

## 25. The Battle of Siffin

The Imam came to Kufa after the end of the Battle of Basra and he made Kufa his capital. The people of Kufa were the builders of his army whose support was indispensable in defeating his opponents in Basra. There were no other people upon whom he could rely.

The majority of the people of Basra were against him and they were not expected to become sincere towards him after the war of Basra had eliminated many of their loved ones.

People of Hijaz were not reliable because they were few compared to the people of the rest of the Islamic provinces. People of Syria were followers of his enemy Muawiya. The Muslims of Egypt were incapable of offering what he needed of an army for subduing the secessionists.

The Imam stayed about four months in his new capital preparing what he needed to meet Muawiya the most dangerous among his opponents to the unity of the nation.

He was the most capable among them to challenge the authority of the Imam and their least scrupulous in religion. Muawiya had declared before the Battle of Basra his refusal to join the electors of the Imam and his challenge to his authority.

By this he actually separated Syria from the body of the Islamic State and declared its secession. He added to this his hostility to the central authority and that he was at war with that authority using revenge for the blood of Uthman as an excuse. His secessionist movement started before the movement of the three leaders.

The Imam sent after he was elected a message to Muawiya which was carried by his messenger Subrah Al-Juhani informing him of his election by the companions and asking him along with his followers to join his electors. Muawiya after a long silence sent Qubaisah Al-Absi and gave him a sealed letter addressed from Muawiya to 'Ali. He ordered him to enter Medina raising the letter and holding its lower part and told him what to say.

When Qubaisah entered Medina people knew that Muawiya was defiant. He gave what was in his hand

to the Imam. The Imam opened it and did not find anything in it and the following dialogue took place:

The Imam: What did you leave behind you (in Damascus)?

Qubaisah: (after he asked for and was given immunity): I left behind me angry people who would not be satisfied but with a death punishment for Uthman's blood.

The Imam: Whose death? Qubaisah: Yours! I left also sixty thousand old men crying under the shirt of Uthman which is hung on the pulpit in Damascus.

The Imam: Do they want me to pay for the blood of Uthman? Am I not bereaved by the death of Uthman? God I declare to Thee my innocence of the blood of Uthman. By this the killers of Uthman have been spared unless God wants the opposite. For if He wants something He would necessarily have it.<sup>1</sup>

The answer of the Imam to this obvious challenge was to start mobilization of soldiers for subduing this dangerous defiant. He gave the banner to his son Muhammad Ibn "Al-Hanafeyah" (the mother of Muhammad)

He gave the leadership of a portion of his army to Abdullah Ibn Abbass. He gave 'Umar Ibn Abu Selemah the leadership of another portion of his army. He appointed Abu Leila Al-Jarrah the commander of his advancing division.

He appointed Qutham Ibn Abbass his successor in Medina. He wrote to Qais Ibn Saad his appointed governor of Egypt Uthman Ibn Hunaif his appointed governor of Basra and Abu Musa Al-Ashari his appointed governor of Kufa to try to mobilize people for a march on Syria.<sup>2</sup> He called upon the people of Medina to participate in that Holy mission. He spoke to them saying:

"Certainly our safety would be secured within the authority of God. Give Him your obedience truthfully and willingly. By God you either do that or God will remove from you the authority of Islam; then He will not bring it back to you until the authority of Islam shrinks and recoils in Medina.

Stand up to these people who want to divide your nation. May God reform through you what people of other areas had corrupted and by this you would be paying only what is due from you."<sup>3</sup>

The Imam went on preparing for the march on Syria trying to mobilize all that which was within his reach for the confrontation with this aggressor party. But the news of the departure of Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr to Basra came to the Imam. Thus he was forced to delay his march on Syria until after the conclusion of the emerging crisis.<sup>4</sup>

The Imam did not delay his march on Syria because the three leaders were more dangerous to the caliphate than Muawiya. He did that because the departure of the three leaders to Iraq added to the danger of Muawiya a dealt with soon the Imam would be deprived of all military and financial assistance which he needed to subdue the main enemy Muawiya.

The three leaders with all their forces would not represent a great danger against the unity of the nation if they were alone challenging the authority of the Imam. The Imam would be able to subdue their forces easily if they were alone without Muawiya. Their rebellion was extemporaneous.

They did not have what Muawiya had of resourcefulness strong army and wide popularity in a large Islamic province. As a matter of fact people of Basra were divided in their loyalty towards them and a party from the people of Basra fought them as soon as they entered and before the Imam came to confront them.

Muawiya on the contrary was dangerous by himself even if the three leaders were not with him. He was wily and resourceful. His movement was not extemporaneous. He prepared for it for two decades.

He was in a province whose inhabitants were obedient to his order. He had a huge and well organized army ready to comply with his command. He was capable of challenging the authority of the Imam even if he did not have any helpers from outside Syria.

Therefore the biggest concern of the Imam after he finished the Battle of Basra was to prepare for facing this enemy who was dangerous to the unity of the nation and its future.

To leave no excuse for Muawiya the Imam sent him a message with Jareer Ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali inviting him to join the majority of the Muslims who elected him.

He mentioned in that message that those who elected him were those who elected Abu Bakr 'Umar and Uthman and that the right of the decision about the caliphate was only for the migrant and the Medinite companions. If they elected a man their election would be binding to the rest of the Muslims.

If anyone tries to break away by accusation or innovation they would bring him back. If such a person persists in his secessionary way they have to fight him for taking a road other than the road of the believers. The Imam also said to Muawiya in this message the following:

"Talhad and Al-Zubayr elected me then they broke their covenant with me. Their breach of covenant is like their faith desertion. I fought them after I left no excuse for them until the truth came and the cause of God prevailed while they were averse.

"I invite you to join the Muslims by pledging your allegiance to the new administration. I prefer peace but if you persist in your opposition I will fight you seeking the help of God against you..."

The excuse which Muawiya used in his deceptive movement for reaching the caliphate was the blood of Uthman and that the Imam did not punish the killers of Uthman though they were around him. The Imam therefore included in his message what refutes his argument.

"And you have spoken repeatedly about the killers of Uthman. Join the rest of the Muslims who elected me then ask me to try the ones whom you accused. I will judge between you and them according to the

Book of God..

"Muawiya if you look at the matter through your mind rather than your selfishness you will find me the most innocent in relation to the blood of Uthman and that I was completely isolated of his affairs unless you deliberately make false accusations. You may do that if you want to. You ought to know that you are from the ones who were freed by the Prophet at the conquest of Mecca who are forbidden from reaching the caliphate. They cannot be a factor in deciding the leadership. Nor would they be consulted in the Islamic affairs or elected by the Muslim electors. I have sent to you Jareer Ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali. He is faithful and a migrant with a good past.

Pledge your allegiance to me through him and there is no power but by God."<sup>5</sup> Jareer carried the message to Muawiya and added his own power of persuasion. Muawiya however refused to answer him positively or negatively trying to gain time in preparation for the future. Finally his expected answer came.

It was not expected that any mediation or means of convincing would succeed in bringing Muawiya to the right road. He believed that he is in a strong position to challenge the Imam and he would not do anything else.

He had under his leadership about one hundred thousand fighters and he was still with all his financial and manpower. He did not enter any battle and he did not suffer any loss of property funds or men. The Imam on the other hand was forced to enter the bloody Battle of Basra in which his supporters had to pay a great deal of their blood and wealth.

The enemies of the Imam were on the increase and the supporters of Muawiya were in a continuous increase.

The Syrian treasury was in Muawiya's hands and he used it as he used his own funds purchasing with it the conscience of the seekers of selfish interests and they were numerous.

## **The Opportunist Amr**

The wily Amr Ibn Al-Aws was most outstanding among those who sold their principles and conscience. The co-operation between Amr and Muawiya was a very distinguished event in the history of opportunism. History knew (and Muawiya who was seeking to avenge the blood of Uthman also knew) that Amr Ibn Al-Aws was from the outstanding agitators against Uthman.<sup>6</sup>

This did not prevent Muawiya from covenanting the wily Amr for an alliance against the Imam with the pretext of seeking the avenge for the blood of Uthman of which Amr was guilty.<sup>7</sup> The price Muawiya had to pay to Amr for his alliance with him was the governorship and the tax revenues of Egypt as long as Amr lived if Muawiya wins the struggle against the Imam.<sup>8</sup>

The Imam was determined to try to subdue Muawiya and his followers and bring them back to the bulk of the nation and thwart their secessionist movement. He led his army to Syria and when he came to the land of Siffin he found Muawiya and his army had already occupied the bank of the Euphrates. The Imam was forced to camp away from the water.

## Idealist Versus Opportunist

Muawiya would not hesitate to use for his end any means even if it is extremely criminal. He occupied the bank of the Euphrates and thought he could prevail against 'Ali and his army through the terrible weapon of thirst. He decided to prevent his opponents from reaching the water.<sup>9</sup> Thus 'Ali and his army had to surrender or die of thirst. Thirst would make them easy victims and Muawiya's army in possession of supplies food and water would be able to destroy 'Ali and his army. Muawiya thought victory was within his reach. Destroying scores of thousands of Muslims through this method would not shake the conscience of Muawiya because his conscience was dead.

It would not shake his conscience to kill 'Ali and his two sons Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein members of the House of the Prophet. Nor would it shake his conscience to kill them by thirst though it meant killing by thirst the majority of the companions of the Messenger who were "Badrians" and "Uhudians."

Why should the conscience of Muawiya be shaken for committing such an ugly crime? Is not his aim to defeat the truth and the people of the truth? What is the difference between one death and another death? There is not any difference in the eyes of Muawiya between reaching victory through the sword or through annihilation by the weapon of thirst.

The annihilation of 'Ali and his camp through thirst was preferable to Muawiya over killing them by sword.

Fighting 'Ali and his camp by conventional weapons does not secure Muawiya's victory but annihilation through thirst would definitely secure it.

However Amr Ibn Al-Aws his chief advisor counselled him not to try such a terrible weapon yet Amr was not more righteous than Muawiya. Amr thought that this method in spite of its ugliness would not secure victory. It may bring him only failure and curse. 'Ali the man of unusual bravery would not die from thirst while he is in command of a huge army. But Muawiya refused the advice of his ally.<sup>10</sup>

The Imam told Muawiya in a message that he did not come to fight for water. He came to uphold the truth and defeat falsehood. He came to bring the Muslims together after the leaders of falsehood put them in two separate camps. Muawiya did not take the Imam's message seriously and he did not leave the Imam any open avenue but to fight for water.<sup>11</sup>

The Imam waged a battle for the water and this was his first Holy Battle against Muawiya and his camp. He succeeded in occupying the bank of the Euphrates and driving the Umayyad army away from the

river. By this the situation was reversed. Now it became possible for the Imam and his army to do to their opponents what their opponents were trying to do to them. It became possible for the Imam to annihilate his opponents by their own weapons. Would the Imam do that?

Here the history of war kneels to glorify 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. Here 'Ali stands among the leaders of nations towering like a mountain as he gives generations of humanity his impressive lesson. The religion of Islam stands against all kinds of wars of genocide and annihilation. The leaders of the nations of the twentieth century have legalized the annihilation of civilians through atomic bombs and so far have failed to prohibit the use of such weapons.

The faith of Islam (over fourteen centuries ago) had prohibited what was much less than a nuclear war. It prohibited killing children women elderly people and blind enemies. It prohibits the demolishing of houses of the enemies and destruction of their orchards.[12](#)

I cannot conceive that anyone after the Messenger could take the attitude of the Imam 'Ali towards his enemy after his enemy had given him every justification to annihilate him and his army by his own weapon.

The leaders of the Imam's army and their soldiers shouted: Prevent them from water as they prevented us from water. The Imam replied: "God has given you victory against them because of their injustice and aggression. Certainly the issue is more important than depriving them of water."[13](#)

Then he sent to Muawiya this message: "We shall not treat you as you treated us. Come to the water we are equal."[14cdxxxi](#)

## **New Efforts for Peace**

The Imam tried again to bring about peace. His aim was to avoid shedding blood and to bring the Muslims back to unity. His ambassadors went to Muawiya but mediations and negotiations failed to bring any result.

Muawiya was hoping to be the ruler of the Muslim World and nothing would stop him from trying to reach that end.

Skirmishes between the two camps were started and remained limited. A regiment from one side and a regiment from the other side faced each other on one day. On the following day another two regiments faced each other.

The situation continued this way until the month of Muharram began. All hostilities ceased in observation of the sanctity of the month. The Imam went back to his peaceful efforts during the month of Muharram and the result was not better than in his previous efforts.[15](#)

As the month of Muharam ended the two camps went back to their skirmishes and limited battles. The Imam wanted to prevent both camps the expected heavy losses if the two armies faced each other in a decisive battle.

These battles did not prevent men from the two camps to meet and debate each other. Most of the tribes were living in both provinces: Iraq and Syria. Thus they had their special blood relationship. Muawiya contacted a number of leaders of the Iraqi army. He sent them his messengers and spoke to some of them directly trying to persuade them by promising them important rewards if they leave the camp of the Imam and join him. [16](#)

The followers of the Imam also tried to persuade their relatives in Syria to join the camp of the truth. The Imam however did not allow himself to try to buy his opponents with public funds or to promise their ambitious leaders important positions.

There were many people looking for their interests among the followers of the Imam. It would be sufficient to mention men such as Ashaath Ibn Qais about whom Abu Bakr said: Whenever Ashaath sees an evil he assists it." History records that Muawiya sent his brother Utbah to Ashaath trying to attract him. He offered him proposals and Ashaath was not unreceptive.

Finally the Imam decided to meet Muawiya in a decisive battle. The two huge armies met and the most important battle the Muslims had ever waged until that time began. The two armies fought each other all day and a big portion of the night.

They resumed the battle on the following day and the right wing of the Imam's army was defeated and ran away. By this the core of his army was weakened. Thus the Imam had to move from the heart of the army to its left side where the fighters were from the tribe of Rabi-aah. [17](#)

When the Rabi-ites witnessed the Imam among them they realized the magnitude of their responsibility towards the protection of the Imam. They fought bravely fearing that the Imam might be killed while he is among them and that this will put them in an eternal shame. Therefore they decided to prevent that at any cost. [18](#)

Malik Al-Ashtar went on trying to bring the retreaters back. They heard his voice and came back. The army was back again in action and the war went on with its utmost cruelty and ugliness for the whole day and night. [19](#)

## **Martyrdom of Ammar Ibn Yasir**

On that day when the right of the Imam's army retreated an outstanding companion of the Holy Prophet Ammar Ibn Yasir who was 93 years old stood between the two camps. He spoke loudly saying: By God if they hit us until they drive us from here to the orchards of Hejar we will continue to believe that we are the people of truth and that they are people of falsehood. [20](#)

Then he said pointing to the banner of Muawiya: "By God under the banner of the Messenger I fought the man of this banner three times and the man of the banner is not more righteous now than before."[21](#)

Ammar had an appointment with his martyrdom at the hands of the aggressor party. The Messenger of God said to him in the presence of many companions. "Son of Sumayah (Sumayah was Ammar's mother) the aggressor party shall kill you."[22](#)

This statement was well known to the companions. Amr Ibn Al-Aws was one of the reporters of this hadith and people of Damascus heard that from him. His narration of this hadith caused a deep disturbance in the camp of Muawiya days before the decisive battle began.[23](#)

Muawiya blamed Amr for reporting this hadith. He expected Ammar to be with the Imam and through his presence Muawiya's followers will discover that they belong to the aggressor party.

Ammar asked for a drink before he entered the decisive battle of Siffin during which he obtained his martyrdom. A lady brought him milk mixed with water.

When he saw the drink he exclaimed "Allahu Akbar" (God is The Great). This is what my beloved the Messenger of God promised me when he said: Ammar the aggressor party shall kill you and your last drink in this world will be milk.[24](#)

He took his drink then he rushed on saying: Who wants to go to Paradise? Paradise is under the shades of the spears. He who is thirsty comes to the water and the water will be drunk today. Today I will meet my beloved ones: Muhammad and his party."[25](#)

Ammar went on fighting and urging Hashim Ibn Utba Ibn Abu Waqass to advance (Hashim was the bearer of the banner of Ammar's regiment. He was of the best of the Qureshite warriors and very beloved by the Imam. He lost one of his eyes at one of the battles.) Ammar sometimes joked with him saying: One-eyed advance.

Then he tells him: Advance I redeem you with my father and mother. And Hashim calms Ammar down saying: Take it easy "Abu Yaqthan" (Ammar's code name). The war makes you move too fast.[26](#) But neither the words of Hashim nor the ninety three years could minimize the speed of Abu Yaqthan. He wanted to hurry to Paradise.

He had an appointment with his beloved the great Messenger. He wanted to meet him and he did.

Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit the man of two testimonies (The Prophet had made his testimony equal to the testimony of two men) was with the Imam in Siffin but he did not fight. When Ammar was killed Khuzaimah realized that the aggressor party is the camp of Muawiya. He entered his tent. He took a bath and put his armor on then he went fighting until he died.[27](#)

## The Big Conspiracy

The war continued with all its violence and intensity during the third day and weakness became obvious in the camp of Muawiya. The Imam's army almost reached the tent of Muawiya. He wanted to run away but he felt ashamed and so he stayed.[28](#)

Before noon while the battle was progressing in its intensity victory became within the reach of the Imam's camp. While his army was about to defeat the aggressor party copies of the Holy Qur'an were hoisted in Muawiya's camp and voices were heard saying:

This is the Book of God. It is between you and us from its beginning to end. Remember God. Remember God for the future of the Arabs. Remember God for the future of Islam. Who shall protect the borders of Syria if the Syrian people perish? Who shall protect the borders of Iraq if the Iraqi people perish? [29](#)

Muawiya had already despaired from obtaining a military victory. He was facing a decisive defeat on the battlefield. Now he resorted to the Holy Qur'an. The invitation to accept the rule of the Holy Qur'an was not an invention of Muawiya and Ibn Al-Aws.

You may recall that the Imam called upon the camp of Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubier at Basra before the beginning of its battle to surrender to the Holy Qur'an. A youth from Kufa volunteered to carry the Holy Qur'an face the people of Basra and invite them to accept the rules of the Holy Qur'an. His invitation was rejected and the youth was killed.[30](#)

Muawiya and Ibn Al-Aws had decided to resort to the invitation of the rule of the Holy Qur'an when they realized that their military defeat was inevitable.

Muawiya evidently had prepared the atmosphere for such an invitation through his secret contact with some of the leaders of the Imam's army particularly Ashaath Ibn Qais the head of the tribe of Kindah whose members were numerous in Kufa.

Muawiya was almost certain that hoisting the copies of the Holy Qur'an would lead to a division in the Imam's camp whether the Imam would accept or refuse the invitation. What Muawiya expected happened. Voices from the Imam's camp were raised asking to stop the fight and accept the rule of the Holy Qur'an.

Those who wanted to stop hostilities were three categories. Each of them had a motive that differed from that of the other two categories. The scrupulous category was made up of religious fanatics. They thought that rejecting the invitation to the rule of the Book and continuing the battle would be a major sin which Muslims are not supposed to commit. They forgot that their Imam is the most knowledgeable of the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic law and that he is the most adherent to the Islamic principles.

This category included a great number of readers of the Holy Qur'an who thought that they knew all the

Islamic law and appointed themselves as the protectors of Islam. This kind of religious people are numerous in every generation.

There was another category of people who were anxious to stop the fight led by conspirators who were collaborating with the enemy believing their co-operation with the enemy will bring them some material wealth or high positions.

The third category believed that their obedience to the Imam in the two battles of Basra and Siffin had cost them dearly because they paid with the blood of their children brothers and relatives. Their main concern was to save their lives. They could not care less for what happened to Islam and the Muslims.

The Imam stood up trying to show them the right road saying to them: The resort to the Holy Qur'an is only a conspiracy planned by Muawiya and his advisors. I know them as young and old. They never were people of the Qur'an or religion. All they wanted was to avoid the catastrophe of defeat.[31](#)

There was within the camp of the Imam some people who had both sincerity and wisdom (these were a minority compared to the others.) These people agreed with the Imam and urged him to continue the war and to ignore the many voices which were calling for cessation of hostility.

These people were led by Malik Al-Ashtar. But their voices were drowned by the voice of the majority who wanted to end the battle.

Al-Ashtar was still pushing hard towards Muawiya seeing that victory was within his reach but those who wanted to end the war surrounded the Imam. They threatened to desert him and to fight him and even to take him as a captive and hand him to Muawiya.[32](#)

They asked him to order Al-Ashtar to discontinue his march. The Imam found himself between two alternatives. If he continued the war he would be forced to fight his enemy and the biggest portion of his own camp with only a minority that was still obedient to him.

Otherwise he could discontinue the war and victory would slip from his hand. He chose to discontinue the war feeling that his obedient followers may be annihilated without reaching a result which would improve the just side.

The Imam found himself facing a coup by which his authority came to an end. Al-Ashtar came back from the front and urged him to fight those who disobey him with those who obey him. The Imam said: "Malik I was a leader but now I have become a follower."[33](#) However the conspiracy was twofold: Discontinuation of war and the acceptance of the invitation to the rule of the Holy Qur'an through two arbiters.

The arbiters from the Iraqi camp had to be Abu Musa Al-Ashari who was the governor of Kufa before the beginning of the Battle of Basra. The reader may remember the efforts which this man made to prevent the people of Kufa from joining the Imam in his confrontation with the army of the three leaders at Basra.

Muawiya achieved all that through the stupidity of the religious fanatics along with some traitors in the Imam's army. The collaborators and the fanatic readers acted and sounded as if they were burdening the Imam instead of Muawiya with the responsibility of the war.

Their efforts were directed at challenging the authority of the Imam and preventing him from choosing any arbiter that inclined to his opinion or thought of resuming the fight.

Muawiya chose Amr Ibn Al-Aws to be his representative and none of the people of his camp argued with him. The Imam chose Abdullah Ibn Abbas but Al- Ashaath and his followers said: No two men from Mudhar (the Arab tribes who are neither Rabi-ites nor Yemenites) shall rule us (meaning that Amr Ibn Al-Aws and Abdullah Ibn Abbas both are Qureshites non-Yemenites and non-Rabi-ites). The fact is that they did not refuse Ibn Abbas for being a Mudharite. His being a Mudharite was taken by Ashaath as a pretext to cover up his intentions. Had Ibn Abbas been against the Imam Ashaath would have accepted him.

This became obvious when the Imam nominated Malik Al-Ashtar who was a Yeminite. Ashaath rejected him and so did his tribe saying: Did anyone burn the earth other than Al-Ashtar? They meant that Al-Ashtar was in agreement with the Imam and wants to go back to war in order to defeat the aggressor party. Ashaath and his tribe were actually assistants and collaborators with the aggressor party.

They joined the Imam reluctantly. They did not like his reign or his victory or everything he stood for. In fact these people were more harmful to the Imam and more dangerous to his cause than his own enemy Muawiya.

The Imam was forced to accept the arbitration. He was forced also to accept Abu Musa as the representative of his camp and the documents of arbitration were written and signed by the two sides. Ashaath was extremely pleased with obtaining such a document and he went from one division to another of the Iraqi army reading it to them.[34](#)

## **The Two Arbiters**

The important points of the document of arbitration were the following:

1. The two arbiters will validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates and that they will follow what they find in it.
2. They should follow the instructions of the Holy Prophet which unite the Muslims and do not separate them.
3. The two arbiters promise God and covenant Him that they will try to bring peace to the nation and will not turn the nation back to division and war.

4. The deadline for their deliberation will be the month of Ramadan (and if they choose to make the decision before that date or choose to delay it for the interest of the nation they could do that.)

5. The place of their meeting will be equal in distance between Kufa and Damascus and Hijaz.[35](#)

The Holy Qur'an and the hadiths which bring unity to the nation validate the right of 'Ali who was elected by the companions of the Prophet and who was "brothered" by the Messenger and declared to be the leader of every believer. They invalidate the untruth of Muawiya who divided the nation and shed the blood of the Muslims for his own interest.

Yet the two arbiters were not expected to validate a truth or to invalidate a falsehood. Neither of the two companions was neutral in the dispute about which they came to issue a fair decision. Ibn Al-Aws was the second in command of the camp which was fighting the Imam. Al-Ashari was one of five people who were opposed to the Imam and his policy before the beginning of the Battle of Basra.

During that period Muawiya was preventing the extension of the Imam's authority to his province and declaring his armed disobedience. The Mother of Believers Talhah and Al-Zubayr were occupying Basra and hoping to extend their influence to Kufa.

While Muawiya and the three leaders were doing that Abu Musa was preventing people of Kufa from assisting the Imam in retrieving what the three leaders had usurped from the area of his authority.[36](#)

Abu Musa was taking this stand while the Imam was sending to him and to the people of Kufa his messages and messengers asking people of Kufa to come to his assistance in retrieving his right. Abu Musa was satisfied to keep Basra under the authority of the three leaders because he was collaborating with them. He actually was in open defiance of the Imam covering his intention with his deceptive methods of calling upon people to avoid fighting.

Yet the Holy Qur'an clearly invites the believers to fight any Muslim community that commits aggression against another Muslim community.[37](#) Had Abu Musa had his way during that period he would have prevented the people of Kufa from joining the Imam and the Imam's reign would have ended in the first year after his election.

Trusting Abu Musa and Amr Ibn Al-Aws on the right of the Imam was in fact trusting an enemy on the right of his enemy.

What was expected finally took place. The two arbiters continued in their deliberation for a long time. The result of their deliberation was that they agreed to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and Muaweyeh.

Abu Musa was the first to declare his decision of invalidating the leadership of the two men. Ibn Al-Aws stood after him to declare the invalidation of the leadership of the Imam and the establishment of the leadership of Muawiya. Abu Musa accused Amr of being treacherous breaching an agreement with him.

Had Ibn Al-Aws not been treacherous and agreed with Abu Musa to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and Muawiya their invalidation would have had an adverse effect on the Imam rather than Muawiya.

The Imam was the Caliph and Muawiya was only the governor of Syria. Thus invalidating Muawiya's caliphate would be meaningless. What does it mean to overthrow a man from an office he does not occupy?

Had the decision of the two arbiters been in accordance with the stipulation of the document of arbitration the deceptive act of Ibn Al-Aws against Abu Musa would have been considered an assistance to the Imam rather than to Muawiya.

Had not Ibn Al-Aws done that the harm to the Imam from the legal point of view would have been greater because their decision would be binding on the Imam and unharmed to Muawiya. For invalidating Muawiya as a caliph does not deprive him of any position he had.

Had their decision been in agreement with the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet the deception of Ibn Al-Aws would have been the only barrier from making their decision binding because it proved that they were in disagreement in their ruling.

But the decision of the two arbiters was opposed to the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet even if they had agreed. The Holy Qur'an declares the following:

***"If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel make ye peace between them. But if one of them transgresses beyond the bounds against the other then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. If it complies then make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just." The Holy Qur'an chapter 49 verse 10.***

The party of Muawiya was the aggressor party which refused to obey the command of God. 'Ali was the legal Caliph by the appointment of the Holy Prophet according to the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet.

He was also the Caliph by a general election which he received from the overwhelming majority of the companions and the inhabitants of Medina Mecca Iraq Egypt Yemen and the rest of the Islamic provinces with the exception of the inhabitants of Syria who were ruled by Muawiya. Since he was the legal Caliph it was the duty of the Muslims to obey him. The Holy Qur'an commands the Muslims to obey the leaders from among them:

***"O you who believe (in Islam) obey God the messenger and the people of authority from among you..." The Holy Qur'an chapter 4 verse 58.***

The Holy Prophet declared that 'Ali is the leader of every believer and prayed to the Almighty that He

love whoever loves 'Ali and to be hostile to whoever is hostile to 'Ali.<sup>38</sup> Muawiya was hostile to the Imam. He fought him and he legalized shedding his blood. And if God responds to the prayer of His Prophet (and no doubt He does) then Muawiya is an enemy of God by being the enemy of 'Ali.

Muslim in his Sahih reported that the Holy Prophet said "Whoever comes in an open rebellion and parts with the community then he dies he will die a pre-Islamic death."<sup>39</sup> Muawiya no doubt was out of obedience to the legal Caliph.

If anyone has hesitated in judging that Muawiya was the leader of the aggressor party he should remember the authentic hadith (whose authenticity is well established) which reported that the Messenger said to Ammar Ibn Yasir while many companions were listening: "Ibn Sumayah the aggressor party shall kill you."<sup>40</sup> The party of Muawiya is the party that killed that outstanding companion who was a beloved of the Prophet.

This hadith was so well known that Al-Zubayr had a tremor with which the arms he was carrying started to shake at the Battle of Basra when he knew that Ammar was in the Imam's camp. He feared that Ammar will be killed at that battle then Al-Zubayr will be from the aggressor party.<sup>41</sup>

When Amr Ibn Al-Aws at the Battle of Siffin was informed that Ammar was killed he refused to believe it and when he witnessed the body of the martyr the color of Amr's face was changed. Then he said: Are we the ones who killed him? The one who killed him is the one who brought him<sup>42</sup> and so Muawiya said.

When the Imam heard of that he ridiculed it saying: "Then the Messenger of God is the one who killed his uncle Hamzah because he is the one who brought him to the Battle of Uhud." There is no doubt that Abu Musa heard the hadith.

He knew that Ammar was killed and he knew that Muawiya and his party were the aggressor party and that 'Ali is the well guided Imam but all that did not prevent him from deciding to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and overthrow him. This was only because he was an enemy of the Imam. I do not want to say that he did not value what he knew of the Book of God and the words of the Messenger but I would say that his hatred of the Imam blinded him.

<sup>1.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 104.

<sup>2.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 104-105.

<sup>3.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 105.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 5

<sup>5.</sup> Abdul Fattah Abdul-Maqsud 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib part 4 pp. 31-32.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 141 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 560.

<sup>7.</sup> Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib part 4 pp. 44-45 And Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 pp. 62-63 (8th edition) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 460-461.

<sup>8.</sup> Al-Tabari his History part 5 p. 39.

<sup>9.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 145 Al-Tabari his History part 21 pp. 571-572 Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 71.

<sup>10.</sup> Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 145 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 542.

- [11.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 145.
- [12.](#) Al-Hurr Al-Amili Wasa-il-al-Shi'ah part 11 pp. 43-44.
- [13.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 145-146 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 572.
- [14.](#) Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsud Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib part 4 p. 190.
- [15.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 149.
- [16.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 148.
- [17.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 152.
- [18.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 152.
- [19.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 152.
- [20.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 257.
- [21.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 257.
- [22.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 259.
- [23.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 259 Ibn-Al-Athir also reported this in his Al-Kamil part 3 p. 158.
- [24.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 258 Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 78.
- [25.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 258 Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 p. 78.
- [26.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 161.
- [27.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 p. 259.
- [28.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 154.
- [29.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 160-161.
- [30.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 509.
- [31.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 161.
- [32.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 161.
- [33.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 163.
- [34.](#) Al-Tabari in History part 5 p. 55.
- [35.](#) Al-Baladhuri Ansab Al-Ashraf (conveyed by Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 2 pp. 83-84. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 162-163.
- [36.](#) See chapter 23 of this book section 3.
- [37.](#) The Holy Qur'an chapter 49 verse 10.
- [38.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 110. The Hadith was reported by more than one hundred companions.
- [39.](#) Muslim his Sahih part 12 p. 241.
- [40.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 233.
- [41.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 pp. 510-511.
- [42.](#) Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat part 3 pp. 253-254.

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