could no longer hold the blade, and it fell from his hand.

Al Sibti ibn al Jawzi records that by this stage as many as thirty-four sword strikes had lacerated the blessed body of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

Tarikh al Tabari records that this strike was remembered as the blow that shattered the remaining strength of Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

At last, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws} could no longer remain standing. His noble body, broken by bleeding wounds and surrounded by enemies, gave way beneath him.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} fell for the final time on the day of Ashura.



THE MARTYRDOM OF THE CHIEF OF MARTYRS

THE LONELY MARTYR, AL HUSSEIN IBN ALI IBN ABI TALIB

Nafasul Mahmoom and al Malhuf narrate that the shattered frame of Imam al Hussein {a.s} collapsed upon the burning sands of Karbala. His noble body, weakened by the countless wounds he had endured, fell heavily upon the earth. His breathing had grown faint and irregular, each shallow inhalation separated by long and agonising pauses.

Air escaped his lips in laboured gasps as the life within his body slowly ebbed away.

Seeing that Imam al Hussein {a.s} still breathed, the accursed enemy of Allah {AZJ}, Sinan ibn Anas al Nakhai, advanced once more with his spear.

Driven by the vile fear that another might claim the slaying of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}, Sinan now thrust his weapon into the ribcage of the injured Imam {a.s}.

Al Irshad relates that the spear was driven with such cruelty that it 'pinned the Imam {a.s} to the ground', tearing through his ribs.

"Peace be upon the al Hussein who tasted the spears raining down over his body." Ziyarat Nahiya

The clamour of war subsided, Yet even then, none among the enemy dared to approach. They remained at a distance, watching the fallen Imam {a.s} upon the scorching earth. His blood pulsed and flowed freely, a dark red pool spreading across the sand beneath him.

Muthir al Ahzan relates that when Imam al Hussein {a.s} was overcome by the severity of his wounds and had fallen to the ground unable to move, the vile Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan commanded the soldiers to shoot arrows toward him. At this order, the enemies of Allah {AZJ} loosed their arrows upon the battered Imam {a.s} as he lay helpless upon the earth.

Seeing that Imam al Hussein {a.s} had been weakened to the very limits of life, the army that surrounded him now prepared to unleash their cruelty upon his shattered body on the ground.

Arrows rained upon the Imam {a.s}, and spears and swords struck Imam al Hussein {a.s}.

It is related that the shirt of Imam al Hussein {a.s} bore the marks of more than a hundred shafts, lances, and sword blows.

Al Sibti ibn al Jawzi reported that thirty-three thrusts of the spear alone were counted upon the body of the Imam {a.s}. Al Malhuf states that the savage Sinan ibn Anas then cast aside his spear and drew forth his knife. It is narrated in Medinatul Maajiz, from Ibn Shahr Ashub, that Abu Mikhnaf relates from Jaludi that when Imam al Hussein {a.s} fell upon the earth, his loyal steed rose in defence of its master. The honoured horse, pained and stained with blood, turned fiercely upon the enemy who attempted to approach the fallen Imam {a.s}.

It charged toward them with fury, striking them with its hooves and throwing men from their saddles as it trampled them beneath its feet. Bleeding and trembling with rage, the faithful steed encircled the body of its Imam {a.s}, guarding him from the surrounding enemy.

Its nostrils flared, and its hooves struck the ground with violent force, repelling any who dared draw near to the gravely wounded son of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that the steed of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} fought in desperate defence of its master, striking and trampling those who came near, until it had slain about forty men. It is related in the Amali of Shaykh al Saduq and Rawdat al Waizin that after this, the horse turned back toward the fallen body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The steed brought its face close to the body of the Imam ^{a.s}, then smeared its mane and forehead in the pooled blood that had gathered around him. It marked itself with the blood of its master, staining its head and face with the sign of his martyrdom.

Then the horse began to thrash about in anguish. It struck the ground, shook its head, and neighed loudly in distress, its cries rising across the battlefield. No rider now sat upon its back, and no hand now held its reins. Suddenly, it turned from the place where the Imam ^{a.s} had fallen and galloped toward the tents of the women. Its mane stained with blood, its saddle was empty, and its cries carried before it the terrible news of what had befallen the Imam ^{a.s}.

The murderers now drew nearer to witness the spectacle of the beheading of the Imam ^{a.s}.

According to al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq, Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} relates that the accursed Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan now dismounted from his horse and stood near the fallen body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The Imam ^{a.s} still writhed upon the burning sands of Karbala, his body torn and shattered by wounds.

Each breath escaped from him with difficulty, a harsh rasp mingled with blood. Shimr approached with Sinan ibn Anas and men from the army of al Sham. Their shadows fell across the Imam ^{a.s} as they gathered around him. They stood at his head and stared down at the broken figure before them, the dust of the battleground clinging to his blood-soaked body.

“Your faculties faded, your breath became shallow and ceased.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

They stood watching, staring down at the butchered figure before them. Several long moments passed before the shattered ribs of the Imam ^{a.s} lifted faintly, a slight rise of the chest, a weak and fragile motion. It was a sign that life still lingered within the Imam ^{a.s}.

Al Malhuf recounts that among those who gathered around the writhing body was the vile Hilal ibn Nafi. He later described what he saw: “I was standing among the men of Umar ibn Sa'd when someone cried out, ‘Good news, O Amir! Shimr has killed al Hussein!’

I moved through the ranks of the army until I stood at his head. He was almost dead.

By Allah ^{AZJ}, I have never seen a mortally wounded person, covered in his own blood, more dignified or more radiant. The brightness of his face and the beauty of his appearance made me forget any thought of killing al Hussein.”

Around them, the circle of soldiers tightened. The air was heavy with cruelty and dread as they stood over the body of the Imam ^{a.s}. In that desperate state, Hilal ibn Nafi reports that the Imam ^{a.s} asked for water, for the torment of thirst still burned upon his blessed lips.

The dryness of the desert had parched his tongue, yet before his request could settle among them, a man standing nearby mocked the Imam ^{a.s}:

“By Allah ^{AZJ}, you shall never taste water until you are taken to Hell and made to drink from its boiling water.”

Al Malhuf states that the chest of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lifted slightly once more.

Some time had passed since his last painful breath escaped his parched throat.

Air filled his lungs again and, with great effort, the Imam ^{a.s} spoke:

“Woe be to you. Rather, I shall go to my grandfather, the Prophet of Allah ^{saws}, and I shall dwell with him in his abode, in a seat of honour near the All-Capable Sovereign, Allah ^{AZJ}.”

Blood continued to flow from the bleeding gashes upon his body as his words ceased.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} waited again for strength to gather within him. His chest rose once more, and as air filled his lungs, the Imam ^{a.s} continued:

“I shall drink from the water that never becomes polluted, and I shall complain to the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} about what you have done against me.”

His tongue was dry. His lips were cracked. His gasping was ragged and faint, and his speech was broken by the weakness that had overtaken the Imam ^{a.s}.

With every rise of his broken chest, fresh blood flowed from his deep wounds, spilling upon the earth with the fading rhythm of his heart.

Al Khawarizmi records from Amr ibn al Hasan that Shimr ibn Dhi al Jawshan saw that Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was breathing his last and moving his tongue in thirst.

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan stepped forward and struck the Imam ^{a.s} with a violent kick.

“O son of Abu Turab!” Shimr said.

“Do you not claim that your father stands at the cistern of the Prophet and gives water to whom he wishes?! Be patient, then, until you drink from his hand!”

The torn body of the Imam ^{a.s} shook, his broken ribs crushing the last fragile breaths from him. Now, no resistance came from Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Even Hilal ibn Nafi stood horrified at the cruelty unfolding before him. The report in al Malhuf continues with the words of Hilal ibn Nafi:

“They were enraged by what al Hussein said, and it was as though Allah ^{AZJ} had not placed even an ounce of mercy in their hearts.

They wished to sever his head while al Hussein was still speaking to them. I was stunned by their mercilessness, and I said to them,

‘By Allah ^{AZJ}, I shall never again take part in any of your affairs.’”

Umar ibn Sa'd had also by now arrived and was mounted nearby, watching from a distance, his face brimming with delight upon the suffering of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Turning sharply to a man beside him, Ibn Sa'd barked an order:

“Woe to you. Get down and go to al Hussein and finish him.”

The man Umar ibn Sa'd addressed was Khawli ibn Yazid al Asbahi.

Al Irshad states that Khawli ibn Yazid rushed forward and dismounted quickly from his horse, intending to sever the head of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. But when Khawli ibn Yazid drew close and saw the state of the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, Khawli became weak and began to tremble. The accursed Shimr then barked angrily at Khawli:

“May Allah ^{AZJ} break your hands! Why do you tremble?!”

Muthir al Ahzan reports that Umar ibn Sa'd grew impatient as he looked upon those who stood around Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Seeing their hesitation, Ibn Sa'd shouted:

“Why do you hesitate with this man?”

Then Umar ibn Sa'd ordered Sinan ibn Anas to sever the head of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Tarikh al Tabari records that Sinan ibn Anas also rebuked Khawli harshly as he stepped forward himself: “May Allah ^[AZJ] crush your arms and cut off your hands!”

Ibn Tawus relates that Sinan then advanced towards the body of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. As Sinan ibn Anas approached, he declared loudly before the soldiers:

“By Allah ^[AZJ], I will cut off your head, even though I know well that you are the son of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws], and the one whose father and mother are the best of all people.”

In that moment, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was barely alive. His ears still heard the vile words spoken over his dying body while his life slowly faded away.

Al Khawarizmi narrates that Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan then shouted to Sinan:

“Sever his head from behind!”

But Sinan ibn Anas replied: “By Allah ^[AZJ], I will not do that. If I were to do so, his grandfather Muhammad ^[saws] would be my accuser on the Day of Judgement.”

The inhabitants of the heavens watched this tragic scene, as Sinan ibn Anas knelt beside Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], gripping his blade firmly in his hand.

A faint breath still escaped from the sacred lips of the Imam ^[a.s.].

With one hand, Sinan seized the hair of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] violently and pulled his head upward, forcing the neck back and exposing it in a sharp, agonising arc.

In his other hand, Sinan ibn Anas raised a sword of Indian steel and placed the blade upon the sanctified throat of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

“At that time, he was sitting on your chest, quenching his sword with the blood of your throat, grabbing your beard with his hand, as he slew you with his sword.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

Sinan ibn Anas al Nakhai began to cut at the blessed neck of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

With the first and second strokes, the blade tore through the skin and entered the neck, as the battered body of the Imam ^[a.s.] writhed upon the burning sands.

“Peace be upon the one whose aorta was severed.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

Sinan pressed the blade deeper.

With the third, fourth, and fifth strokes, Sinan sawed through the flesh of the neck until the blade reached the trachea. Gurgling sounds emerged as blood gushed into the parched windpipe of the Imam ^[a.s.].

The body of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] shuddered, for it could no longer thrash in pain. Again, Sinan sawed at the neck.

With the sixth, seventh, and eighth strokes, the blade cut deeper and severed the vessels of the neck, and blood poured forth in heavy streams upon the earth of Karbala.

The writhing of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] ceased upon the sands of Karbala.

“You had turned motionless. Peace be upon the one slaughtered in public.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

Still, Sinan sawed at the neck with increasing force.

With the ninth and tenth strokes, the blade grated harshly against the bone, the steel scraping against the vertebrae as Sinan forced the weapon downward.

Sinan ibn Anas now pressed with all his strength.

With the eleventh and twelfth strokes, Sinan hacked and sawed violently until, with a dreadful parting, the head of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was severed from the body.

The Maqal of al Khawarizmi states that Sinan ibn Anas al Nakhai moved his dagger a total of twelve times upon the blessed neck of the Imam ^[a.s.] before severing his blessed head.

The grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] was beheaded upon the sands of Karbala.

Sinan ibn Anas rose from the body of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

The lifeless form of the Imam ^[a.s.] fell with a dull thump upon the sands. In the grasp of Sinan ibn Anas was the noble hair of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], and with it, the blessed;

‘HEAD OF HUSSEIN ^[a.s.]’.



THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF KARBALA

THE HEAD OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN {a.s}

Tarikh al Tabari reports that when Sinan ibn Anas al Nakhai had completed the beheading of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, Sinan grasped the sacred head by its hair and lifted it from the ground. His chest heaved as Sinan breathed heavily from the frenzy of the killing.

Around Sinan ibn Anas stood the hardened soldiers of the opposing army, their weapons still stained from the slaughter that had just taken place upon the sands of Karbala.

They looked upon Sinan with admiration and grim delight, pleased at their triumph and cruelty against the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

Sinan ibn Anas then turned his gaze and saw Khawli ibn Yazid.

His eyes were cold and unfeeling as Sinan stretched out his arm, the sacred head of the Imam {a.s} suspended by its hair. Al Irshad relates that Sinan handed the blessed head to Khawli ibn Yazid and ordered him, "Carry it to the commander, Umar ibn Sa'd."

Khawli ibn Yazid eagerly reached forward and seized the head.

Without hesitation, Khawli turned away from the place where the Imam {a.s} had been murdered. Khawli walked through the ranks of the army with arrogant pride, the head of the Imam {a.s} hanging beside him, swaying from his grasp as Khawli trudged onward.

The blessed head of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was carried through the ranks of the opposing soldiers. Drops of blood fell steadily from it, darkening the sands of Karbala as the army jeered at the sight passing before them.

Muthir al Ahzan records that when the noble head of Imam al Hussein {a.s} was brought before Umar ibn Sa'd, he expressed satisfaction and offered thanks to Allah {AZJ} for what Ibn Sa'd believed to be his victory in the battle.

Umar ibn Sa'd then took the sacred head and fastened it to the bridle of his horse.

By this moment, the battle of Karbala had ended.

The killers of Imam al Hussein {a.s} and his companions now began to boast openly of what they had done. The battlefield was filled with the loud voices of men congratulating one another for the murder of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah {saws}.

Pride filled their speech as they gloried in the atrocity that had just been committed.

The soldiers gathered around Sinan ibn Anas and praised him with words of admiration steeped in haughtiness and malice. They said to Sinan:

"You have killed al Hussein, the son of Ali, and the son of Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah {saws}!"

Another voice called out to Sinan ibn Anas:

"You have killed the greatest of the Arabs in rank and lineage, who came to these people intending to remove them from their kingdom!

Go now to your masters and demand your reward from them!"

Another voice from amongst them encouraged Sinan ibn Anas:

"Even if they were to give Sinan the treasuries of their wealth for killing al Hussein, it would still be too little!"

Majma al Bahrayn relates that Sinan ibn Anas was a man overcome by arrogance and touched with madness. Inflated by the praise of those around him, Sinan mounted his horse and rode forward until he reached the entrance of the tent of Umar ibn Sa'd.

There, Sinan halted and raised his voice loudly, proclaiming his infamous boast:

"Load my saddlebags with silver and gold! I am the one who killed the veiled king!

I killed the best of men in mother and father, and the best of them in noble lineage!"

It is narrated by Abu al Faraj, Sibt ibn al Jawzi, and al Masudi that when Umar ibn Sa'd heard these words, Ibn Sa'd became irritated and said: "Bring him to me."

Sinan ibn Anas was brought before Umar ibn Sa'd, still brimming with the pride that had seized him. Ibn Sa'd struck him with a rod and rebuked Sinan sharply, saying:

"O madman, I bear witness that you are truly mad!

You have never been sound-minded. Do you speak such words?!"

Yet despite this rebuke, Umar ibn Sa'd himself remained in a celebratory mood.

The burden of the battle had lifted from him now that the murder of Imam al Hussein {a.s} had been accomplished. With a tone of mocking amusement, he said to Sinan ibn Anas:

"By Allah {AZJ}! If Ibn Ziyad were to hear you, he would strike off your neck!"

The soldiers who stood around them burst into jeering laughter as the camp of Umar ibn Sa'd filled with the sounds of celebration and triumph. It is narrated in Nawadir from Ali ibn Asbat, who relates from some of his companions, that Imam al Baqir {a.s} said:

"They killed al Hussein in a manner that the Prophet {saws} had barred them from using even when slaughtering an animal. They killed him with swords, lances, stones, sticks, and batons."

"Peace be upon the butchered body, the oppressed one who was without a helper." Ziyarat Nahiya



THE MARTYRDOM OF SUWAYD IBN AMR

Among those who had fallen earlier upon the field was Suwayd ibn Amr, another of the devoted companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Suwayd had fought beside his Imam ^{a.s} with loyalty and courage until the wounds upon his body overcame him. At last, weakened by injury and loss of blood, Suwayd had collapsed unconscious among the slain.

Struck down during one of the final struggles of the companions, Suwayd lay motionless upon the sands of Karbala. Those who passed by him thought that his soul had already departed, and that Suwayd had been numbered among the martyrs who had fallen before him.

Suwayd remained while the tragedy of Karbala moved toward its dreadful completion.

The dust of battle settled upon his wounded body. Around Suwayd, the clash of swords, the cries of the wounded, and the thunder of hooves continued across the plain.

Yet Suwayd heard none of it. He lay still upon the earth, unaware of the final moments that were unfolding around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. The day advanced toward its greatest calamity, and the battlefield grew darker with grief and blood.

Only after Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had been killed, when the shouts of triumph rose from the ranks of the enemy and the terrible cry spread across the plain, did life stir once more within Suwayd. His wounded body began to move, and consciousness returned to him in the shadow of the greatest loss. From beneath the weight of injury and exhaustion, Suwayd heard:

“Al Hussein has been killed! We have killed al Hussein!”

Suwayd ibn Amr arose in fright, the words piercing him more fiercely than any wound.

For a moment, the battlefield around Suwayd seemed to fade beneath the horror of what he had heard. The cries of the enemy, the thunder of hooves, and the smoke rising across the plain all bore witness to a calamity that had finally unfolded. Al Malhuf records that Suwayd regained consciousness and, gathering what strength remained within him, forced himself upright despite the multitude of wounds that covered his body. His sword had long since been looted from him, yet, grasping only a dagger, he rose once more upon the field of Karbala.

Though the Imam ^{a.s} had already been martyred and no companion remained to stand beside him, Suwayd ibn Amr refused that the enemy should find the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} without a final defender.

Suwayd ibn Amr fought alone against the army before him, wounded and staggering.

His resistance was brief. Zayd ibn Ruqad al Janabi ²⁰⁹ and Urwah ibn Bata' al Tughlibi closed in upon him, and by their hands, Suwayd ibn Amr was finally killed.

May Allah’s ^{AZJ} mercy and blessings be upon Suwayd ibn Amr ibn Abi al Muta'.

Abu Mikhnaf relates through Zuhayr ibn Abdul Rahman al Khath'ami that Suwayd ibn Amr was the last of the martyrs to be slain, for his death occurred after the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, though Suwayd himself had fallen earlier in the day.

²⁰⁹ Zayd ibn Ruqad al Janabi was also the killer of al Abbas ibn Ali. He was the archer who also struck Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil with an arrow.

THE RETURN OF THE RIDERLESS HORSE

From the dreadful stillness that followed the slaughter of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, there suddenly rose a cry of anguish that pierced the silent plain. It was the steed of the Imam ^{a.s}.

The pounding of its hooves shattered the heavy stillness of Karbala as it galloped wildly toward the tents. Each thunderous strike upon the hardened earth echoed across the camp, drawing nearer and nearer, carrying with it the dreadful announcement of the calamity that had just unfolded upon the battlefield.

Al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq narrates from Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} that the horse of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} came racing back toward the tents in a state of violent agitation.

Its breath burst from its nostrils, and its body trembled with distress. Its eyes terrified.

From within the sanctuary of the tents, the daughters of the Prophet ^{saws} and the assembly of women and children heard the frantic neighing of the horse.

Ziyarat al Nahiyah al Muqaddasah relates that when the women of the household heard the cry of the steed, they rushed from the tents in alarm and dread.

They stood before the blood-stained horse. Its body bore the signs of the calamity it had witnessed, and upon its back lay the empty saddle of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

The horse had returned alone. The rider was gone.

The mane and forehead of the steed were drenched with the blood of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Arrows still protruded from its flesh, and bleeding wounds scarred its body from the chaos of the battlefield. The saddle had slipped and hung askew, the reins twisted and disordered.

Still, its wide eyes carried the horror of what it had witnessed. Despair descended upon the camp with crushing certainty. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had surely been slain.

Ziyarat al Nahiyah al Muqaddasah states that the cries of the women erupted, breaking the dreadful silence that had settled upon the camp. They rushed toward the steed with dishevelled hair, striking their cheeks in grief and agony, Their weeping piercing the air.

Their faces were uncovered as they wept and wailed in anguish. Their voices rose in lamentation as the weight of the catastrophe descended fully upon them.

Ibn Shahr Ashub in his Manaqib, and Muhammad ibn Abi Talib, relate that the faithful steed cried out again with a long, mournful neigh as it circled the tents in frantic distress.

Unable to bear the anguish of the loss of its master, the loyal animal withdrew behind the tents and struck its head against the ground repeatedly until its life departed.

“Your horse distractedly galloped towards your camp, neighing and crying” ^{Ziyarat Nahiya}
Now, more strange events began to occur. Cosmic signs began to appear.

This was a crime of unparalleled violence. Even the inhabitants of the skies bore witness to the enormity of what had occurred upon the plains.

The merciless martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had shaken the heavens themselves. Nafasul Mahmoom states that the skies above Karbala seemed to stir over the burning plains, and a redness appeared within them, the like of which had never been witnessed before.

Al Malhuf records that at that very moment a violent storm arose upon the plain.

A fierce wind swept across the battlefield, carrying thick clouds of black dust that swallowed the sky. The air grew so dark that nothing could be seen through the raging storm.

The army of Umar ibn Sa'd was seized with fear as the wind roared around them, and many believed that the curse of Allah ^{AZJ} had descended upon them for the crime they had committed. The storm raged over the battlefield before finally passing.

It is also related in al Sawa'iq al Muhriqah of Ibn Hajar that among the signs witnessed on the day of the martyrdom of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was that the heavens darkened so greatly that the stars became visible during the daylight hours.

Wherever a stone was lifted in Syria, fresh blood was found beneath it. It is also said that the sky turned red on account of his martyrdom and that the sun itself grew dim.

Some among the enemy believed that the Day of Resurrection had descended upon them.



THE PLUNDER OF THE BODY OF IMAM ^{a.s}

When the blessed head of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had been severed from his sacred body, his body lay abandoned upon the burning sands of Karbala, silent, motionless, and deprived of life. For a brief moment, the battlefield seemed to hold its breath.

Then, as if released from restraint, the enemy soldiers surged forward.

They descended upon the body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} like vultures upon a slain lion, their hands restless with greed, their eyes searching for whatever they could seize as a trophy of their crime. The sand settled upon the wounds of the Imam ^{a.s} as his blood soaked the earth.

Al Malhuf records that now began the plunder of the body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. Nafasul Mahmoom states that everything that had been upon the Imam ^{a.s} was stripped from him. The first man rushed forward and clawed at the blood-soaked **robe**, the 'burdah', that covered the Imam ^{a.s}. With a brutal wrench, he tore the garment away, dragging the headless body across the scorching sands as the cloth was ripped free.

Dust rose into the air as more men sought to seize whatever they could.

Abu Mikhnafe narrates from al Saqab ibn Zuhayr, from Humayd ibn Muslim, that Qays ibn al Ash'ath al Kindi seized the silken robe of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

It is said that Qays ibn al Ash'ath later used to sit upon that robe and became known among the people as 'Qays of the Robe'. The cloak of the Imam ^{a.s} now hung in the grasp of this accursed plunderer, while the sanctified body beneath it lay exposed to the merciless sun. This report is likewise recorded in Tarikh al Tabari, Ibn Sa'd, al Malhuf, and al Khawarizmi.

Another man forced his way forward and seized the **shirt** of the Imam ^{a.s}, the 'qamis'. His fingers dug into the stiffened cloth, which clung stubbornly to the blood that had dried upon the chest of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. With force, he tore at the shirt. As the garment was ripped from the body, the wounds that had begun to clot were exposed once more.

Humayd ibn Muslim witnessed that Ishaq ibn Haywah al Hadrami was the one who stripped away the shirt of the Imam ^{a.s} and later wore it in mockery. Allah ^{AZJ} cursed him. It is reported that Ishaq ibn Haywah was later afflicted with leprosy and that his hair fell out. This report is also mentioned in al Irshad and al Malhuf. Another name is recorded by al Khawarizmi, Jawanah al Hadrami, who is said to have suffered the same fate.

The **sword** of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lay beside his sanctified body, for his blessed fingers had clung to it until the final moments before he collapsed upon the ground.

Tarikh al Tabari relates that a man from Banu Nahshal ibn Darim seized one of the swords of the Imam ^{a.s}. Al Malhuf narrates that another sword was taken by Jumay ibn al Khalq al Awdi. Al Khawarizmi records that a Tamimi man named al Aswad ibn Hanzalah, also known as al Qalanis al Nahshali, pried a sword from the Imam's ^{a.s} grasp.

That sword later came into the possession of the family of Habib ibn Budayl. It must be noted that this weapon was not the sacred sword Dhulfiqar, which remains among the preserved trusts of the Prophethood and the Imamate.

Still the plunderers gathered around the body. One of them crouched low and reached for the **sandals** of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. He tugged violently at the straps, and with each pull, the body of the Imam ^[a.s.] shifted upon the ground. At last, the straps tore free and the sandals were taken, leaving the blessed feet of the noble Imam ^[a.s.] bare upon the scorching sands.

Nafasul Mahmoom records that it was carried out by a man from the tribe of al Awd named al Aswad ibn Khalid, also reported in al Tabari, Ibn Sa'd, al Malhuf, and al Khawarizmi.

Abu Mikhnaf narrates through al Saqab ibn Zuhayr from Humayd ibn Muslim that he saw Bahr ibn Kab al Tamimi strip away the outer Yemeni **trousers**, the 'sirwal', from the body of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.]. Al Sibt records the same event and adds that they plundered everything from him, even his trousers. Allah ^[AZJ] cursed him. Al Malhuf states that later Bahr ibn Kab was struck down and became bedridden, as his legs were paralysed and his body wasted away.

Another name mentioned by Shaykh al Mufid in al Irshad is Abjar ibn Kab. It is related that in the heat of summer his hands would stiffen like two pieces of wood, and in the cold of winter they would soften and bleed, dripping with blood and pus until death took him.

Even the 'burnus', a long **cloak** with a hood made of silk, was seized. It was taken by a man from the Kindi tribe named Malik ibn al Yusr. Tarikh al Tabari, quoting Humayd ibn Muslim, narrates that Malik ibn al Yusr later carried the cloak to his wife, Umm Abdullah, the daughter of al Hurr and the sister of Hussein ibn al Hurr al Baddiyy.

When Malik began washing the blood from the cloak, his wife rebuked him and said:

"Have you brought into my house what you stole from the son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws]? Get it away from me!" Allah ^[AZJ] cursed him. From that day onward, Malik ibn al Yusr lived in poverty and hardship until his death.

The burnus was a long hooded cloak traditionally made of wool or cotton. It had originally been associated with Christian monks, but in the early period of Islam it was also worn by pious Muslims, as mentioned in Majma al Bahrayn.

Nearby lay the **turban** of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], the 'imamah', now heavy with matted blood. It had fallen during the brutal assaults upon him. Another man pushed forward through the crowd and bent down to snatch the blood-soaked turban.

Nafasul Mahmoom records that the turban of the Imam ^[a.s.] was taken by Akhnas ibn Murthid al Hadrami. Al Malhuf states that Akhnas ibn Murthid wrapped it around himself arrogantly in mockery of the Imam ^[a.s.]. Allah ^[AZJ] cursed him. It is reported that Akhnas ibn Murthid later became insane and blind. Al Khawarizmi records another name, Jabir ibn Yazid al Awdi, who also became insane or afflicted with leprosy.

They did not cease until even the **armour**, the 'cuirass', that had covered the body of the Imam ^[a.s.], was stripped from him, drenched in his sacred blood.

Nafasul Mahmoom narrates that the armour of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was taken as a prize by Umar ibn Sa'd. Allah ^[AZJ] cursed him. When Umar ibn Sa'd was later killed, al Mukhtar awarded that armour to the man who slew him, Abu Amrah. Al Khawarizmi reports another narration which attributes its seizure to Malik ibn Nasr al Kindi.

"Peace be upon the stripped corpses, and the plundered bodies. Peace be upon the plucked souls, the snatched spirits, and the mangled corpses left in the desert." Ziyarat Nahiya

They plundered from Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] every garment that had covered his body, the robe, the shirt, the sword, the sandals, the outer trousers, the turban, and the armour, each taken in turn by the plunderers who crowded around the fallen Imam ^[a.s.].

When at last they had completed their desecration, the noble grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^[saws] lay upon the sands with only the most minimal covering remaining upon his sanctified body, abandoned beneath the pitiless desert sun.

"Peace be upon the loneliest of the lonely, the greatest martyr of all martyrs. Peace be upon him, who was slain by the individuals of illegitimate birth." Ziyarat Nahiya

The crowds of the enemy dispersed from the body of the Imam ^[a.s.], for there was nothing more left to plunder. Those who had not yet taken their share now scoured the remains, searching for anything to satisfy their greed.

Another enemy of Allah ^[AZJ] approached. His name was Bajdal ibn Sulaym al Kalbi. As Bajdal searched around the corpse of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.], he noticed a glint beneath the thick, clotted blood and sand near where the hand of the Imam ^[a.s.] lay.

It was a **ring**, reflecting in the sunlight.

His eyes fixed upon it greedily. Bajdal ibn Sulaym grasped the finger of the Imam ^[a.s.] and tried to snatch the ring away, but it would not slide free.

The hands of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] had become swollen and bruised from the many blows that had struck them as he fought to defend himself.

Fearing that another might seize the prize before him, the accursed Bajdal drew his blade. Bajdal ibn Sulaym began to saw through the blessed finger of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.].

The blade cut through the flesh and broken bone until the finger was severed.



Bajdal tore the ring away and dismissively threw aside the severed finger of the son of al Zahra ^{s.a} upon the sands. Allah ^{AZJ} cursed him. Al Malhuf narrates that when al Mukhtar later seized Bajdal ibn Sulaym, he ordered that his hands and feet be cut off.

Bajdal wallowed in his own blood until he died. It should be noted that the ring taken from the body of the Imam ^{a.s} was not the unique signet ring of the Imamate, which remains among the sacred trusts and is preserved with Imam al Qa'im ^{ajf}. ²¹⁰

Thus the pure body of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} was left stripped by treacherous hands. The dust settled upon the body of the Imam ^{a.s} while the sun burned overhead. Upon every hand that had plundered from the Imam ^{a.s}, the curse of Allah ^{AZJ} descended. When they had taken everything from the body of Imam ^{a.s}, their greed turned toward the tents of his womenfolk, inspired by the desecration they had already committed.

“Neither the enemy respected your rights, nor were they mindful of retribution for slaying you and your companions, and plundering your belongings.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*



²¹⁰ Muhammad ibn Muslim asked Imam al Sadiq concerning the ring of Imam, for it had been said that all of his possessions were plundered. The Imam replied, “It is not so as is said. al Hussein ^{a.s} bequeathed to his son Ali ibn al Hussein ^{a.s} and handed over his signet to him, as also the trusts of Imamate that were handed over by the Prophet of Allah to Imam Ali, who then gave it to al Hasan, who handed it to al Hussein, and it passed to my father Muhammad al Baqir, until it came to me. It is with me, and I wear it on Fridays when I stand in prayer.” Muhammad ibn Muslim continues: “On Friday I visited Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} and prayed beside him. When he finished prayer, he extended his hand towards me, and I saw the ring on his finger, engraved with the words: “There is no deity but Allah ^{AZJ}; be prepared to meet Allah ^{AZJ}”; Then Imam ^{a.s} said, “This is the signet of my grandfather Aba Abdillah al Hussein.””

THE TRAMPLING WITH HORSES

The camps of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} and the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had now been utterly overrun. The tents stood desolate, their ropes slack and their coverings torn, while the cries of the bereaved rose from among the women and children who had witnessed the devastation. Those anguished voices mingled with the fading echoes of battle, and the plain of Karbala lay silent beneath the heavy weight of what had just occurred.

Among them lay the body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} himself upon the burning sands of the desert. His blessed body had been separated from his sacred head, and the dust of Karbala settled upon his wounds. Humayd ibn Muslim watched as Umar ibn Sa'd rose upright in his saddle. The arrogance of victory had taken hold of Ibn Sa'd, and he gazed out across the battlefield with a cold and satisfied pride.

The task that had been entrusted to Umar ibn Sa'd by his masters was now complete.

Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and his loyal companions had been slain, their small band extinguished by the overwhelming force of the army that had encircled them. Muthir al Ahzan records that Umar ibn Sa'd had fastened the head of Imam ^{a.s} to the bridle of his horse.

Al Manaqib of Ibn Shahr Ashub relates that Ibn Sa'd lifted his hand toward the wretches who stood near him and called out in a loud voice, his command echoing across the plains:

“Who will volunteer to trample the body of al Hussein with his horse?!”

This cruel command was not born merely from the malice of Umar ibn Sa'd himself.

It was the fulfilment of the wish of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, who had written to Ibn Sa'd with explicit instruction. In a letter preserved by Abu Mikhnaf through Abu Janab al Kalbi, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had commanded:

“And when al Hussein is killed, run horses over his chest and back! For he is a rejected rebel, a man of evil, who has divided the people! I would normally never harm anyone after death, but I have sworn that should I succeed in killing him, I will do this to him!”

A murmur spread through the gathered army. Some men lowered their heads, unease spread even among these ranks of killers, while others shifted uncomfortably in their saddles. Yet the darkness that had consumed many hearts did not relent. Certain men stepped forward, eager to carry out this desecration. Al Malhuf records that ten men volunteered, their malice still unsatisfied even after the murder of the Imam ^{a.s}. The names of these men were:

- (1) Ishaq ibn Haywah al Hadrami, (2) Ahbash ibn Marthad, (3) Hakim ibn Tufayl al Sabi'i, (4) Umar ibn Sabih al Saydawi, (5) Raja ibn Munqidh al Abdi, (6) Saleh ibn Wahab al Ju'fi, (7) Salim ibn Khaythamah al Ju'fi, (8) Wahiz ibn Ghanim, (9) Hani ibn Thubayt al Hadrami, and (10) Usayd ibn Malik.

Before the eyes of Umar ibn Sa'd and the soldiers, these men mounted their horses. Their armour clattered as they climbed into their saddles, and the restless animals stamped upon the ground. The riders gathered themselves and turned their horses toward the place where the body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} lay upon the sand.

Al Irshad narrates that the riders then urged their horses forward. The hooves thundered across the plain of Karbala, sending clouds of dust rising into the air. With ruthless force, they drove their mounts over the blessed body of the Imam ^{a.s}.

The pounding hooves struck against the body again and again, and the sickening sounds of crushing bones echoed beneath them, while the sand churned violently beneath the trampling horses, carrying fragments of torn flesh with it.

“You fell to the ground, wounded; horses trampled you with their hooves, and tyrants raised their swords against you.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

They continued trampling over the body of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} until the bones of his body were broken beneath the relentless hooves. Bihar al Anwar narrates that the noble chest was “crushed into his back” by the devastating trampling of the horses.

Al Malhuf narrates from Abu Umar al Zahid: “We investigated the past of each of these ten men, and found every one of them to be illegitimately born.”

When this atrocity had been completed, Umar ibn Sa'd turned his attention to the dead of his own army. Ibn Sa'd ordered that the bodies of those who had been killed from among his soldiers be gathered together. Funeral prayers were then performed over them, and Ibn Sa'd commanded that they be buried upon that same battlefield.

The bodies of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, his companions, his sons, and his brothers were treated in stark contrast. Their heads had been severed, their belongings stripped from them, and whatever could be taken as spoils had been seized.

“Peace be upon the heads severed from the bodies, the heads raised upon a lance.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*

The lifeless bodies of Imam ^{a.s} and companions were left deserted, under the relentless sun of Karbala, the bodies of the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and their loyal companions remained upon the burning sands, exposed to the wind, the sands, and the passage of time.

“Peace be upon those who were buried without shrouds. Peace be upon the unclothed corpses in the desert, bitten by wild wolves and around whom the beasts of prey prowled.” *Ziyarat Nahiya*



THE SEQUEL; ‘MA’SIR AL SAJJAD’, JOURNEY OF SAJJAD ^{a.s}

Then came the winds of plunder. The vast army that had viciously butchered Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and mutilated his blessed body now turned their gaze toward the sanctity of his camp. Tarikh al Tabari narrates from Abu Mikhnaf, who narrates from Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that the enemy began to seize whatever possessions of the Imam ^{a.s} they could find.

Shaykh al Mufid in al Irshad relates that they fell upon his camel, seized its reins, and dragged it away as plunder. Then they descended upon his saddle bags, tearing them open with frantic hands and scattering their contents upon the ground.

Al Tabaqat al Kubra records that around Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} were only a few simple provisions, humble remnants of a travelling caravan. Yet even these were not spared.

They were torn apart, scattered across the earth, and taken by the soldiers, who competed among themselves for the smallest of gains.

With the provisions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} swiftly looted, those who had found nothing for themselves turned to whatever remained within the tents of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Their greed would not allow them to depart empty-handed.

It is related that the ‘wars’, a fragrant yellow dye similar to saffron, had been brought from Yemen. Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} had taken it from a caravan bound for Yazid ibn Muawiyah during his departure from Mecca at the station of al Tanim.

Among those who seized this ‘wars’ on the Day of Ashura were Ziyad ibn Malik al Dubayi, Imran ibn Khalid al Anazi, Abdul Rahman al Bajali, and Abdullah ibn Qays al Khawlan.

Heartbreakingly, Tarikh al Tabari narrates through Humayd ibn Muslim, who quotes Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s}, that the soldiers then directed themselves toward the womenfolk that were with the caravan of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, seeking to plunder their goods and belongings.

Imam al Sadiq ^{a.s} states that ‘there was no woman spared until they had snatched the robe from her back, forcibly deprived her of it, and carried it away.’

Al Bidayah wa al Nihayah narrates from Humayd ibn Muslim that the wretched soldiers began dividing the belongings and possessions of Imam ^{a.s} among themselves. They entered the tents and plundered whatever they could find, even the clean garments of the women.

Al Malhuf states that the soldiers raced one another to plunder the camp of the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}; ‘they even ripped the cloaks from the backs of the women.’

The daughters of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} and the women of his household ran from the burning tents, crying and wailing, mourning the martyrs.

Soon the tragedy reached its most terrifying moment.

Fires began to rage through the tents of the Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Flames spread through the encampment as the chaos of looting and terror reached its peak. Cries of anguish and terrified occupants filled the air. Their screams and wails were horrific.

Orphans, children, and women ran in desperation from one tent to another, seeking safety where none remained. Desperately trying to flee death and the enemy assailants.

It is related that when a woman clutched desperately at her veil in an attempt to prevent it from being torn away, they would overpower her and snatch it from her hands.

These accounts must remain succinct, for they are unbearably sorrowful. In speaking of such delicate matters, we confine ourselves strictly to the narrations that have reached us, without going beyond what has been transmitted.

“Peace be upon the women forcibly exposed of their veils.” Ziyarat Nahiya

The full extent of what befell the captives of Karbala, and the depth of the violation committed against their sanctity, is known only to Allah {AZJ}.

And so they looted the camp of Imam al Hussein {a.s}. Allahu {AZJ} Akbar.

The harrowing details of the plunder of the tents of the Ahlul Bayt {a.s}, and the events that unfolded after the killing of Imam al Hussein {a.s}, will continue in our next work.

“Peace be upon the family and children who were nearby the place of martyrdom, who were without support among strangers.” Ziyarat Nahiya

If Allah {AZJ} grants us the capability and the health, we intend in the coming years to compile the account of the journey of Imam Ali ibn al Hussein {a.s} after the tragedy of Karbala.

That work will be titled 'Ma'sir al Sajjad', the Journey of Imam al Sajjad {a.s}.



BACKGROUND - THE BATTLEFIELD CIRCUMSTANCES

THE DIVINE PERMISSION OF KARBALA

During the battle of Karbala, when the first assault of the enemy was being prepared, Ithbat al Wasiyyah relates that Imam al Hussein {a.s} turned toward his companions standing behind him. His face bore the gravity of resolve, calm yet unyielding.

Imam al Hussein {a.s} praised and glorified Allah {AZJ}, then addressed them, saying,

“Indeed, Allah {AZJ} the Almighty has permitted your death and mine to occur today.

Your duty is to persevere and fight in His way.”

This statement attributed to Imam al Hussein {a.s} on the morning of Ashura, spoken as he fortified his companions with steadfastness, demands careful theological framing if it is to be properly understood. When the Imam {a.s} had declared that,

‘Allah {AZJ}, the Most High, has permitted my death and yours on this day,’

a fundamental question naturally arises: in what sense can the slaying of the Imam {a.s} and his companions ever fall under the category of divine permission?

Islamic theological discourse distinguishes between two dimensions of divine permission. The first is prescriptive in nature, referring to Allah’s {AZJ} legislative command, through which actions are classified as obligatory, prohibited, recommended, or permitted.

Within this framework, the killing of Imam al Hussein {a.s} and those who stood beside him can never be construed as sanctioned or allowed.

It represents one of the gravest transgressions in divine law, placing its perpetrators in direct opposition to Allah’s {AZJ} legislative will. In this sense, the Imam’s {a.s} words cannot be understood as indicating moral or juridical approval.

The second dimension is ontological, relating to the manner in which events are allowed to unfold within the fabric of creation. Here, divine permission does not signify endorsement, but rather the existential allowance for an occurrence to take place.

All events unfold through chains of causation, yet the effectiveness of those causes is itself dependent upon Allah’s {AZJ} enabling will. Fire burns, steel cuts, and life departs only because Allah {AZJ} allows these effects to occur.

The Qur'an illustrates this reality through moments in which the natural order was suspended: the fire of Namrud did not harm Prophet Ibrahim {a.s}, and the blade did not touch Isma'il {a.s} at the moment of sacrifice. These exceptions reveal that even the laws governing cause and effect possess no independent power.

This principle forms the foundation of ‘tawhid al afal’, the oneness of almighty Allah {AZJ} in all acts, wherein nothing exerts efficacy outside His {AZJ} existential sanction.

This distinction is also essential for preserving the meaning of human responsibility. Moral accountability presupposes the coexistence of two divine wills: one that commands and legislates, and another that permits existence.

Without this dual structure, the possibility of acting against what is commanded would vanish, rendering obedience and disobedience meaningless, and collapsing the very concept of trial, choice, and consequence.

When Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] spoke of divine permission on the day of Ashura, he was invoking this second category, the ontological allowance inherent in the unfolding of creation.

The words of the Imam ^[a.s] echo the Qur'anic principle that no calamity befalls except by the permission of Allah ^[AZJ]. By situating the tragedy of Karbala within this cosmic framework, this was not endorsement, but an event permitted to unfold within Allah's ^[AZJ] wisdom, while the oppressors remained fully responsible for their choices; not endorsement, but a divinely measured trial. The declaration carried a deliberate and profound purpose.

Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was preparing his companions for a certainty grounded in divine wisdom: that their chosen path of loyalty would culminate in martyrdom, and that this end, though severe, lay within Allah's ^[AZJ] ordained plan for their elevation. His words fortified their hearts, guiding them toward acceptance, resolve, and serenity before destiny.

Their deaths were not validations of oppression, but the highest expression of obedience in the face of injustice; not signs of Allah ^[AZJ] sanctioning tyranny, but affirmations that even tyranny unfolds within a dominion Allah ^[AZJ] never relinquishes, so that faith may be tested, sacrifice may be purified, and truth may attain its eternal witness.

Thus, the divine permission spoken of by Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] was not an approval of the crime committed against him, but Allah's ^[AZJ] allowing the trial of Karbala to unfold within His wisdom, while the oppressors remained fully accountable for their own deeds.



THE FORMATION OF THE TENTS

When Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] reached the plains of Karbala and began selecting a site for his encampment, his decision was guided by clear foresight, combining tactical awareness with a deep concern for those under his protection. The possibility of imminent battle demanded a position that would restrict the enemy's ability to attack from multiple directions, while at the same time shielding the women and children who had journeyed with the Imam ^[a.s].

Tarikh al Tabari records that Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] deliberately chose a location where the tents could be positioned with their backs against a dense growth of reeds. This natural barrier ensured that the opposing forces would be unable to encircle the camp or launch a sudden assault from the rear, thereby the enemy would not divert the attention of the companions.

Beyond these reeds lay a shallow depression in the land, described as a dried riverbed or low-lying ground. According to Tarikh al Tabari, during the night preceding Ashura, the Imam ^[a.s] ordered this area to be excavated and shaped into a trench.

Shaykh al Saduq relates in al Amali that the trench was then filled with dry brushwood and timber, prepared to be ignited should the enemy attempt a surprise attack from behind.

The reeds and the fire trench together formed a layered defence, combining physical obstruction with psychological intimidation, and demonstrating a level of preparation that stood in stark contrast to the reckless aggression of the opposing army.

Alongside these measures, another critical arrangement was carried out under the noble Imam's ^[a.s] direct instruction. The companions brought the tents close together, fastening them tightly with ropes on three sides. Only a single opening was left exposed, facing the enemy's position. Tarikh al Tabari notes that this narrow frontage functioned as a controlled gateway, forcing any advancing force to confront the defenders head-on.

By reducing the battlefield to a confined space, Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] ensured that the numerical superiority of the Kufan army could not be fully exploited by them.

Had these defensive preparations not been implemented, the forces of Umar ibn Sa'd could have overwhelmed the small group with relative ease. They might have bypassed the field of combat entirely, stormed the rear of the camp, and seized or killed Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] and his companions in the early moments of the confrontation. Instead, when morning broke on the day of Ashura, the soldiers of Umar ibn Sa'd were met with an unexpected sight. Flames rose behind the tents, smoke drifting across the camp's perimeter. What should have been the camp's most vulnerable point had been transformed into a wall of fire.

This defensive formation proved decisive in the opening hours of the battle. Despite the widely transmitted figure of only seventy-two devoted men standing with the Imam ^[a.s], they were able to resist for several hours against an army reported by some sources to have numbered in the tens of thousands.

Their ability to hold their ground, repel repeated assaults, and inflict heavy casualties was directly linked to the careful positioning of their camp and the unity of their defensive front.

The resilience of Imam al Hussein’s ^{a.s} companions unsettled Umar ibn Sa’d.

The Maqtal of al Khawarizmi reports that, frustrated by the mounting losses in single combat, the accursed Umar ibn Sa’d ordered a contingent of his troops to force their way into the tent area and plunder it, hoping to draw the defenders away from the battlefield.

This manoeuvre failed. The companions, moving in small groups of three or four through the narrow lanes between the tents, ambushed the intruders as they attempted to loot.

Instead of weakening the defence, the raid descended into confusion, adding further disorder to Umar ibn Sa’d’s ranks. Realising that pillage would not break the cohesion of the Imam’s ^{a.s} followers, Umar ibn Sa’d issued a more brutal command: the tents were to be now set ablaze so as to cause panic. Torches were brought, and flames began to spread. The companions rushed instinctively to extinguish the fire, but Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} stopped them. The Imam ^{a.s} instead instructed, “Leave them and let them burn the tents.

If they set them on fire, they will not be able to come through the blaze to attack you.”

As Tarikh al Tabari records, this assessment proved correct. Although some of the tents were destroyed, the advancing flames formed yet another barrier, preventing the Kufan troops from penetrating the encampment. This would then provoke the opposing Kufan army and Umar ibn Sa’d to then again abandon this strategy and revert to battle.

Thus the Imam ^{a.s} and his loyal companions continued to withstand wave after wave of attack. The enemy surged forward like an unending tide, but each man among the noble Imam’s ^{a.s} followers held his position until they fell valiantly defending the truth.

Their discipline, their formation, and the extraordinary foresight of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} ensured that the defensive perimeter remained intact until the final moments of their lives.

A broader reading of these accounts allows several historical conclusions to be drawn.

The overall layout of the tents appears to have formed a crescent-shaped arrangement, with the tents of the women placed at the central curve. Extending outward from either side were the tents of the companions, reaching toward the battlefield itself.

These outer tents, largely unoccupied once combat began, functioned as a structural shield and were later set alight by the order of Umar ibn Sa’d. It is also evident that there was no significant distance between the front line and the encampment.

The battlefield lay only steps away. This proximity meant that the family of the Imam ^{a.s} were able to witness everything. They saw the courage of their loved ones, the savagery of the attackers, and the relentless slaughter unfolding before their eyes.

Fathers, brothers, and sons were cut down within sight of those who loved them most.

The emotional torment endured by the women and children of the camp, as they watched the massacre of their family while trapped within burning tents, is beyond human grasp.

“Peace be upon the family and children who were nearby the place of martyrdom, who were without support among strangers. After you, your progeny were captured, and adversity befell your family and your offspring. Certainly, by this event, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} was wronged, left alone, and denied vengeance.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE ARMY OF IMAM ^{a.s} IN NUMBERS

Among the most consistently transmitted reports is that the total number of individuals martyred alongside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at Karbala amounted to seventy-two.

One of the earliest and most authoritative attestations of this is preserved by al Mufid, who states, “In the morning, after the dawn prayer, al Hussein ibn Ali mobilized his companions for battle. They were 32 horsemen and 40 foot-soldiers.”

This figure, while widely cited, becomes more complex when examined against broader biographical and historical records.

When the names and identities of those killed at Karbala are studied individually, the total count appears to exceed the commonly stated number of seventy-two.

Alternative reports present markedly higher figures for the Imam’s ^{a.s} supporters, some enumerating 82, others 145, while a number of narrations extend the total to 180, 600, or beyond. A closer reading of the martyr lists reveals further nuance. In many accounts, 154 individuals are named as having been killed, in addition to Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} himself.

Within this larger group, approximately seventy-two can be identified as belonging to a specific cohort: The household of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, companions of the Prophet ^{saws}, or those who had previously stood among the supporters of Imam Ali ^{a.s}.

This raises the possibility that the enduring figure of seventy-two does not represent the sum total of the army, but rather this distinguished inner circle, whose loyalty, lineage, or historical proximity to the Prophet’s household elevated their remembrance in early transmission. Another interpretive possibility is that the number seventy-two reflects the group present at the earliest stages, specifically those who set out or initially encamped with the Imam ^{a.s}, before later reinforcements arrived.

Multiple reports point to an additional 20 to 30 blessed individuals who joined Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} after his arrival in Karbala, strengthening the argument that the army expanded beyond its foundational numbers. Textual transmission must also be accounted for.

Over centuries of manuscript copying and oral reporting, some names appear in multiple variant forms, leading to possible duplication within the lists. This raises the likelihood that a portion of the numerical discrepancy stems not from different individuals but from differing orthography or dialectal renderings of the same names.

Equally important is the fact that some key martyrs, despite their central place in the tragedy of Karbala, are not always included in formal counts of combatants. Many such enumerations focus only on those who actively entered the battlefield, bore arms, or were recorded as fighting alongside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. For this reason, figures such as Ali al Asghar, Abdullah ibn al Hasan, and Lady Umm Wahab may be absent from certain military tallies due to their age, gender, or non-combatant classification. This does not lessen their martyrdom or their significance. Rather, it shows that some reports count only armed fighters, while others preserve the wider memory of all those martyred with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that not all who stood with the Imam ^[a.s] fell in the battle. Men such as al Hasan al Muthanna and al Dahhak ibn Abdullah al Mashriqi survived the ordeal, further demonstrating that enemy estimates, elegiac commemorations, and martyr registries do not always overlap in method or intent.

Thus, while the figure of seventy-two has attained symbolic permanence, the broader historical record indicates that the true number of Imam al Hussein's ^[a.s] supporters, those who marched, fought, were martyred, or survived at Karbala, was indisputably higher.

"Peace be upon those who were left far from their homeland. Peace be upon the pallid bodies, the gushing bloods, the dismembered limbs." *Ziyarat Nahiya*



THE ESTIMATED FORCES OF UMAR IBN SA'D

Reports regarding the size of the army of Umar ibn Sa'd display considerable numerical variation, even within sources generally regarded as early or relatively dependable. Among the figures preserved in transmission are 4,000, 4,500, 20,000, 22,000, 28,000, 30,000, 31,000, and 35,000. This disparity can be understood partly through the manner in which the Kufan regiments were deployed. The troops did not leave Kufa as a single, unified mobilization.

Instead, contingents were dispatched in successive waves, with reinforcements joining the main army at different intervals. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that some early reports recorded only the size of the initial force, while later narrations incorporated the total after subsequent divisions had converged upon Karbala. This incremental deployment model alone can account for a significant portion of the numerical inconsistency.

A second complicating factor is the large rate of desertion reported among the Kufan ranks before they reached Karbala. Some who were conscripted or coerced into joining the expedition abandoned the march along the route, whether in anticipation of battle, reluctance to confront Imam al Hussein ^[a.s], or due to tribal and political hesitations.

Given this attrition, any attempt to determine the exact final number present on the battlefield becomes inherently uncertain. What may be preserved in the sources could reflect recruitment figures, departure numbers, or battlefield estimates, all of which are distinct and not necessarily reconcilable. Among the recorded figures, the number 30,000 appears repeatedly, including in narrations attributed Imam Ali ibn Al Hussein ^[a.s].

Although these reports are not preserved in the most rigorously authenticated compilations, the figure itself aligns plausibly with the broader political and demographic context of Kufa. Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad had enacted a sweeping mobilization of the city's male population, making participation near-compulsory. If Kufa's full military capacity at the time was approximately 100,000 men, as cited in several historical assessments, then a force of 30,000 would represent less than half of its available manpower, a proportion consistent with both enforced conscription and mass reluctance.

An additional indicator supporting this estimate relates to the uprising of al Mukhtar al Thaqafi, whose forces are reported to have reached 60,000. If true, this would imply that roughly half of Kufa's military-aged population avoided Karbala, while the other half, approximately 30,000, ultimately formed the backbone of Umar ibn Sa'd's marching force.

Taking these factors collectively, the figure of 30,000 cannot be asserted with absolute certainty, yet it remains the most historically coherent and contextually defensible approximation when weighed against troop logistics, patterns of attrition, political coercion, demographic capacity, and corroborative narration.

"Certainly, by killing you, the enemy have killed Islam, disrupted the truth of prayer and fasting, revoked the prophetic customs and the divine laws, destroyed the pillars of faith, distorted the verses of the Qur'an, and brutally rushed into tyranny and aggression." *Ziyarat Nahiya*

THE SEQUENCE OF MARTYRDOMS

As the hours of Ashura advanced, a question naturally rises in the mind of the reader: why did the companions of Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] appear to go out one by one, when the enemy had already launched repeated assaults and the battlefield had long ceased to resemble an orderly contest? The answer lies in the nature of the fighting itself, and in the distinctive character of Karbala, where military reality and moral witness were inseparably joined.

First, it must be understood that the struggle did not begin as a series of isolated duels. The enemy ranks advanced in waves, pressing forward repeatedly, and the companions did not meet these assaults as solitary fighters. They formed a defensive front, and when the pressure intensified, they closed ranks again and again, fighting as a unit.

Their primary duty in those early hours was not simply to strike the enemy, but to hold the line, protect the encampment, and keep the attackers from reaching the tents.

In such conditions, martyrdom often occurred within the crush of battle, amid arrow volleys, cavalry surges, and close combat.

Many companions were therefore killed during collective engagements and defensive stand-offs, not only in individual combat that could be narrated as a single episode.

Second, as their numbers diminished and exhaustion mounted, the character of the fighting naturally changed. A small group facing a far larger army cannot sustain extended formation warfare indefinitely.

Once the companions had been reduced, the front could no longer be held with the same breadth, and the defence of the camp became increasingly dependent upon brief, concentrated counterattacks and personal acts of resistance. The narrative therefore begins to show individual departures more clearly, not because the companions had suddenly abandoned collective defence, but because the battle had reached a stage where each remaining man's movement toward the front became visible, decisive, and final.

Third, the companions' one-by-one approach to Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] was not merely a tactical rhythm created by the battlefield. It was also an expression of discipline, allegiance, and moral clarity. Throughout the reports, the companions are shown coming to the noble Imam ^[a.s.] to bid farewell and to seek permission to fight.

This is not the behaviour of men acting independently or impulsively, but of men consciously departing under authority. In a normal battle, a commander issues orders and units advance.

But at Karbala, the companions were not fighting under the illusion of victory. They were fighting with full awareness that they were offering their lives in defence of the Imam ^[a.s.] and in testimony to the truth of his cause. Seeking permission was therefore part of the meaning of their sacrifice. Each man wished to stand before his Imam ^[a.s.] one final time, to receive his prayer, and to depart with the certainty that his blood would be poured in obedience.

"Peace be upon the bloodstained chests, the plucked souls, the snatched spirits, the stripped corpses, the pallid bodies, the gushing bloods and the dismembered limbs." *Ziyarat Nahiya*

Fourth, this also explains why the companions preceded the members of the Imam's ^[a.s.] Household. In the moral framework preserved in the Maqatal tradition, it was not fitting that the family of the Prophet be exposed to the enemy while loyal companions still remained able to defend them. The companions themselves understood this and insisted upon it.

Their martyrdom was not simply a sequence of deaths; it was a deliberate barrier raised between the tents and the swords of the enemy. Even when the enemy surged toward the encampment, the remaining companions would hurl themselves forward to drive them back. Their deaths, in this sense, were a shield that was thinning hour by hour.

Fifth, the reports that mention farewells, prayers, and Qur'anic recitation are not ornamental details added for effect; they are structural clues to how the day unfolded.

They show that as the ranks of the companions were reduced, what remained of the defence increasingly took the form of individuals stepping forward with conscious intention, and the Imam ^[a.s.] receiving them, praying for them, and sending them out.

This pattern does not contradict the existence of repeated assaults. Rather, it explains how the camp continued to stand despite them: each assault was repelled by fewer men, each defence required greater sacrifice, and each departure to the front was both a military necessity and a moral act witnessed by the Imam ^[a.s.].

For this reason, the later narrative naturally names the companions one by one. It is not because the battle became slow, nor because the enemy granted them courtesy.

It is because the companions, reduced in number and surrounded by a vast host, were now fighting at the edge of finality, where every step from the Imam ^[a.s.] toward the battlefield became an irreversible offering. Thus the martyrdoms appear individually in the telling, even while the battle as a whole remained continuous and brutal.

The companions went one by one, not as a theatrical procession, but because the line had become thin, the defence had become intimate, and each man sought to depart with the Imam's ^[a.s.] permission and prayer, placing himself between the enemy and the Household until Imam al Hussein ^[a.s.] fell.



THE ACCOUNT OF THE MARTYRS OF KARBALA

The land of Karbala, sanctified by the final stand of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} and those who chose death over humiliation, left behind a legacy of sacrifice whose full magnitude can scarcely be measured. Among the many matters connected to that tragedy, few are more difficult to determine than the exact number of martyrs who fell on the Day of Ashura.

The early chroniclers recorded their names in differing forms, and although many agreed upon a central body of those who were martyred, variations in transmission, the loss of records, and the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the uprising have meant that a definitive number has remained beyond certainty.

In order to approach a sound understanding of this matter, the historians of the early centuries gathered the names of those whose martyrdom was reliably attested in the reports available to them.

These names, which form the basis of later maqatal works, make possible an approximate reconstruction of the number of those who fell.

Traditionally, they have been arranged into four principal groups, according to their closeness to the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, their lineage, or their companionship with the infallible Imams ^{a.s}.

Group One: The Martyrs Who Were Companions of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}
Among those who were martyred beside Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} were two men whose lives had intersected directly with the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}:

(1) Anas ibn al Harith; (2) Abdul Rahman ibn Abd Rabbih al Ansari.

Group Two: The Martyrs Who Had Been Companions of Imam Ali ^{a.s}
A second group consisted of those who had once fought under Imam Ali ^{a.s} and now stood beside his son in the final hour:

(3) Abu Thumamah Amr ibn Abdullah al Saidi; (4) Habib ibn Muzahir al Asadi;
(5) Zahir, the freedman of Amr ibn al Hamq; (6) Ammar ibn Abi Salamah al Dalani;
(7) Said ibn al Harith al Khuzai, the freedman of Imam Ali ^{a.s};
(8) Abdullah ibn Umayr al Kalbi; (9) Kardus ibn Zuhayr; (10) Nafi ibn Hilal al Jamali.

Group Three: The Martyrs from the Household of the Prophet ^{saws}
These are the martyrs from among the family of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, those whose blood was most intimately joined to his noble house:

(11) Ali al Akbar; (12) Abdullah, also known as Ali al Asghar; (13) Abdullah ibn Ali;
(14) Uthman ibn Ali; (15) Jafar ibn Ali; (16) al Abbas ibn Ali; (17) Abu Bakr ibn Ali;
(18) Muhammad ibn Ali; (19) Abu Bakr ibn al Hasan; (20) Abdullah ibn al Hasan;
(21) al Qasim ibn al Hasan; (22) Jafar ibn Aqil; (23) Abdul Rahman ibn Aqil;
(24) Abdullah ibn Aqil; (25) Muhammad ibn Abi Said ibn Aqil;
(26) Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil; (27) Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar;
(28) Awn ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar.

In isolated reports, additional names from the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s} are also mentioned:

(29) Ibrahim ibn Ali; (30) al Abbas al Asghar ibn Ali; (31) Jafar ibn Ali;
(32) Abdullah al Akbar ibn Ali; (33) Abdullah al Asghar ibn Ali; (34) Ubayd Allah ibn Ali;
(35) Umar ibn Ali; (36) Atiq ibn Ali; (37) Qasim ibn Ali; (38) Bishr ibn al Hasan;
(39) Umar ibn al Hasan; (40) Abu Bakr ibn al Hussein; (41) Jafar ibn al Hussein;
(42) Ibrahim ibn al Hussein; (43) Abu Bakr ibn al Qasim ibn al Hussein;
(44) Hamzah ibn al Hussein; (45) Zayd ibn al Hussein; (46) Qasim ibn al Hussein;
(47) Muhammad ibn al Hussein; (48) Umar ibn al Hussein; (49) Muhammad ibn Aqil;
(50) Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Aqil; (51) Hamzah ibn Aqil; (52) Ali ibn Aqil;
(53) Awn ibn Aqil; (54) Jafar ibn Muhammad ibn Aqil;
(55) Abu Said ibn Aqil; (56) Ibrahim ibn Muslim ibn Aqil; (57) Ali ibn Muslim ibn Aqil;
(58) Abdul Rahman ibn Muslim ibn Aqil; (59) Ubayd Allah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil;
(60) Abu Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Aqil; (61) Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Aqil;
(62) Ibrahim ibn Jafar; (63) Abu Bakr ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar;
(64) Awn al Asghar ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar; (65) al Hussein ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar;
(66) Ubayd Allah ibn Abdullah ibn Jafar; (67) Awn ibn Jafar ibn Jafar;
(68) Muhammad ibn Jafar; (69) Muhammad ibn al Abbas;
(70) Ahmad ibn Muhammad al Hashimi.

Group Four: The Martyrs Who Were Companions of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}
The fourth and largest group comprises those who stood with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} out of conviction, loyalty, and certainty, and who sealed that loyalty with their blood:
(71) Ibrahim ibn al Hussein al Asadi; (72) the nephew of Hudhayfah ibn Asid al Ghifari;
(73) Abu al Hayyaj; (74) Adham ibn Umayyah al Abdi; (75) Anis ibn Maqal al Asbahi;
(76) Burayr ibn Khudayr; (77) Bashir ibn Amr al Hadrami; (78) Jabir ibn al Hajjaj;
(79) Jabalah ibn Ali al Shaybani; (80) Junadah ibn al Harith; (81) Jundub ibn Hujr;
(82) a youth whose father had already been martyred; (83) Jawn, the freedman of Abu Dharr;
(84) Juwayn ibn Malik; (85) al Harith ibn Imru al Qays; (86) al Harith ibn Nabhan;
(87) al Hatuf ibn al Harith; (88) al Hajjaj ibn Zayd; (89) al Hajjaj ibn Masruq;
(90) al Hurr ibn Yazid al Riyahi; (91) Hulas ibn Amr; (92) Numan ibn Amr;
(93) Hanzalah ibn Asad al Shibami; (94) Rafi, the client of Banu Shindah;
(95) al Rumayth ibn Amr; (96) Zuhayr ibn Bishr al Khatham; (97) Zuhayr ibn Sulaym al Azdi; (98) Zuhayr ibn al Qayn al Bajali; (99) Zayd ibn Maqal;
(100) Salim, the bondsman of ibn Madaniyyah; (101) Sad ibn Hanzalah al Tamimi;
(102) Said ibn Abdullah al Hanafi; (103) Said ibn Kardam;
(104) Sulayman, the freedman of Imam; (105) Sulayman ibn Rabiah;
(106) Sawwar ibn Abi Himyar; (107) Suwayd ibn Amr ibn Abi Muta;
(108) Sayf ibn al Harith al Jabiri; (109) Sayf ibn Malik al Abdi;
(110) Shabib ibn Abdullah al Nahshali; (111) Shawdhab, the client of Banu Shakir;
(112) al Dhubab ibn Amir; (113) Darghamah ibn Malik;

- (114) Abis ibn Abi Shabib al Shakiri; (115) Amir ibn Muslim;
(116) Salim, the bondsman of Amir ibn Muslim; (117) Ibad ibn Abi al Muhajir;
(118) Abdul Rahman ibn Abdullah al Arhabi; (119) Abdullah ibn Qays al Ghifari;
(120) Abdul Rahman ibn Qays al Ghifari; (121) Uqbah ibn al Salt;
(122) Imran ibn Kab al Ansari; (123); Ammar ibn Hasan al Tai;
(124) Umar ibn al Uhduth al Hadrami; (125) Umar or Amr ibn Khalid al Saydawi;
(126) Sad, the bondsman of Umar ibn Khalid al Saydawi; (127) Amr ibn Khalid al Azdi;
(128) Khalid ibn Amr ibn Khalid al Azdi; (129) Umar or Amr ibn Dubay al Tamimi;
(130) Amr ibn Abdullah al Jundai; (131) Amr ibn Qurazah al Ansari;
(132) Umayr or Amr ibn Abdullah al Madhhiji; (133) Wadih, the Turkish bondsman;
(134) Qarib ibn Abdullah, the bondsman of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s};
(135) al Qasim ibn Habib al Azdi; (136) Qanab ibn Amr al Namiri;
(137) Kinanah ibn Atiq al Thaghlabi; (138) Malik ibn Abd ibn Sari al Jabiri;
(139) Mujammi ibn Ziyad; (140) Mujamma ibn Abdullah al Aidhi;
(141) the son of Mujamma ibn Abdullah al Aidhi; (142) Masud ibn al Hajjaj;
(143) Abdul Rahman ibn Masud ibn al Hajjaj; (144) Muslim ibn Awsajah al Asadi;
(145) Muslim, or Aslam, Ibn Kathir al Azdi; (146) Naim ibn Ajlan al Ansari;
(147) Munjih, the freedman of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s};
(148) al Hafhaf ibn Muhannad al Rasibi; (149) Hammam ibn Salamah al Qanisi;
(150) Wahab ibn Wahab; (151) Yahya ibn Salim al Mazani;
(152) Abu Shasha Yazid ibn Ziyad ibn Muhasir; (153) Yazid ibn Nabit al Abdi;
(154) Abdullah ibn Yazid ibn Nabit al Abdi; (155) Ubayd Allah ibn Yazid ibn Nabit al Abdi.

Conclusion

When all of these categories are brought together, the number of those whose names have been preserved rises to well over one hundred and fifty.

Yet even this remains an approximation rather than a final and indisputable total.

What is certain, however, is not the exact sum, but the immensity of the sacrifice.

They were a company unequalled in history for the purity of their intention, the firmness of their faith, and their unwavering defence of truth in the face of tyranny.

Their number may remain a matter of historical discussion, but their rank is not. Each name transmitted through the sources stands as a witness to loyalty, courage, and devotion.

Whether remembered in detail or preserved only in passing, they all belong to that sacred company who gave their lives with Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, and by their blood transformed the plain of Karbala into an eternal symbol of faith, honor, and resistance.

“Mourning commemorations were held for you in the utmost exalted place of Heaven, and the dark-eyed Maidens of Paradise hit their own heads and faces in grief. The skies and their inhabitants wept, as did Paradise and its keepers, the mountains and their surroundings, the oceans and their fishes, the heavens and their servants, the House, the Station of Abraham, the Sacred Monument, and Mecca and its sanctuary.” Ziyarat Nahiya

THE KILLERS OF IMAM AL HUSSEIN ^{a.s}

Such was the savagery inflicted upon Imam Al Hussein ^{a.s} by the callous enemy that Maqtal literature relates many various individuals being named as those who beheaded the Imam ^{a.s}. The brutality unleashed upon Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} was so relentless, and the hatred of his enemies so venomous, that even in the final moments of his life they contended among themselves for the claim of having killed the Imam ^{a.s}.

The question of who severed the blessed head of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} is therefore among the most sensitive and contested matters in the sources of the Maqtal tradition.

While the broad outlines of the final scene are shared across early reports, the identity of the man who performed the final act varies between narrations. This variation arises from the chaos of the battlefield, where multiple assailants closed in upon the fallen Imam ^{a.s} at the same moment, each striking or attempting to strike him.

Eyewitnesses remembered different parts of the scene, narrators transmitted different details, and later traditions preserved the roles of different perpetrators.

The sources most consistently mention three principal figures in connection with the beheading: Sinan ibn Anas, Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan, and Khawli ibn Yazid.

Sinan ibn Anas al Nakha'i / al Iyadi

The primary sources that mention Sinan ibn Anas include Tarikh al Tabari, al Irshad, al Malhuf, Muthir al Ahzan, and al Amali of Shaykh al Saduq.

Among the earliest and most widely transmitted reports, Sinan ibn Anas appears as the man most directly responsible for the killing of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, either by striking the decisive blow, thrusting the spear that brought the Imam ^{a.s} down, or completing the beheading.

Tarikh al Tabari, quoting the eyewitness Humayd ibn Muslim, describes Sinan ibn Anas thrusting his spear into the Imam ^{a.s} and knocking him to the ground.

Khawli ibn Yazid then approaches to sever the head but trembles and fails to carry out the act. At that point Sinan ibn Anas dismounts, curses Khawli for his weakness, and proceeds to behead Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} before handing the head to Khawli.

Al Irshad by Shaykh Mufid also preserves the same sequence.

Khawli ibn Yazid approaches but becomes overwhelmed and unable to perform the act. Sinan ibn Anas rebukes Khawli and then carries out the killing and beheading himself.

Al Malhuf intensifies the scene. In this narration, Sinan repeatedly stabs the Imam ^{a.s} and fires an arrow at him. Then, after Khawli ibn Yazid's failure to cut the sacred throat of the Imam ^{a.s} with his sword, Sinan steps forwards after stating the couplets about the Imam ^{a.s}.

Shaykh al Saduq's Amali likewise aligns with this tradition, portraying Sinan grasping the beard of the Imam ^{a.s} and cutting his throat while uttering the same blasphemous couplets.

The convergence of these independent reports across multiple early sources gives considerable historical weight to Sinan's involvement in the final act, whether as the man who delivered the decisive killing blow, the one who severed the head, or both.

Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan al Amiri

The primary sources that attribute the beheading to Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan include al Irshad, al Khawarizmi, Ziyarat al Nahiyah al Muqaddasah, and variant strands preserved within the Tarikh Al Tabari tradition. Shimr was already one of the most infamous commanders in the Kufan army, and several reports attribute the final act directly to Shimr.

A report within al Irshad states that after Khawli's hesitation Shimr himself approached the fallen Imam ^{a.s}, and severed the head before handing it to Khawli to deliver to Umar ibn Sa'd.

Al Khawarizmi records a particularly vivid and emotionally charged narration. In this account Shimr sits upon the chest of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}, seizes his beard, mocks him concerning the 'Hawdh' of the Prophet, and then draws his dagger repeatedly across the blessed throat until the head of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} is severed.

Ziyarat al Nahiyah al Muqaddasah preserves this image as a defining moment of the martyrdom: Shimr seated upon the chest of the Imam ^{a.s}, his hand in the beard of the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws}, slaughtering Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} with his blade.

Within the devotional memory of the Shi'i tradition these reports hold profound spiritual authority and have shaped the symbolic portrayal of the martyrdom. From a strictly historiographical perspective they occur less frequently than the cluster of reports involving Sinan ibn Anas, yet their narrative presence within Shi'i literature is extremely powerful.

Khawli ibn Yazid al Asbahi

The primary sources that mention Khawli ibn Yazid al Asbahi include al Irshad, Tarikh al Tabari, al Malhuf, and al Khawarizmi. Khawli ibn Yazid consistently appears in the reports as the man ordered by Umar ibn Sa'd to sever the head of Imam al Hussein ^{a.s}. However, the sources do not portray him as the one who ultimately completed the act. Across the narrations Khawli rushes forward to carry out the command but becomes overwhelmed by fear and trembling. His hands falter and Khawli is unable to perform the beheading.

Khawli ibn Yazid is then cursed or rebuked by either Sinan or Shimr for his weakness, after which another man completes the act. Some later genealogical and tribal traditions attempted to attribute the beheading to Khawli alone, but the earliest historical sources do not grant him that decisive role. His place in the narrative remains that of the man who was commanded to carry out the beheading but failed, and who afterwards carried the severed head to the commander of the Kufan army. The variation in the names arises from several overlapping factors rather than from a contradiction regarding the martyrdom itself. The first is the reality of the battleground. Multiple soldiers hemmed in Imam al Hussein ^{a.s} at the same moment, striking him from different directions. In such a chaotic scene, eyewitnesses naturally remembered different actions and attributed the final act to different individuals.

Secondly, eyewitness bias influenced the transmission of the reports. Some Kufan narrators appear to have downplayed the role of their own tribesmen, shifting blame toward figures such as Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan who had already become notorious.

Thirdly, devotional memory within the Shi'i tradition elevated Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan as the archetype of cruelty in the tragedy of Karbala. Even where earlier historical reports emphasised Sinan's role, the symbolic image of Shimr as the embodiment of the crime became deeply embedded in devotional literature. Finally, the differences also reflect the transmission chains of the narrations.

Tarikh al Tabari relied heavily upon the account of Humayd ibn Muslim, who foregrounds the role of Sinan. Shi'i narrations transmitted through Imam al Baqir ^{a.s} and Imam Ali Ibn Al Hussein ^{a.s} also mention Sinan ibn Anas al Nakha'i in the act of cutting the throat.

Liturgical texts such as Ziyarat al Nahiyah al Muqaddasah later canonised the image of Shimr ibn Dhi'l Jawshan sitting upon the chest of the Imam ^{a.s}.

Thus the variations are the result of differing textual traditions, tribal loyalties, and theological emphasis. They do not alter the fundamental reality of the event: that the grandson of the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} was surrounded, struck down, and murdered by a group of men whose brutality has been exemplary throughout history.

“Indeed, the Messenger of Allah ^{saws} became distressed and his anguished heart wept. The Angels and the prophets offered their condolences to the Prophet ^{saws} for your martyrdom.

Your mother, Fatimah al Zahra ^{s.a}, became distressed and bereft of you!

Legions of favored Angels came in waves to offer their condolences to your father ^{a.s}, the Leader of the Faithful. Mourning commemorations were held for you in the utmost exalted place Heaven, and the dark-eyed Maidens of Paradise hit their own heads and faces in grief.”

Ziyarat Nahiya

May Allah's ^{AZJ} blessings be upon Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} blessings be upon Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} blessings be upon the children of Imam Al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} blessings be upon the companions of Imam Al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} blessings be upon the ancestors of Imam Al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}.

May Allah's ^{AZJ} curse be upon the killers of Imam al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} curse be upon the killers of Imam Ali ibn al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} curse be upon the killers of the children of Imam Al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} curse be upon the killers of the companions of Imam Al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s},
May Allah's ^{AZJ} curse be upon the killers of the ancestors of Imam Al Hussein ibn Ali ^{a.s}.

❖ COMPLETION OF HEAD OF HUSSEIN {A.S} EDITION ONE ❖

والحمد لله {عز وجل} رب العالمين

Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}, the Lord ^{AZJ} of the worlds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

النسخة الإنجليزية - الطبعة الأولى [2026] من كتاب "رأس الحسين" ء قد اكتمل،

بقلم حيدر علي شيخ بن محمد

نقدم هذا العمل المتواضع في خدمة إمام زماننا، الإمام محمد بن الحسن المهدي؛ القائم؛ الحجة؛ المنتظر؛

الخلف الصالح؛ الموعود؛ بقية الله؛ صاحب الزمان وأسلافه المعصومين، لا سيما سيد الشهداء الإمام

الحسين ء ، الذي خلّدت بدمه الطاهر أعظم ملحمة في تاريخ الإسلام.

في هذا العمل نسعى إلى خدمة ذكرى عاشوراء وإحياء أمر أهل البيت عليهم السلام.

والحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا النبي محمد وعلى ذريته الطاهرة،

وخليفته أمير المؤمنين الإمام علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام

هنا نختم كلمتنا في هذه الطبعة الأولى[2026] ، والحمد لله عز وجل رب العالمين

English Maqṭal - Edition 1 (2026) of the book “**HEAD OF HUSSEIN** ^{a.s.}” has been completed, authored by Haydar Ali Shaykh ibn Muhammad.

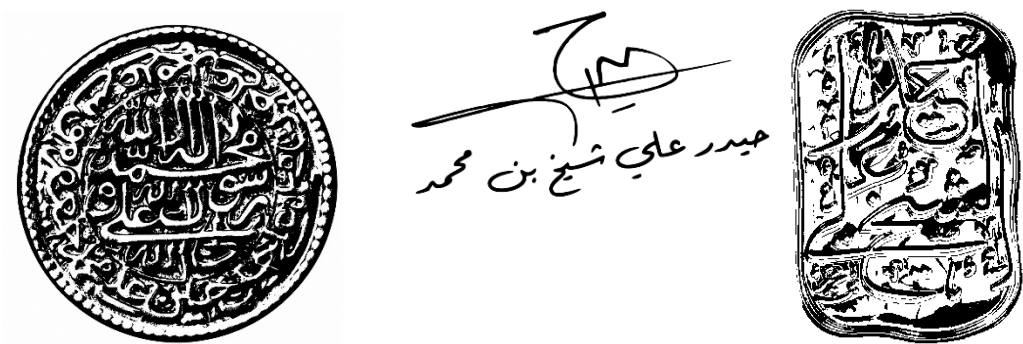
We present this humble work in the service of our awaited Imam al-Zaman, Imam Muhammad ibn Hassan Al-Mahdi ^{ajf}; Al-Qa'im; Al-Hujjah; Al-Muntazar; Al-Khalaf al-Salih; Al-Maw'ud; Baqiyatullah; Sahib al-Zaman and His Infallible Forefathers ^{a.s.}.

And in particular, the Master of the Martyrs, Imam al Hussein ^{a.s.}, through whose pure blood the greatest tragedy in the history of the world was eternally physically inscribed.

In this work, we humbly seek to serve the remembrance of Ashura and the revival of the cause of the Ahlul Bayt ^{a.s.}. And praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}, Lord ^{AZJ} of the worlds, and blessings and peace be upon our Master, the Prophet Muhammad ^{saws}, and his pure progeny, and his successor, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ^{a.s.}.

Here we conclude our word on this Edition 1 (2026).

Praise be to Allah ^{AZJ}, the Lord ^{AZJ} of the worlds.



اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى فَاطِمَةَ وَأُيُوبَهَا وَبَعْلَهَا وَبَنِيهَا وَالسِّرِّ الْمُسْتَوْدَعِ فِيهَا بِعَدَدِ مَا أَحَاطَ بِهِ عِلْمُكَ

يَا اللَّهُ. يَا اللَّهُ. يَا اللَّهُ. يَا اللَّهُ. يَا اللَّهُ. يَا اللَّهُ.

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - Ya Ar-Rahmaan (The Beneficent) & Ar-Raheem (The Merciful), Ya Dhul-Jalaali-Wal-Ikram.

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Maajid (The Illustrious, the Magnificent) & Al-Mumeet (The Creator of Death);
we ask You by the right of Mohammad Al Mustafa ^{saws}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Awwal (The First) & Al-Akhir (The Last);
we ask You by the right of Ali Al Murtaza ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Fattaah (Chief Judge) & Al Fatiras-Samawati wal-ardh (Maker of Heavens & Earth);
we ask You by the right of Fatima tuz Zahra ^{s.a.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Haleem (The Most Forbearing) & Al-Hakeem (The All Wise);
we ask You by the right of Hassan Al Mujtaba ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Haq (The Absolute Truth) & Al-Hameed (The Praiseworthy);
we ask You by the right of Hussain Ash-Shaheed ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Mu'izz (The Honourer and Bestower) & Al-Muzil (The Dishonourer);
we ask You by the right of Zain Al Abideen ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Baqee (The Everlasting) & Al-Badee (The Incomparable Originator);
we ask You by the right of Baqir Al Uloom ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Jaami (The Gatherer & The Uniter) & Al-Jaleel (The Majestic);
we ask You by the right of Jafar Al Sadiq ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Khabeer (The All Aware) & Al-Kabeer (The Most Greatest);
we ask You by the right of Musa Al Kadhim ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Ar-Ra'oof (The Most Kind) & Ar-Razzaq (The Provider);
we ask You by the right of Ali ibn Musa Al Ridha ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are At-Tawwab (The Ever Pardoning) & Al-Lateef (The Subtle One, The Most Gentle);
we ask You by the right of Mohammad Taqi Al Jawad ^{a.s.}

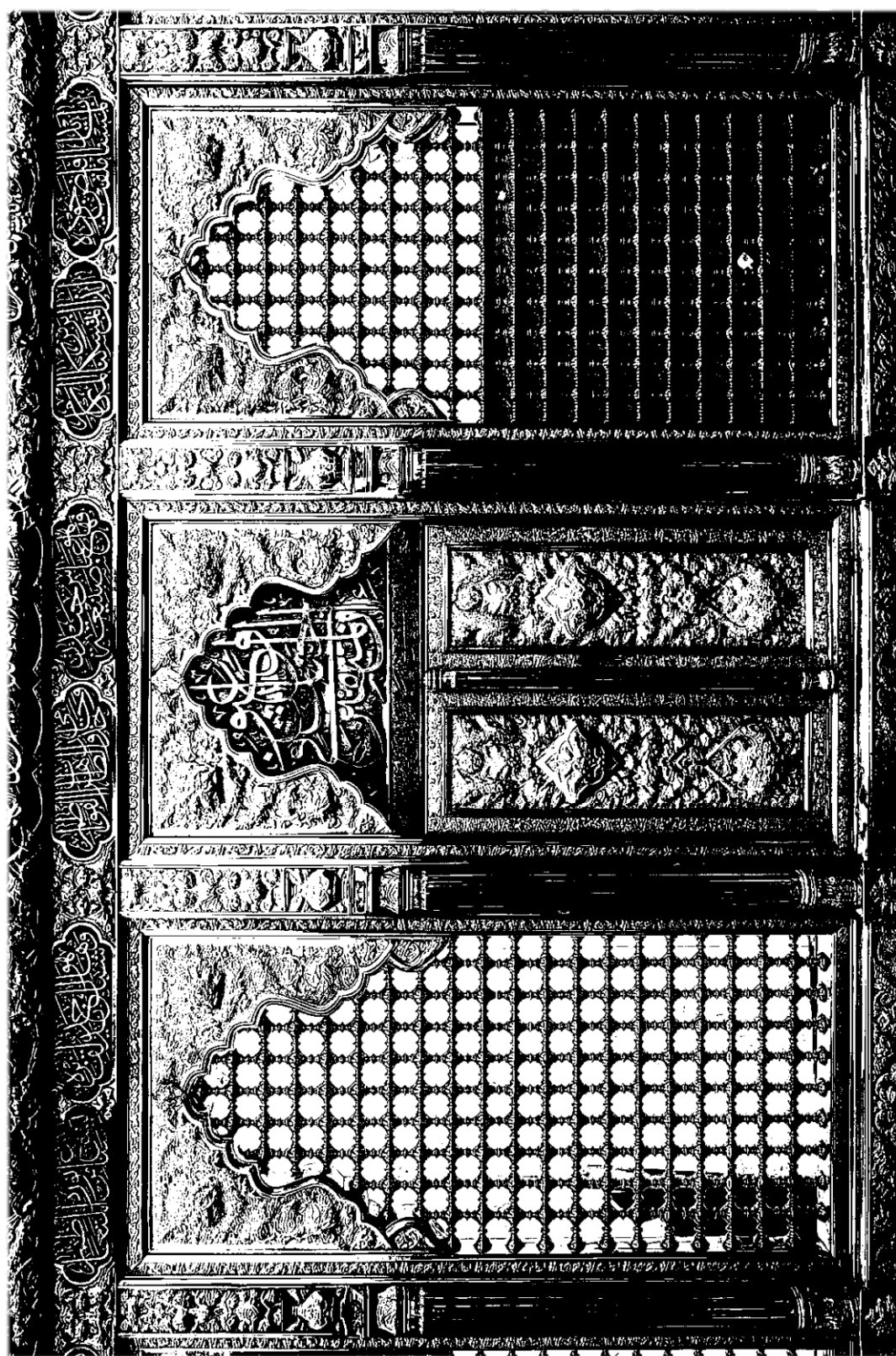
Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Haseeb (The Reckoner) & Al-Hafeedh (The Preserver);
we ask You by the right of Ali Naqi Al Hadi ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Al-Ahad (The Unique, The Only One) & Al-Alee (The Most High, The Exalted);
we ask You by the right of Hassan Al Askari ^{a.s.}

Ya Allah ^{SWT} - You are Malik-Ul-Mulk (Master of Kingdom, Owner of Dominion) & Al-Muntaqim (Avenger);
we ask You by the right of Mohammad Al Mahdi Al Muntazar ^{ajf}

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ - بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

Rabbana atina fid dunya hasanatan wa fil Aakhirati hasanatan waqina 'adhaban-nar – behaqqe Muhamadin wa Alay Muhammad
"O' our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire
- by the right and status of Muhammad ^{saws} and the Family of Muhammad ^{saws}."



يا حبيبنا الذي لا يخفى

السلام عليك يا حجة الله التي لا تخفى يا صاحب الزمان

In Ziyarat al Nahiya, Imam al Qa'im ^[ajf] remembers Imam al Hussein ^[a.s] with agonising grief;

Peace be upon you, O my master Aba Abdillah al Hussein ^[a.s], and upon the Angels who flutter around your dome, surround your grave, circumambulate your courtyard, and come for visitation.

Peace be upon you! I ^[ajf] intend your visitation, and I ^[ajf] am hopeful of achieving the prosperity that is with you.

Salutations from he ^[ajf] who recognizes your sanctity, is a sincere believer in your guardianship, seeks nearness to Allah ^[AZJ] through your love, and is aloof from your enemies,

Salutations from the one ^[ajf] whose heart is wounded due to the tribulations you have suffered, and whose tears flow in your remembrance,

Salutations from the one ^[ajf] who is distressed, grief-stricken, distracted, and yielding,

Salutations from the one ^[ajf], who, had he ^[ajf] been present with you in that plain, would have shielded you from the sharpness of the swords with his body and sacrificed his last breath for you, would have struggled beside you, helped you against the aggressors, and redeemed you with his soul, body, wealth, and children and progeny,

Salutations from the one ^[ajf] whose soul is a sacrifice for yours, and whose family is a shield for yours.

But as I ^[ajf] have been hindered by the course of time and as Allah's ^[AZJ] decree has prevented me ^[ajf] from helping you, and as I ^[ajf] could not fight those who fought you, and show hostility to those who showed hostility to you,

I ^[ajf] will lament you morning and evening, and will weep blood in place of tears, out of my anguish for you and my sorrow for all that befell you, until I ^[ajf] meet death from the pain of the catastrophe and the choking grief.

I ^[ajf] bear witness that you certainly established prayer, gave alms, enjoined good, forbade evil and transgression, obeyed Allah ^[AZJ], never disobeyed Allah ^[AZJ], and held fast to Allah ^[AZJ] and to His ^[AZJ] rope.

Then, you pleased Allah ^[AZJ], held Allah ^[AZJ] in awe, were attentive towards Allah ^[AZJ], and were responsive to Allah ^[AZJ], established the customs of the Prophet ^[saws], extinguished turmoil in religion, invited people to

rectitude, clarified the ways of righteousness, and strove in the way of Allah ^[AZJ].

You ^[a.s] were an obedient one to Allah ^[AZJ], a follower of your grandfather, Muhammad ^[saws], peace be upon him and his family, heedful of the saying of your father ^[a.s], quick to execute the will of your brother ^[a.s], an erector of the pillars of the religion, a suppressor of tyranny, an advancer on the transgressors, and a sincere exhorter for the nation, a traveler into mortal throes, a warrior against the wretched, and a maintainer of Allah's ^[AZJ] proofs on earth, compassionate towards Islam and Muslims, a champion of truth and most patient in adversity, a protector for the religion, and a defender of its domain.

You ^[a.s] safeguarded the right path and supported it, spread justice and promoted it, advocated the faith and manifested it, restrained and reproached the frivolous, took back the rights of the lowly from the privileged, and were equitable in your arbitrations between the weak and the strong.

You ^[a.s] were the springtime of the orphans, the protection of humanity, the glory of Islam, the treasure of divine laws, and a relentless ally of benevolence.

You ^[a.s] were the straightest path, the most generous of the creation, and had the brightest record.

You ^[a.s] were of great ancestry, noble descent, and lofty rank.

You ^[a.s] possessed plentiful merits, praiseworthy manners, and were abundant in endowments.

Proof