

At Karbala'

Arrival in Karbala'

At *Karbala'*, Hurr and his army blocked the caravan of Imam Husayn from going any farther. Hurr said, "This is near the river and you cannot go farther."

The horses of the Imam's group stopped, and Imam Husayn asked Zuhayr, "What is the name of this place?"

Zuhayr answered, "Taf."

The Imam asked, "Is there any other name for this place?"

Zuhayr said, "It is also called *Karbala'*."

The Imam's eyes watered and he said, "O, God! I seek refuge with God from Karb (grief) and Bala (tribulation). Here is the place in which we will set our camp; here is the place where our blood will be shed. Here is the place where our graves will be. This is what my grandfather has told me."

Events of Karbala'

On the second day of the holy month of Muharram, sixty-one years after the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medinah, his grandson, Imam Husayn, gathered all of his relatives and family and said, "O God! We, the family of the Prophet Muhammad, were chased out of our homes in the city of our Prophet (Medinah). The children of Umayya harmed us. O, Lord! Secure our rights for us and help us against the unjust people."

Then he faced his followers and said, "People are slaves of this world. The religion is just what they say. They use it as long as it provides them with their living. When they are tested, the true religious people are few."

Then he said, "All of you know what has happened to us and you know how the world has changed its

face towards us. The good is now considered bad and no good remains except for a little. You see that truth is not acted upon and the wrong is not prevented. Indeed, a believer does not wish anything but to meet his Lord. Indeed, I do not see death [for freedom] as but happiness and life with unjust people as nothing but grief.”

When the Imam finished, Zuhayr stood up and said, “O, grandson of the Messenger of God! We heard your sermon. If the whole world was eternal, we would prefer to rise with you than to be in this world.”

Burayr stood and said, “O the son of the Messenger of God! God has honored us to fight with you and may your grandfather be our interceder on the Day of Judgment.”

Nafi’ Ibn Hilal stood and said, “Your grandfather, the Messenger of God, lived among people, some of them were hypocrites, promising to help him, but in reality, they hid themselves to betray him, until he died. Your father ‘Ali was in a similar situation. You are now among us in a similar situation. Whoever betrays you betrays no one but himself. You go wherever you go. We will be with you, whatever you face, East or West. Indeed, by God, we do not hesitate to meet our Lord. We speak from our hearts and from our minds. We follow whoever follows you and we are enemies of whoever is your enemy.”

Then, the Imam asked the residents of the area, Nineveh and Ghadriyyah, to sell their property to him for 60,000 Dirhams.

He said, “All of the property is for you, on one condition, that whoever wants to visit my grave, you lead them to it.”

The area was four miles by four miles. He let them keep the money and he gave the land back to them, then wrote a one-line letter to his brother, Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafiyyah, saying, “Indeed, the world seems not to be and the Hereafter is certain.”

Meanwhile, Hurr wrote to Ibn Ziyad telling him of the events. Ibn Ziyad replied in a letter to Imam Husayn saying, “O Husayn, I have heard that you have settled in *Karbala*. The leader of the faithful Yazid has written and ordered me not to sleep or be full with drink until I send you to your Lord or you accept my rule and the rule of Yazid.”

The Imam read the letter and let it fall to the ground. After he dropped it he said, “People who want to please anyone but God will not be successful.”

Ibn Ziyad’s messenger asked for a reply and the Imam said, “He has no reply from me because the punishment of God is certain for him.”

When the messenger came back to Ibn Ziyad and told him what happened, he became very angry. He stood up and ordered ‘Umar Ibn Sa’d to march towards *Karbala* with an army of 4,000 troops. He even wrote a promise for ‘Umar Ibn Sa’d to appoint him as governor of Ray in Persia if he goes to *Karbala* and kills Imam Husayn. When Ibn Ziyad finished writing, he extended his arm and mentioned for ‘Umar

to take it. 'Umar was reluctant and Ibn Ziyad took the paper back.

'Umar left the governor and gathered all of his friends to consult them. All of them warned him not to go. The son of his sister Hamzah Ibn Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah told him, "I ask you by God not to go and not to fight Imam Husayn even if you become governor of the whole world."

In the morning, he met with Ibn Ziyad and said, "I am not willing to go and fight Imam Husayn. I have brought for you a list of other people to send to fight the Imam."

Ibn Ziyad said, "I am not asking you to tell me whom to send to fight. If you do not want to go, you will not be the governor of Ray."

But, 'Umar Ibn Sa'd did not want to give up his chance to be governor of the rich city of Ray, so he accepted to go and fight Imam Husayn with 4,000 men.

In *Karbala'*, 'Umar asked Azra Ibn Qays to go and meet the Imam and ask him why he is in *Karbala'*. Azra refused, because he was one of those who asked the Imam to come to Kufah.

Kathir Ibn 'Abdullah al-Shu'bi said, "I am going to meet the Imam and if you want me to kill him right away, I will."

'Umar said, "No, just go and ask him why he is coming here."

Kathir went towards the Imam's camp but Abu Thumamah al-Sa'idi stopped him on his way.

Kathir said, "I have a message for the Imam."

Sa'idi said to him, "You give up your sword and you can go to see the Imam."

He refused, and when he tried continuing towards the Imam's camp, Sa'idi would not let him pass, and Kathir decided to go back. Then 'Umar sent Qurra Ibn Qays al-Hanbali. When he conveyed the message to the Imam, the Imam said, "Your people have written to me; therefore, I came. If you have changed your mind, I am going to leave."

Qurra went back to 'Umar and 'Umar wrote to Ibn Ziyad telling him what Imam Husayn said. Ibn Ziyad wrote a reply saying, "Tell Husayn and his followers to pay allegiance to Yazid. If he does so, we will think about what to do with him."

Then, Ibn Ziyad announced a public meeting in the main Masjid of Kufah and made a speech. He said, "O people! You know the people of Abi Sufyan and you know how they have served you, and you know this leader of the faithful Yazid. You know how helpful he is to his people. He serves them and gives them what they need; all of the roads are safe under his leadership as they were during his father's rule. His son, Yazid, honors people. He makes them rich! He has increased your salaries by a hundred times, and he has ordered me to increase them even more if you go to fight his enemy Husayn. Listen to him

and obey him.”

He immediately distributed money among the soldiers and then went to Nukhaylah. He camped there, and ordered Ibn Namr al-Tamimi and Hajjaj Ibn Abjar and Shimr Ibn Dhil-Jawshan and Shibth Ibn Rab'i to go and join 'Umar Ibn Sa'd. Shibth (one of those who wrote letters inviting the Imam) announced that he was sick.

Ibn Ziyad called him and told him, “You want to play a double trick. If we succeed, you will tell us you were sick and could not help us. To Husayn's people you will say you helped them. Come here so I can see for myself. My people tell me you are not sick.”

When Ibn Ziyad saw him, he did not see any sign of sickness and ordered him to go immediately. After that, He ordered five hundred troops under the leadership of Zijr Ibn Qays at the gate of Kufah to prevent other people from leaving and helping the Imam.

However some were able to go. One of them was Amir Ibn Abi Salamah al-Dalani who crossed the gateway. When they tried to stop him, he fought with them and was able to reach *Karbala'* and fight to protect Imam Husayn.

By this time, Shimr left for *Karbala'* with 4,000 troops, Yazid Ibn Rikab with 2,000, Hosayn Ibn Numayr with 4,000, Shibth Ibn Rab'i with 1,000, Kalb Ibn Talha with 3,000, Hajjaj Ibn Abjar with 1,000, Madhair Ibn Rahinah with 3,000, and Nasr Ibn Harshah with 2,000 fighters. By the 6th day of the month of Muharram, there were 20,000 troops under the leadership of 'Umar Ibn Sa'd, and Ibn Ziyad kept sending more troops until the total was 30,000 soldiers.

On the day of the 6th, Ibn Ziyad wrote to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd, “I would like to know your news every morning and every night until you finish Husayn.”

'Umar immediately redistributed his army around the Euphrates to block the Imam's camp from access to water. The Imam could not bear to hear the children crying. They were not close enough to the river to drink, but the camp was close enough to see and smell the water. The Imam realized that the camp might even be close enough to have water underground. He used one of the tent poles and a hammer to dig a well, hammering the tent pole deeper and deeper until water sprang from the pipe. But, after some time, the water stopped.

Ibn Ziyad wrote to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd, “I heard that Husayn is digging a well. He and his followers drank from that well. The moment you receive my letter, prevent them from digging any wells and make it as difficult as possible for them!” He sent five hundred of his own troops to deliver the message and to guard the Euphrates.

The Seventh of Mutharram

The Imam and his followers were totally cut off from water and their throats burned from thirst. At this point the Imam asked 'Abbās to bring some water for the women and children. 'Abbās and twenty others each took a water skin and, during the night, marched towards the Euphrates. 'Abbās was in the middle and all twenty around him to protect his water skin and Nafi' Ibn Hilal al-Bujali took the flag.

The guards at that part of the river asked, "Who is this?"

He said, "We came to drink water."

The soldiers answered, "Go drink water as much as you like, but do not carry any back for Husayn."

Nafi' replied, "By God, I am not going to drink a drop of water while Husayn and his family are thirsty!" He called on his people to go and get water. Some of them filled the water skins and the others fought. They were able to get water back to the camp, but a few bags of water are not much for a whole camp of men, women, and children, as well as horses and other animals.

The Eighth of Mutharram

The Imam sent Ibn Qurdah al-Ansari to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd to ask for a meeting between the two camps. He agreed and each of them came with twenty guards. The Imam said to his followers to wait behind, except for his brother 'Abbās and his son 'Ali. 'Umar Ibn Sa'd did the same leaving everyone behind except for his son and his slave.

The Imam said to 'Umar, "Are you going to fight with me? Do you not fear God on the Day of Judgment? You know who I am. Why do you not leave these people and join me?"

'Umar said, "I am afraid that my house will be demolished."

The Imam said, "I will rebuild it for you."

'Umar said, "I am afraid my village will be confiscated."

The Imam said, "I will give you a better village from my property in the Hijaz area."

'Umar said, "I have children and I am afraid Ibn Ziyad is going to kill them."

The Imam, knowing that his excuses were fake, said to 'Umar, "God is going to order someone to kill you in your bed and you will not get even a handful of the wheat of Iraq."

'Umar said sarcastically, "Barley is enough for me."

'Umar Ibn Sa'd sent a letter to Ibn Ziyad and in it he claimed, "The Imam agrees to return back to the

place he came from or any other place in the army camp and be like one of the individual Muslims or come to the leader of the faithful Yazid and put his hand in his hand so they can see what they do to each other.” He added, “That is the best solution for you and for the whole nation.”

Ibn Ziyad gathered his council and said, “This is not a bad idea.”

Shimr interrupted him, “No! This cannot be! If you do not get him now, you will not be able to get him again! He is weak now and you are now strong!”

Ibn Ziyad immediately wrote to ‘Umar Ibn Sa’d “Indeed, I did not send you to Husayn as a mediator nor to give him promises. Look! If Husayn and his followers accept my rule, take them alive and send them to me. If they do not, attack them, kill them, and cut off their hands, feet, noses and other parts. If Husayn is killed, march the horses on his chest and his back. I do not think that would hurt him after death! If you do so, you have your reward with us. If you do not, you must immediately resign and Shimr Ibn Dhil-Jawshan will be your replacement as the leader of the Army. I have ordered him to do so.”

Shimr brought the letter to ‘Umar Ibn Sa’d who read it and said, “You are responsible for this! We have planned for a solution and you destroyed it! Indeed, by God, Husayn is not going to submit. Indeed, the soul of his father is between his chest.”

Shimr said, “Tell me, are you going to obey your leader or not?”

‘Umar said, “I am going to do it, and I will not let you have that honor. You take leadership of the infantry.”

Shimr’s Trick

Shimr had a distant relation to ‘Abbas on his mother’s side. He wanted to divide Imam Husayn’s family. Shimr went near the Imam’s camp and yelled in a loud voice, “Where are the children of our sister?”

‘Abbas and his brothers did not answer when they heard him yelling. The Imam asked, “Why do you not answer him? He is your relative.”

So, ‘Abbas and his brothers went out and said, “What do you want? What is the matter with you?”

He said, “O children of my sister! You have clemency. Do not kill yourselves With Husayn. Come to the obedience of the leader of the faithful Yazid.”

‘Abbas said, “God curse you and your clemency! You give us clemency and you do not give clemency to the grandson of the Prophet of God? And you are asking us to enter the obedience of the cursed people and those who are children of cursed people?”

Then, ‘Abbas left him and came back to the tents.

When 'Abbās got back, Zuhayr went to him and said, "I would like to tell you a story. When your father wanted to marry, he went to his brother 'Aqil to choose for him a woman of a brave tribe. He wanted to have a brave child and your father wanted you for this day to help your brother."

'Abbās replied, "Are you trying to encourage me? Today, of all days! God knows what I am going to do today! To help my brother! My Imam!"

Then, Habib Ibn Mu'ahir al-Asadi asked permission from the Imam to go talk to his tribe, Banu Asad. The Imam gave him permission. He went and they recognized him. He asked them to come and help the Imam. Ninety of them went to join him, but one of the other tribes went and told the news to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd. 'Umar sent four hundred men to stop the ninety from reaching the Imam's camp. They fought and struggled to reach the Imam. Some were killed, others returned to their tribe, and only Habib made it back to the Imam's camp.

The Night of the Ninth

Thursday, the night of the ninth of Muharram, 'Umar ordered his entire army to attack the Imam's camp at once. The Imam was sitting, then said to his brother 'Abbās, "Go to them and see what they are up to."

'Abbās went with twenty followers. Among them were Zuhayr and Habib. They asked the army, and the army replied that the order of the governor came that they must obey him and his rule, or fight. 'Abbās went back to the Imam and told him.

Meanwhile, his people were preaching to the army of 'Umar. Habib Ibn Mu'ahir said, "Indeed, by God, you are the worst people. Who are you going to kill? The children of your Prophet? Those who spend all of their time in worshipping God?"

The head of the army said, "You just want to show yourself as a good person."

Zuhayr said, "God has made people different. Do not help the unjust people in killing the righteous people."

The head of the army said, "But, Zuhayr, you are not a Follower!"

Zuhayr said, "Do you not see I am with them now? Is this not enough for you to see that I am a Follower? God knows that I did not invite him and I did not write him a letter and I did not promise him anything, but when I saw him and recognized him and knew who his enemy was, I decided to be on his side."

'Abbās came from the Imam with a message, "Leave us alone for one night. Delay the fight for one night so that we can pray to our Lord and recite the Holy Quran."

‘Umar hesitated to do it but some of his army said, “We should let them. Even if they were non-Muslims, we would have let them.”

‘Umar knew that he would not have the support of his army if he ordered to attack immediately, so he answered, “I know that if I give him this, they will be stronger tomorrow. However, I will let them delay the war one night.

The Imam’s Camp on the Ninth

The Imam gathered all of his followers and gave a sermon. He praised God and then said, “I praise God that He has given us the Prophet and He has taught us the Quran and religion. He has given us ears and eyes and hearts, and he has not made us idol-worshippers. Indeed, I do not know any followers better than my followers nor any family better than my family. May God reward you all. Indeed, my grandfather has told me that I will be in Iraq and I will be killed and the time has come. Indeed, I think tomorrow will be the decisive day with these people. I have allowed you all to leave me alone and go on your own way. During this night, any one of you may take your horses and camels and leave. Any of you may take one of my family and leave and you may scatter in the cities and villages. Indeed, I am the one they want. When they get me, they will not go after anyone else.”

After this sermon, his brothers and children and relatives said, “We will never leave you! We do not want to live after you are gone and we do not want to see that day!”

The Imam turned his face to the children of ‘Aqil and said, “It is enough for you that your father was killed, you go.”

They said, “By which face will we face other people and say to them, we left our master, the best of our family, and we did not help him when he needed our help? Indeed, we are here to sacrifice ourselves for you. Life after you is the worst life.”

Ibn ‘Awsajah said, “If we leave you alone, what would be our answer to God? I swear by God, I will not leave them until I hit them in their chests with my spear and fight them with my sword, and if I do not have a sword, I will throw rocks on them until I die with you!”

Sa’id Ibn ‘Abdullah said, “We are not going to leave you until we prove that we have honored the Messenger of God by honoring you. By God, If I die and come back to life, and if I am burned and come back to life again seventy times, I will not leave you until I die for you.”

Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn said, “I wish to be killed in your way and come back to life and be killed 1000 times to protect you!”

After others said similar things, the Imam said, “Jazakumullah Khayra (may God reward you well)”, and then said, “I am going to be killed tomorrow and all of you will be killed and no one among you will

remain except my son 'Ali al-Sajjad.”

When they heard that 'Ali al-Sajjad would survive the massacre, they all screamed in one voice, “All Praises to God! Praise God who has honored us to help you and honored us to die with you!”

Then, after the people became quiet, the Imam said calmly, “The good news is heaven.”

The Night Before the Tenth

This was the worst night for the People of the House of the Prophet. Women and children cried, the children screamed for water, and everyone was getting ready for the morning.

Suddenly, Burayr said a joke to Ibn 'Abdul Rahman al-Ansari. 'Abdul Rahman said, “This is not the time for joking around.”

Burayr stopped laughing and said, “God knows I am not a joker, but I am happy that we are going to prove our faith tomorrow, and the time has come.”

Habib Ibn Mu'ahir started laughing and Ibn al-Hamdani said, “This is not the right time for laughing.”

Habib laughed and said, “This is the best time for laughing! We are so close to entering Heaven!”

They all started to devote themselves to prayer. The Imam was repeatedly reading,

“And let not those who disbelieve think that whatever we increase for them is the best for them. Indeed, we increase it for them so they increase in sin. And they have a humiliating punishment.”¹

One of the guards heard the Imam and said, “We are the best.”

Burayr replied, “O outlaw! If you were the best, you would be with the grandson of the Prophet of God. Repent from your sins and join us.”

The man mocked him and said, “No, I am just a witness.”

It is reported that on this night, thirty-two people joined the Imam's camp when they saw that the Imam and his followers were reading the Holy Quran and praying and devoting themselves to God.

The Imam recited a poem:

“O life! How many friends you have in the morning,

That you leave in the evening.

Some are dead, some are alone, and no one is replaced.

Everything is up to God.

Only He remains forever.”

When the Imam’s son ‘Ali al-Sajjad heard his father reciting this poem twice, he realized that there was no hope for peace with the army.

When Zaynab heard the poem, she cried and said, “Today my mother and my father and brother died.”

The Imam immediately faced her and tried to comfort her, saying, “O sister! Be patient. You know that everyone dies. People on the earth die, people in the heavens die, no mortal remains forever.”

Then, he said to his sister and his daughters and the women of the camp, “When I die, do not tear your clothes, do not harm your faces, or speak any nonsense.” And he told them to follow ‘Ali al-Sajjad as their leader.

Then, he ordered all of his followers to attach their tents to each other, so they can face the enemy in only one direction. He also said to dig a trench behind the tents and ordered to make a fire in it when the attack starts, so the horses of the enemy cannot attack from behind.

Later in the night the Imam went to scout the area. Nafi’ followed him. The Imam asked him, “Why did you come after me?”

He said, “I was worried that they might attack you in the darkness.”

The Imam said, “I came to make sure there are no hidden assassins around here.”

Then he took Nafi’s hand and said, “Nafi’, there is only one soul and one life. We are going to die tomorrow. Look, there is nobody between these two hills here, why do you not run away?”

Nafi’ fell down to the feet of the Imam and asked, “Why do you not want me to stay with you at this moment? By God! I am not going to leave you until I die here with you!”

Then, the Imam went to the tent of Zaynab. Nafi’ followed him and overheard the conversation between them. Zaynab asked him, “Have you talked to your followers? Are you sure they are going to remain loyal to you?”

Imam Husayn said, “I have tested them, I found no one among them but the bravest of their tribes. Each of them wants to die for this cause like an infant who wants milk from his mother. When Nafi’ heard that, he cried and went and told Habib what he heard.

Habib said, “Indeed, by God, we do not want to do anything without his permission. If we did not need his permission I would have been the first to die!”

Nafi' said, "I see all of the women are in one voice with him."

Habib called all of the men together and told them what Nafi' told him. All replied in the same way, that each of them wants to be first to be killed, but they do not want to act without the Imam's permission, and they assured Habib that they would not do anything contrary to the Imam's decision. Habib suggested that they all go to the women and express their attitude. When all went to the tent and expressed themselves, all of the women started to wail and cry.

Just before dawn, the Imam started to get sleepy. When he woke up, he said, "I saw my grandfather in my dream and he said: You are the martyr of this nation and tomorrow you will be with me."

The Day of the Tenth

Imam Baqir says that on this day, the followers of Imam Husayn should offer condolences saying, "May Almighty God reward you on the massacre of Imam Husayn and make us all demanding his way with the Mahdi."

Imam Kadhim never smiled during these ten days.

At dawn on this day; the tenth of Muharram, Imam Husayn prayed the Fajr –Dawn– Prayer, then gave a sermon and said, "God has permitted us to fight on this day. We have to be brave and fight."

Then, he divided his small camp of eighty-two people, on horses and on foot. He made Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn in charge of the right flank and Habib Ibn Mu'ahir in charge of the left flank, while he and his family faced the front, and 'Abbas carried the flag.

'Umar Ibn Sa'd came with 30,000 troops, divided by quarters, they surrounded the camp. When Shimr saw the fire in the trench, he yelled, "O, Husayn! You hurried to the fire before the Day of Judgment!"

The Imam did not recognize him, and asked, "Who is this? It might be Shimr Ibn dhil-Jawshan."

His followers told him that it was Shimr, and the Imam said, "You are the one who deserves the fire."

Ibn 'Awsajah wanted to shoot Shimr with an arrow, but the Imam stopped him and said, "I do not want to start the fight."

Then, the Imam raised his hand to the sky and said "O God, You are my trust in all difficulties, my hope in all distress, You make every weakness into strength, when there is no friend and when enemies are many. You are the Protector and the Only Hope."

Then, he asked for his horse, got on it, and yelled very loud so everyone could hear him, "O people! Listen to me. Do not hurry to fight until I tell you my situation. If you accept it and become just in your decision, it would be better for you. If you reject it and do not accept and do not want to be just, then do

what you want, I do not want you to be in doubt, and God is the Protector.”

When the women heard him, they started crying and yelling. The Imam asked his brother ‘Abbās and his son ‘Ali al-Sajjad to comfort them. Then, he said:

“Praises to God and the Messenger of God, and all His angels. O, people! Fear God and be afraid of this world. No one would live in this world forever. If there were someone who could live forever, the Prophets would deserve that more than anyone. But all of them died. Everything of this world goes in vain. Be fearful of God in order to be successful.

O people! God has created this world so that it may be destroyed. The deceived person is the one who is deceived by this world. You are gathered here for a matter, which is not right. If you do what you do, you will bring the anger of God upon you. You believed in God and the Messenger of God, then you try to kill the children of His Messenger.

O, people! Tell me who I am, then look at yourselves and see. Is it allowed for you to kill me and dishonor my family? Am I not the son of the daughter of your Prophet? Am I not the son of his cousin, the first believer in God? Is Hamzah, leader of the martyrs, not the uncle of my father? Is Ja’far al-Tayyar not my uncle? Have you not heard the saying of the Messenger of God, when he said to my brother and me, ‘These two are the masters of the youth of heaven?’

If you say it is, which is true, and I have not lied since I realized that God does not like the liars. If you say you have not heard, if you think I am a liar, then ask those who are among you who have heard it.”

He named a few of them by name and said, “Is that not enough for you to stop you from killing me?”

The Imam’s words affected the soldiers. Shimr noticed this and saw that the soldiers wanted to hear more of the truth, so he addressed his own people and said, “This man does not know what he is saying.”

Habib Ibn Mu’ahir said, “Indeed, by God, he knows what he is saying and he is truthful.”

The Imam said, “Are you in doubt about what I am saying that I am the son of the daughter of your Prophet? Indeed, by God, there is no one in the East or the West who is the son of the daughter of your Prophet but me. Alas, do you want to kill me because I have killed any of your people? Have I killed anyone from you? Have I confiscated any of your wealth or killed any of your people?”

The soldiers did not reply.

The Imam then named Shibth, Hajjaj, Qays, and Zayd Ibn Harith and said, “Did you not write to me saying: Come to our land, all of the land is green and all the people are waiting for you?”

They answered, “No. We did not.”

The Imam said, "Indeed, by God, you did."

He turned to the rest of the troops and said, "O, people! If you do not like me, then let me leave to some other place."

Qays Ibn al-'Ash'ath said, "Why do you not obey the rule of your cousins (the Umayyads)? Indeed, they do not show you but what you wish for and they will not harm you."

The Imam replied, "You are their brother. Indeed, by God, I am not going to give my hand to you in humiliation and I am not going to submit to you like a slave. O people! I made my point clear to you and God is the Witness."

Then, a group of them advanced suddenly towards the Imam's camp. Ibn Hawzah said three times, "Who is Husayn?"

The followers of the Imam said, "Here is Husayn. What do you want from him?"

Ibn Hawzah said, "You will go to hell, Husayn!"

The Imam said, "You are a liar. I will arrive to a Forgiving Lord. And who are you?"

They told him it was Ibn Hawzah. Then, the Imam raised his hand and said, "O God! Please send him to the fire."

Ibn Hawzah became very angry. Suddenly, as his horse charged, he fell and was trampled into pieces by his own horse. When this happened, some of the soldiers realized that they were fighting on the wrong side.

Next, Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn went forward alone and gave a speech:

"O people of Kufah! We are all from the same religion and the same city. We did not start the fighting and when the fight starts it will never end until death. I am calling you to help the grandson of the Prophet and abandon Yazid and his followers. You are not going to see anything good from Yazid and his followers. You have seen what he has done to good people such as Hijr Ibn 'Edi, Hani Ibn Urwah and others. O, people! The People of the House of the Prophet deserve loyalty more than anyone else. I warn you of killing the best of the people around you!"

Suddenly, Shimr shot him with an arrow and said, "Silence! You talk too much!"

Zuhayr answered, "I was not talking to you. You are an animal. You do not even know one word of the Holy Quran. You deserve humiliation on the Day of Judgment."

Shimr said, "God is going to kill you and your friends within the hour."

Zuhayr responded, "Death for His cause is the best."

The Imam sent someone to bring Zuhayr back. Then, Burayr Ibn Khuthayr asked permission from the Imam to go next and warn the army of the evils of killing those who do not deserve it. He was a very old man. He went near the army and said, "O people! God has sent Muhammad as a warner and a bringer of good news and a caller to God. Here is the water of the Euphrates. Pigs and dogs drink from it but the People of the House of the Prophet are not allowed to?"

The troops answered, "Do not talk too much. Husayn has to die of thirst and he is not going to get any water."

Burayr replied, "The People of the House of the Prophet are here with you! What are you trying to do?"

They said, "We want to take them to the governor Ibn Ziyad and he will decide to do whatever he wants."

Burayr said, "If you forgot your letters and your promises, then let him go back wherever he wants."

Some of them said, "We do not know what you are talking about." When they tried to shoot arrows at him, he came back to Imam Husayn.

The Imam went out to them a second time, carrying a Quran, and said, "O, people! Between you and me are this Quran and the tradition of my grandfather."

He asked them again, "What do you want from me?"

They said, "We want you to obey Ibn Ziyad, the governor."

The Imam expressed his anger, and then answered, "Woe unto you! You asked us to come to help you and we came. When we came to you, you turned your swords against us. Now, you are calling us to go and obey those who are against the Holy Quran; those who change the truth; those who are instruments of Satan; those who are trying to extinguish the tradition of the Prophet.

Woe unto you! How could you turn against us and help them? Indeed, by God, this is betrayal and one of your old characteristics. You are the worst fruits. Indeed, the son of the bastard has given me two choices: fighting or humiliation. Humiliation is not possible for God and his Messengers nor would the believers allow that to happen, so I have no choice but to fight with this family, few in number, and with no helpers. But, you have to remember you will not remain honorable after this."

Then, the Imam turned his hands to heaven and said, "O God! Prevent the rain from these people and put them under the sovereignty of someone from Tha'qif who would show them what kind of humiliation they have brought to us."

Then he said to 'Umar, "You think you are going to get the governorship of Ray. I tell you are not going

to get that, but your head will be a foot ball for the children of Kufah.”

When Hurr al-Riyahi heard the Imam’s speech, he went to ‘Umar Ibn Sa’d and asked, “Are you serious in fighting this man?”

‘Umar answered, “Yes. I am going to fight until their heads and hands are cut off.”

Hurr said “What is wrong with what he proposes to you?”

‘Umar said, “If it was up to me, I would have accepted, but your governor refuses any compromise.”

Then, Hurr left him alone and went back to his position in the army. Qurrah was next to Hurr. Hurr turned his face to Qurrah and asked him, “Did you water your horse today?”

He replied, “No.”

Hurr asked him, “Would you like to water him today?” And left him. Qurrah thought that he was going to water his horse.

When Hurr came closer to the camp of the Imam, another soldier asked, “Are you trying to fight against Imam Husayn?”

Hurr kept silent. Muhajir said, “I am puzzled. I thought you were the bravest person of Kufah. Now I see you hesitating. What is this hesitation for?”

Hurr answered, “I see myself between heaven and hell. I have to choose one over the other. Indeed, by God, I am not going to choose anything but heaven, even if I am set on fire!” And he immediately rushed towards Imam Husayn. He reversed his spear and his shield and lowered his head riding towards the Imam. As he came closer, he slowed down and when he reached the Imam, he said, “O God! I repent to you for what I have brought: misery to the hearts of the children of your Prophet. O, Aba ‘Abdullah (Imam Husayn)! I am repenting. Is it accepted?”

Imam Husayn said, “Indeed, God accepts repentance.”

Then, he said to the Imam, “When I left Kufah, I heard someone saying: Hurr, you are going to heaven. And I did not know what he meant. Now I know.”

He joined the Imam with a Turkish slave, then asked the Imam’s permission to go and talk to the army of ‘Umar. The Imam agreed.

Hurr went and yelled to them and said, “O, people of Kufah! You have called the Imam invited him to join you, then why have you gathered against him from every place? Why do you prevent him from leaving in the land of God and prevent him from drinking the water of the Euphrates, which every nation; Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians drink from? Even pigs and dogs drink from it freely, but you prevent

the House of the Prophet from drinking the water?”

Then, the army shot at him with arrows and he came back to the camp of the Imam.

The First Attack

‘Umar Ibn Said came forward, shot one arrow at the camp of the Imam, and said, “Bear witness with the governor that I was the first to shoot an arrow!”

The army began and their arrows fell like rain. The Imam said to his people, “Get up to death, which everyone has to taste. Indeed, these arrows are their messengers to us.”

The Imam’s followers fought all in one group, and they lost fifty men. When the Imam saw that so many of his followers were killed at once, individual people began to ask permission to go and fight. He was hesitating to allow them.

Then, from the enemy’s side, Yesar and Salim came forward and asked who wanted to fight them. Habib and Burayr wanted to go and fight, but the Imam did not allow them (they were old). ‘Abdullah Kalbi, one of the children of Ulaym, was brave and experienced in war, but he was young. He asked permission and the Imam allowed him to go. When he went forward, Ibn Ziyad’s camp asked who he was, and he told them who he was.

They answered, “We do not want you. We want Zuhayr or Habib or Burayr. You are not equal to us!”

Without returning to tell the Imam, he screamed curses at them and attacked. He hit Yesar with his sword, and then Salim came and swung at him. ‘Abdullah used his left hand to block Salim’s sword, and all of his fingers were cut off. But that did not stop him. ‘Abdullah went after Salim, killed him, and then chased after Yesar and killed him as well.

Then he went back to the Imam. On his way back he met his wife, Umm Wahab, carrying a tent pole. She was encouraging him to fight on. He wanted to take her back to the tents with the other women, but she refused and said, “I want to join the fight with this pole.”

The Imam intervened. He asked her to come back and said, “Women should not fight.”

Sayf Ibn Harith and Malik Ibn ‘Abd al-Jabiri came to the Imam crying. The Imam asked, “Why are you crying?”

They said, “We are crying for you, Imam, that you are going to be alone, and we cannot help you.”

They went and fought until they were killed. Then ‘Abdullah and ‘Abdul Rahman, sons of ‘Urwah, came and fought until they were killed. Then ‘Amr Ibn Khalid al-Saydawi and Sa’d and Janir Salmani and Majma Aidhi came and all at once went against the enemy. One of them called for help from the Imam.

'Abbas immediately went to rescue them, but before 'Abbas could reach them, the enemy surrounded them and killed them.

When the Imam saw that most of his people were killed, he took hold of his beard and said to the army, "God's wrath was on the Jews because they claimed a child for Him, His wrath was on the Christians because they made Him a third of three, His wrath was on Zoroastrians because they worshipped the sun, and His wrath will be on those who united to kill the grandson of the Messenger of God.

By God, I will not agree to anything they want until I reach God by my blood!

Is there anyone to help us? Is there anyone to help the family of the Prophet?"

Then, Sa'd Ibn Harith and his brother who were among 'Umar's army immediately turned against the army and began slashing them with their swords, killing many of them.

The Right Flank

The followers of the Imam were few, but individually, people fought zealously, inflicting heavy casualties on the army.

Then, the army chief yelled to his people, saying, "Do you know whom you are fighting? You are fighting those who want to die. No one can go to fight with them unless he himself also wants to die. We have to catapult large rocks on them and kill them with the catapults."

'Umar Ibn Sa'd said, "That is the right decision. I agree, we should not send anyone else to fight with them. If you go and fight with them one by one, they are going to kill you all."

Ibn al-Hajjaj tried to attack the right flank of Imam Husayn's camp. They attacked on horseback, but the Imam's people were on foot. They held their spears forward and did not let the horses of the attackers come closer. When the troops started to retreat, the Imam's army began to shoot the soldiers with arrows.

Hajjaj tried to rally his troops saying, "Go back and fight against those atheists who left the religion."

The Imam answered, "Are we those who left the religion, or are you? Soon we will see who enters the fire first."

Ibn Hajjaj then went around and, with several men, attacked the Imam's camp from the side of the river. Muslim Ibn 'Awsajah fought against three of them. He was wounded badly but he was able to return to the camp.

The Imam said, "God bless you, Muslim. We are all going to die." And he quoted:

“Some of them have fulfilled [their covenant], and others are waiting [to do so], and have not made any changes [in the religion].”²

Habib Ibn Mu‘ahir came and said to Muslim, “How difficult it is to see you dying. Soon, you will be entering heaven.” Habib continued, “I wish I could carry your will, but I know I will be next to join you.”

Muslim said, “I have only one last wish, that you help Imam Husayn as much as you can.”

Habib replied, “Indeed, by God, I will do so.”

When the women cried and wailed ‘Wa Muslimah,’ the enemies realized that Muslim must have died in the camp.

When Shibth Ibn Rab’i realized that Muslim was dead and the enemy was happy, he said to the troops, “Do you know that you have lost the most honorable Muslim whom I know, at the battle of Azerbaijan, was still fighting even after all of the horses were tired?”

The Left Flank

Shimr was in charge of the attack on the left flank of the Imam’s camp, but the Imam and his followers were well prepared. Shimr and his group attacked suddenly, without any success.

‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umayr al-Kalbi went forward and killed nineteen horsemen and twelve footmen. Then, his right hand was cut off, then his leg, and he was taken prisoner. They took him back to the enemy camp, killed him, and then dumped his body back on the battlefield. His wife, Umm Wahab, went to him, cleaning the blood off of his face, and saying, “Heaven is for you. May God join us together in heaven.”

Shimr sent his slave, Rustam, with a heavy club to beat her on her head, and she died instantly. She was the first woman killed among the Imam’s camp at *Karbala’*.

They cut off his head and threw it to the Imam’s camp. His mother took the head, recognized it, then took a tent pole and marched towards the enemy to fight. The Imam stopped her and said, “War is not allowed for women.”

She replied, “Do not cut off my only hope.”

The Imam said, “God will never cut off your hope.”

Shimr came closer and closer. Suddenly, he and his men attacked the tents of the Imam’s camp, and used flaming spears to set the tents on fire. The women screamed. Shibth Ibn Rab’i stopped Shimr from throwing any more spears. From the Imam’s camp, Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn and ten of his people attacked Shimr and his troops, and fought them away.

Azra who was in charge asked for help from 'Umar Ibn Sa'd. 'Umar asked Shibth to go, but he refused. Then 'Umar sent Hosayn Ibn Numayr with five hundred archers. The Imam's camp fought against them and cut off the legs of their horses. 'Umar ordered to attack from all sides because they were not succeeding by attacking from one side.

Each of the Imam's fighters was separated and surrounded by a large group of the enemy. 'Umar ordered all the tents to be set on fire. Women were crying and upset, children did not know what to do.

The Imam said, "Let them set the tents on fire. Get out of the tents and use the fire to protect you from them."

When Abu Sha'tha al-Kindi saw the horrible situation, he decided to leave 'Umar Ibn Sa'd's army. He came to the Imam and said, "I am at your service. Tell me what to do."

He shot one hundred arrows against 'Umar's army. When all of his arrows were finished, he came back and said, "I killed only five. I have to kill more." He went back and killed nine more men before he was killed.

At Noon

When Abu Thumamah al-Sa'di looked up at the hot sun, he realized it was noon, and said to the Imam, "O Imam! I think these people are not going to leave you alone, and I want to die for you before they reach you. But this is the time for prayer."

The Imam raised his head to the sky and said, "You remembered the prayer, and may God keep you among the people who pray. Yes, this is the time for prayer. Ask them if they will give us some time so we can pray."

The chief of the army replied, "Your prayer will not be accepted by God."

Habib Ibn Mu'ahir became angry and said, "The prayer of the People of the House of the Prophet will not be accepted, but yours will?" And he attacked. Habib swung, but missed. He hit the chief's horse instead and the chief fell. His people came and rescued him. Habib kept fighting and killed sixty-two soldiers before they wounded him with a spear. He fell down and his head was cut off. When the Imam saw this, he said, "To God, I will take the case."

After Habib, Hurr al-Riyahi went to fight. He went with Zuhayr and they made an agreement that if the enemy captured one of them, the other would help him. In the fight, Hurr's horse was wounded badly, so he left the horse and fought on foot, until he killed forty-one soldiers, then, he was surrounded by the enemy and killed.

The followers of Imam Husayn went and brought his body. Everyone who was killed was brought to the

tent of the Imam and the Imam looked at them and asked for the mercy of God, saying, “A fight just like the fight of the Prophet and the children of the Prophet.”

He looked at Hurr, cleaned the blood from his face and said, “You are Hurr (free) as your mother named you. You are free in this world and the hereafter.”

The Prayer

The Imam prayed with the rest of his followers. They prayed Salat al-Khawf (Prayer of Fear), a two-unit prayer for wartime. Two of his followers, Zuhayr and Sa'id, were in front of the Imam protecting him. The Imam's followers rotated, half prayed while the other half fought and then they exchanged places.

The enemy shot arrows and Sa'id fell while saying, “O, God! Curse them. Curse those who do not help the descendants of Your Prophet.”

Then he turned his face to the Imam and said, “O, Imam! You are my leader.”

As he died, the Imam said to him, “You will be in heaven before us.”

When the Imam's companions counted, they found thirteen arrows on his body. Then, the Imam said to his remaining followers, “O, honored people! This is heaven. The doors of heaven are open and the Messenger of God and other martyrs are waiting for us. Protect the religion of God and the religion of his Prophet, and protect the women of the House of the Prophet.”

They replied, “Our souls are for your souls and our blood is for your blood. By God, as long as we are alive, no one can hurt your family!”

At this point, 'Umar Ibn Sa'd ordered archers to shoot arrows on the Imam's camp and swordsmen to cut the legs of their horses. After this, the Imam had no horsemen left except Dahhak who said, “When I saw all of our horses' legs being cut, I took my horse and hid it in the tent.”

People were fighting and everyone who left to go fight first came to the Imam and said, “Peace be upon you, O, grandson of the Messenger of God!”

The Imam always answered, “And may upon you be peace, and we are right behind you,” then recited,

“Some of them have fulfilled [their covenant], and others are waiting [to do so], and have not made any changes [in the religion].”³

Abu Thumamah al-Sa'idi went and fought until he was killed. Then, Sulayman Ibn Mazarib al-Bajali went, fought, and was killed. Then, Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn asked permission and the Imam said, “We are going to follow behind you.” He went and killed one hundred and twenty of the enemy before he was killed.

'Amr Ibn Qardha al-Ansari was protecting the Imam with his own body and he fell and died from all the arrows. He had a brother on the enemy side. His brother called to the Imam from far away and said, "O, Husayn O, liar! You deceived my brother until you killed him!"

The Imam said, "I did not kill your brother. God has given him guidance."

The brother said, "I am going to attack you and kill you!"

He rushed towards the Imam but Nafi' Ibn Hilal al-Bujali fought with him and killed him, then killed twelve others with his arrows (his name was on each arrow.) When all of his arrows finished, he went barefoot, fighting with his sword but they catapulted rocks on him until he could not fight any more. When they took him to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd, 'Umar asked him, as he was bleeding to death, "Why did you do this to yourself?"

Nafi' answered, "By God, I have killed twelve of you and wounded others, and I do not apologize for anything, and as long as I am alive, I will not leave any of you alive."

Shimr killed him with his sword.

When Wadih, a Turk in Imam's camp, was fighting, he suddenly called for help, and the Imam immediately went to help him. By the time the Imam reached him and put his face on his face, he died.

[The Remaining Companions](#)

Yazid Ibn Ma'qil, from the army, called Burayr and said, "O, Burayr! How do you find what God did to you?"

Burayr said, "God chose what is best for me and what is worst for you. You do not remember when you were criticizing Muawiyah and called him astray?"

Burayr then asked him to ask for divine intervention before they fight so that God kills whoever of them is evil. Ibn Ma'qil agreed, they fought, and Burayr killed him. On his way back, another group of soldiers attacked Burayr and killed him.

Handalah Ibn Sa'id al-Shabbami called the Imam aside and said to him, "These people deserve the punishment of God when they refuse your call and after killing all of your friends and followers. Do not prevent me from fighting." He went and fought until he was killed.

'Abis Ibn Shabib al-Shakiri came and said to the Imam, "There is no one dearer to me on this earth than you. If I were able to help you by anything better than my soul, I would. May peace be upon you. I bear witness that, indeed, you are on the path of guidance." He took his sword, went to the enemy, and said, "Who wants to fight?"

They recognized him but did not answer. They loaded the catapults with boulders. When he saw that, he took off his armor and his helmet and attacked them with his sword. More than two hundred of them ran away. Then they regrouped, surrounded him from all sides, and killed him.

After that, John, the only African in Imam Husayn's camp, asked permission from the Imam to go. The Imam answered him, "O, John! You did not join this caravan for this battle."

John collapsed at the feet of the Imam and said, "I was following you when things were easy, and I am not going to leave you in this difficult time. I know that I may not have an excellent genealogy, but I have my black skin. Let me enter heaven for your honor. Indeed, I am not going to leave you until my black blood is mixed with your blood!" The Imam allowed him to go and fight, and he killed three hundred and twenty four soldiers before he was killed. The Imam prayed for him.

Then, Anas Ibn Harith Ibn Nabih al-Khalili asked for permission. He was an old man, a companion of the Prophet, and fought with him at the battles of Badr and Hunayn. He went and he killed eighteen soldiers before being killed.

Next, 'Amr Ibn Junadah al-Ansari who was eleven years old asked the Imam's permission. The Imam turned and said, "This is the one whose father was killed in the first attack. Maybe his mother does not want him to fight."

'Amr said, "My mother ordered me to do so and that is why I am asking your permission."

The Imam allowed him to fight. When he was killed, his head was cut off and thrown to the Imam's camp. His mother picked up his head, then took a tent pole and killed two soldiers, but the Imam went to her and took her back.

Then, Hajjaj Ibn Masruq al-Ju'fi fought until he was killed. Then, Sawwar Ibn Abi Hamr al-Fahmi fought, until he was captured as a prisoner. 'Umar wanted to kill him, but his tribe prevented him. He lived through the massacre at *Karbala'*, but died after six months.

The last one, Suwayd Ibn 'Amr Ibn Abi al-Muta went and, during the fighting, fell down on his face. Everyone thought that he was dead, but suddenly when he heard that Imam Husayn was killed, he got up, took out a small dagger from his waist, and started fighting with it. They surrounded him and killed him. He was the last of Imam Husayn's companions to be killed.

[The Imam's Son, 'Ali al-Akbar](#)

By now, no one was left but the Imam's family. The first one that came forward was 'Ali al-Akbar. He was twenty-seven years old, born on the 11th of Sha'ban in the 33 Hijrah (653 CE). He was similar to the Prophet in his features and speech. The women were very upset when he volunteered to fight. His mother was related to Abu Sufyan (Yazid's grandfather) because she was the daughter of Maymunah,

the daughter of Abu Sufyan.

Because of this, a man called to 'Ali al-Akbar and said, "You have a relationship to the leader of the faithful Yazid, and we want to honor that relationship. If you want clemency we will give it to you."

'Ali al-Akbar replied, "The relationship of the Messenger of God is more important than your relationship," and he attacked the enemies while reciting this poetry:

"I am 'Ali son of Husayn son of 'Ali

We are closer to the Prophet than any

Indeed, Ibn Ziyad does not rule over us

I will fight to protect my father

The fighting of a Qurayshi and Hashemi."

When the Imam heard that, he cried and said, "'Umar Ibn Sa'd, you did not honor the relationship to the Prophet. May God send someone to kill you in your bed." Then he said, "O, God! Indeed, the one who is most like the Prophet in his features, manners, and his talk, has gone to them. Whenever we wanted to be reminded of the Prophet, we looked at him. O, God! Prevent from them the blessings of the earth, and divide them and do not make anyone pleased with them." Then he recited:

"Indeed, God has chosen Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of 'Imran over the worlds."⁴

'Ali al-Akbar fought once on the right flank, then again on the left flank and killed one hundred and twenty horsemen. He came back to his father so thirsty, that the Imam cried and said, "Soon you will see your grandfather. He will give you water which you will never forget." He put his tongue on his son's tongue to show him how dry his own mouth was, and then gave him his ring to put in his mouth and whet his mouth with it.

'Ali al-Akbar went back again to fight until he killed eighty more soldiers.

Meanwhile, on the enemy side, Hurrah Ibn Munqidh said, "I am going to kill this boy," and went after him. He hit 'Ali in the back with a spear, then hit him on the head. 'Ali leaned forward and hugged the neck of his horse, and the horse kept going forward until they were at the enemy's side, and they started cutting him into pieces. He screamed to his father the Imam saying, "To you, from me, peace! O, father!" This is my grandfather giving me my water and he says yours is here waiting for you."

The Imam reached him, scattered the soldiers away, put his cheek on his son's cheek, and said, "There is nothing good in this world after you. Now disgraceful are these people against God, by humiliating the family of the Prophet. It is difficult for your father and grandfather that you call them but they do not

answer you. You call them for help but they cannot help you.” The Imam then asked the others to take ‘Ali al-Akbar to the tent. The women all cried and beat their chests.

Next, ‘Abdullah Ibn Muslim Ibn ‘Aqil attacked the enemy and killed three of them. Yazid al-Raqqad shot an arrow at him. ‘Abdullah tried to block it with his hand, but it hit him in the forehead and he could not take it out. Another arrow pierced through his heart and he died.

Then, among the People of Abi Talib, all of the remaining men went in one group and attacked the enemy. Awn Ibn ‘Abdullah Ibn Ja’far al-Tayyar, his brother Muhammad, ‘Abdul Rahman Ibn ‘Aqil, his brother Ja’far, Muhammad Ibn Muslim Ibn ‘Aqil, Hasan al-Muthanna, Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Amir al-Mu’minin, and ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Aqil all went to fight.

The Imam’s Nephew, Qasim

Then, Qasim the son of Imam Hasan and nephew of Imam Husayn fought until he was killed. He was below the age of maturity. He had sandals on his feet and, during the fight, one of the straps of sandals came off. In the heat of the action, he stopped and fixed it as if to say that all of these soldiers are not even worth his one sandal.

During the fight Ibn Nafil came forward to kill him, but Hamid Ibn Muslim came and said, “What do you want with this boy? Leave him. Do you not see all the people surrounding him?”

Ibn Nafil answered him, “No! I want to kill this boy!” And he went and hit Qasim on his head and killed him.

Just before he died, he hollered, “O uncle!” And the Imam reached him like an angry lion. The Imam hit the killer and the killer yelled so loud that all of the army came forward to rescue him, but they could not, and, instead, they ended up running over his body.

When the dust settled, they saw the Imam standing by the head of the boy, saying, “Woe to those who killed you. On the Day of Judgment your grandfather will be their enemy. It is hard for your uncle to be called without being able to help you. It is hard for your uncle to reply without being able to do anything.”

He carried him and put him with ‘Ali al-Akbar’s body, and said, “O God! Do not leave any of them alone and never forgive them for what they have done. O, my People of the House! Be patient. Be patient.”

The Imam’s Brother, ‘Abbas

When ‘Abbas saw the situation, he gathered his brothers; ‘Abdullah, ‘Uthman, and Ja’far, and all of them decided to fight before him. Then, when ‘Abbas came and asked permission to fight, the Imam said, “Instead of fighting, go and bring some water for the children.”

'Abbās went towards the troops and spoke, "O, 'Umar Ibn Sa'd! This is Husayn, grandson of the Messenger of God. You have killed all of his followers and relatives. His children and his women are thirsty. Let them have water. He is asking to leave this land for you and go to Rome or India."

His speech affected the soldiers and some of them cried.

Shimr replied, "If the earth is all filled with water, we would not let you drink one drop of it, unless you come to the allegiance of Yazid."

When 'Abbās went back to tell his brother the Imam, he heard the children's cries for water. Then, he took his horse and a water skin and headed towards the river. Four thousand soldiers surrounded him and shot arrows at him, but he did not care. He went straight to the river, carrying the Liwa al-Hamd, the flag of the Prophet Muhammad during wars, which Imam Husayn inherited.

When he reached the river, because he was so thirsty, he took a handful to drink, but then he remembered that the Imam and his children were still thirsty, he let the water drop back into the river and said:

"I do not want life after Imam Husayn.

Imam Husayn and the women and children are thirsty,

And I cannot drink while they are thirsty.

This is not the order of my religion to do so!"

He filled the water skin and headed back to the camp. When the enemy blocked him, he killed many of them saying:

"I do not care about death.

My life is to protect the life of the Imam!"

Zayd Ibn Ruqad was hiding behind a palm tree, and suddenly came out, swinging his sword and cutting off 'Abbās's right hand.

'Abbās said:

"If you cut my right hand

I am going to continue protecting my religion

And a true Imam,

The descendant of the Prophet!"

He did not care about his hand because he wanted to get the water back for the children. Another soldier, Hakim Ibn Tufayl, was also hiding, and he came out and cut 'Abbas's left hand. Then, they surrounded him, and the arrows reached the water skin and the water began to leak out. When 'Abbas noticed this, his heart sank and he could not bear to return back to the camp without any water.

One arrow pierced his chest, and a soldier hit his head with a tent pole. 'Abbas fell down and said, "To you, from me, Peace! O, Imam!"

The Imam immediately rushed to him and said, "Now my back is broken and I have no choice!"

The Imam did not take the body with the others. He left it there and left alone, crying, wiping his tears with his sleeve, and saying, "Is there not anyone to help us? Is there not anyone to give us shelter? Is there not anyone who fears the Fire of God?"

Sukaynah, his daughter, came to him and asked about her uncle 'Abbas. Zaynab came to take her away, and they all started crying heavily. The only one remaining was Imam Husayn. The Imam looked around and saw no one left.

He looked at his family and his children and said, "Is there anyone to take care of the family of the Prophet? Is there anyone who fears God? Is there anyone to help us?"

The children and women cried, weeping and wailing loudly. 'Ali al-Sajjad was very sick, but he got up and took his sword to fight. The Imam said to Umm Kulthum, "Do not let him participate. If he dies, no one will carry the message."

Then he gathered all of his children and family and said, "You must be quiet."

He changed his clothes to the old clothes of the Prophet, changed his sword to the sword of the Prophet, and said, "I am going to be killed, and I do not want anybody to take these old clothes from me." Then, he asked for his infant child. Zaynab brought him with his mother Rabab. He kept the child on his lap, kissed him, and said, "Woe to the army!"

He took the child with him to the army, held up the child so everyone could see, and said, "If you want to fight with me, this child has no sin for you to fight against him. Take him and give him water."

The army people were talking, some saying yes, some saying no. 'Umar turned to his slave, Harmalah, and said, "Finish this matter! Now!"

Harmalah shot a three-pointed arrow at the heart of the baby, and it died while it was in the Imam's hands. The Imam caught some of the baby's blood in his cupped hand and threw it into the sky, saying, "O, God! You are witness to what they have done!"

Then, the Imam came off his horse and dug a grave with his sword on the spot and buried the baby.

Then, the Imam climbed back onto his horse, rode towards the enemy, and said, "I am Husayn, son of 'Ali. Anyone who wants to fight me, come on!"

Ibn Yaghuth said, "I could not believe that someone with so many of his followers and relatives killed could still be so firm in his decision."

When the Imam started to charge towards them, the army ran away from him, so 'Umar said, "This is a brave man of the Arabs. You cannot fight him one by one. Surround him on all sides!"

Four thousand arrows were shot at the Imam. He stopped and said, "O, followers of Abi Sufyan! If you do not believe in any religion, and you do not fear the Judgment, then be free in this world. [At least think for yourselves] Go and examine yourselves, if you are Arabs as you claim."

Shimr said, "What are you saying, O, son of Fatimah?"

The Imam said, "I am the one who fights with you, the women have done nothing wrong. Do not let your army attack the women."

Shimr agreed, and they started to attack him. The Imam fought the four hundred that were guarding the river, and he entered the river. His horse wanted to drink from the river, and the Imam said to his horse, "I am thirsty and you are thirsty, but I will not drink until you drink."

The horse looked up at the Imam, showing that he understood. The Imam went to scoop some water, and somebody said, "You drink water while your women are taken slaves?"

The Imam dropped the water and rode back to the tents. He gathered everyone together for one last time and said, "You must be patient, and be prepared for the difficulties of the future. Know that God will protect you and rescue you from your enemies. You should not give up hope. Your enemy will be punished with a severe punishment. Do not complain and do not say things that make you look weak. Be prepared for difficulties."

When the Imam wanted to ride away on his horse, everyone came and clung to him saying something, and he and Zaynab tried to comfort everyone. He looked at little Sukaynah and said, "You have much crying to come... do not cry for me now."

While the Imam was saying goodbye to his family, 'Umar said to his army, "Take advantage of his being busy with his family and attack him. If he leaves them, you cannot overcome him!"

Suddenly, arrows began to fly and the children and women ran to take cover. The Imam clenched his fingers around his sword and went after the troops, killing everyone that came in his way and repeating the phrase "There is no help but from God!"

Shimr said, "You are not going to drink water until you enter hell."

The Imam said, "O, God! Make him die of thirst."

Abu al-Hutuf shot an arrow that hit the Imam in his forehead. The Imam removed it from his head and threw it aside, saying, "O God! Do not leave any of them on this earth and never forgive them." And he said in a very loud voice, "This is the worst treatment you are giving the People of Muhammad! I will be killed by you, but God is going to take revenge on you!"

One of them asked, "What kind of revenge do you think God will take?"

The Imam said, "Some of you will kill others and the punishment of God will come pouring down on you."

The Imam continued chasing after them and they ran away until someone catapulted a large stone at him. The rock hit his forehead and blood dripped into his eyes. He wiped the blood, and someone shot a three-pointed arrow that pierced his chest, near his heart.

The Imam said, "In the name of God, and by God, and by the religion of the Messenger of God!" And he pulled the arrow out from his back, which was pouring with blood. He was so weak that he could not walk. Malik Ibn Nasr came and cursed the Imam and hit him on the head with a sword. The Imam said, "May you never eat by your hand until you join the unjust people."

The Imam fell down on the ground and was not able to get back up. Suddenly, they saw a child (Muhammad Ibn Abi Sa'id Ibn 'Aqil Ibn Abi Talib) run towards the Imam and drop himself on the Imam to protect him. The Imam told him, "You have to be patient. Go join the women. Do not stay here."

Before he could get away, an arrow killed the child.

It became easy to kill the Imam. He had no one to help him, and he himself lost so much blood; therefore, he was too weak to stand. But, no one wanted to start the murder of the grandson of the Prophet of God. They surrounded him and just stood there, looking at him, and the Imam just lay there, looking back at them.

Shimr yelled, "Why are you looking at him? What do you expect him to do? If he were able to fight you, he would have. Finish him now that he is wounded!"

Zur'a hit the Imam's left shoulder with his sword. Hosayn ibn Numayr shot an arrow into his throat, another soldier hit him on his chest, and Sinan speared him on his collarbone, then another in his chest, then another in his throat. Salih Ibn Wahab hit the Imam on his side.

The Imam lay on the ground bleeding and looking up at the soldiers. They stood, looking. The Imam asked for water and they refused to give him any. One of them said, "You will not get any water until you get to hell!"

The Imam asked, “Am I going to hell while my grandfather is the Prophet of God, and I am going to tell him what you have done to me?” He raised his hands to the sky and said, “O God! I am in need of you and ask help from you, and rely only on you. O God! Judge between us and these people who invited us then turned against us and killed us. O God! I am patient on whatever is written for me.”

Ever since the Imam fell off his horse, the horse did not leave the scene, and kept circling around the body of the Imam.

‘Umar said, “This horse is one of the best Arabian horses. You have to fight with the horse!”

The horse, by itself, killed forty men and ten horses.

Then ‘Umar said, “Do not kill him! Let us see what he is going to do.”

So, they left him alone, and he went back to the Imam, sniffed his body, whinnied very loudly, and went back to the tents. When the women and children saw the horse they realized that the Imam was dying. Umm Kulthum and Zaynab and others yelled, “We wish if the heaven and earth were not there!”

‘Umar sent a group of his army, and the Imam was still struggling.

Zaynab called ‘Umar and said, “The Imam is killed and you are watching?” And he cried. She said, “Is there any Muslim among you?” But nobody replied to her.

‘Umar called his army and said, “Go down there and finish him. Shimr went to the Imam, kicked his leg, sat on his chest, took hold of his beard, and stabbed him with his sword twelve times. Then, he cut off the Imam’s head.

After that, the soldiers came forward to loot the Imam’s belongings from his body. Ibn Hayway took his shirt. Ibn Marthad took his turban. Ibn Khalid took his shoes. Ibn Khal took his sword. Bajad wanted his ring, but he could not get it off, so he cut off the Imam’s finger just to get the ring. Qays took his velvet Qatifa. Ja’wunah took his old clothes. Rahil took his bow. Then, they left the headless bodies to rot in the desert.

[1.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of Ali-‘Imrān 3: 179

[2.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of al-Ahzāb 33:23

[3.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of al-Ahzāb 33:23

[4.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of Ali-‘Imrān 3:34