

Chapter 18: Morning of Ashura

During the night of Ashura the Imam and his companions offered prayers, sought Divine forgiveness, and made supplications. The night eventually came to end and the morning of their day of glory arrived. It has been written by Shaykh Mufid in his book entitled *al-Irshad* and by Tabari in his *Tarikh* that after dawn prayers the Imam arrayed his companions, out of whom thirty two were mounted and forty were on foot. He entrusted the command of the right wing to Zuhayr bin Qayn and that of left wing to Habib ibn Mazahir and also entrusted the standard to his brother Abbas.

Umar bin Sad also arrayed his forces in the morning of that day. He entrusted the command of the right wing to Amr bin Hajjaj Zubaydi, the left wing to Shimr bin Jawshan, the mounted soldiers to Azra bin Qays Ahmadi and the infantrymen to Shith bin Rabie and gave the standard in the hand of his slave.

On the day of Ashura the Imam addressed the people, and delivered speeches a number of times. However, he commenced the day with supplication and every time before he addressed the enemy he sought strength and guidance from Allah. All the invocations and addresses of the Imam are couched in highly eloquent and expressive language. He addressed the soldiers of the enemy army with a perfectly calm and composed mind as if all of them were his friends and devotees and had gathered together to assist him, although he knew very well that after these addresses those very people would attack him with 30,000 spears and kill him.

These speeches were being delivered by an orator, who was thirsty and did not have even a drop of water to moisten his lips. He was an orator, who knew that after a short time his women and children would be made captives by his impudent and sworn enemies. He was an orator, who had not eaten any food and was also thirsty, although on the day of Ashura he did not complain about hunger on account of his lofty character and patience and mentioned thirst only.

Imam Sajjad has said: "The son of the Prophet's daughter was killed when he was thirsty and hungry".

It is really surprising that an orator, who is hungry and thirsty, should speak before thousands of enemies who are ready to kill him. Though there are numerous causes of his anxiety and uneasiness, yet he speaks in such a way that whatever he says is eloquent and expressive. He speaks with perfect peace

of mind and courage. Whatever he says is firm and logical. He seldom expresses helplessness and broken-heartedness.

As his companions are killed and the place around him becomes vacant his speech becomes all the more eloquent, and he displays more courage and greater peace of mind. Where can one find such an orator in the history of mankind –a helpless and friendless orator, whose speech is not affected by the prevailing conditions and who is perfectly calm and composed, although there is nothing to mitigate his anxiety and mental disturbance.

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