

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > The Hidden Truth about Karbala > Chapter 24: The Burial of the Martyrs

## **Chapter 24: The Burial of the Martyrs**

The night after the battle was the most painful one for the remaining members of Imam Husayn's family. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was lying unconscious with high fever. On the martyrdom of his father, he had succeeded as the fourth Imam. There was no male member to guide the women. Tents were burnt and the women and children were forced to go out into the open. Lady Zainab (a.s.), in keeping with the family tradition, approached Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.), the Imam of the time, and asked, "O son, all our men have been killed, our tents have been set on fire, and our head–scarves have been snatched. We have no option but to remain in the tents and be burnt to ashes or to go out into the open. You are the Imam succeeding our martyred lord Husayn. What do you order us to do in the present state of affairs?"

By her conduct, Lady Zainab (a.s.) established that Zainul Aabidin Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) was the *Imam* succeeding his father that even at the peril of one's life, one has to strictly abide by the order, direction, and wish of the *Imam* of the time.

Imam Zainul Aabidin replied that death would be preferable to life after the loss of Imam Husayn, yet since it would amount to suicide if they remained to be burnt in the tents, they should go out into the open. The Imam further said that if all were burnt to death, there would be no anyone to tell the truth about what happened in Karbala and the tyrants would spread all sorts of false rumors. It was therefore necessary to live, though as captives, in order to propagate the message of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and explain in detail the atrocities and injustice meted out to him and his companions. From that moment, Lady Zainab (a.s.) became Husayn's ambassador, espousing Husayn's cause at every opportunity, even at the most adverse situation.

Lady Zainab gathered all the women and children around the unconscious Imam Zainul Aabidin in a secluded open spot. She took a pole from a burning tent to ward off any mischief monger. In the middle of the night, she found that two children were missing. She left in search of the missing children, telling her sister Umm Kulthoom to take care of others in her absence.

When Lady Zainab (a.s.) entered the battlefield in search for the missing children, she found them lying, clasped to each other. Out of sheer fright and the terrific stress, the children had died. When she returned, she found that Sukaina, the teenaged daughter of Imam Husayn (a.s.), was missing too. Once

again, Lady Zainab (a.s.) went into the battlefield. She found that, clasped to a headless body, Sukaina appeared to be asleep. She heard a voice asking her not to disturb the child. Lady Zainab (a.s.) then asked, "Are you my brother Husayn?" She received the reply, "Yes."

The battlefield was strewn with the bodies of the martyrs. The men of Umar bin Sa'd removed the bodies of their killed soldiers, leaving behind the bodies of Imam Husayn (a.s.), his relatives and companions. 1 Some persons related to some of Imam Husayn's companions removed the bodies of their relatives. Al–Hurr's tribesmen took away the bodies of al–Hurr, his son, and brother and buried them at their village that is about seven kilometers from Karbala. Some other persons took the bodies of their relatives. Only the bodies of the offspring of Abdul Muttallib were left in the battlefield.

It was an unholy custom among the Arabs in the pre-Islamic times that the body of the vanquished was trampled under the hoofs of horses in a show of barbaric power. The custom was prohibited and discontinued after the Prophet (S) had proclaimed Islam. Thus in none of the several battles and skirmishes, nowhere do we find such incidents of trampling of dead bodies.

As a mark of their return to barbarism, Umar bin Sa'd ordered horses to be freshly shod in order to trample the headless body of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Umar bin Sa'd called for volunteers to trample Imam Husayn's body (a.s.) under the hoofs of their horses. The ten accursed men, who volunteered to do that, were [1] Ishaq ibn Hawiyyah [2] al-Akhnas ibn Marsad ibn Alqama ibn Salamah al-Hadhrami [3] Hakeem ibn Tufayl al-Sinbisi [4] Amr ibn Sabih al-Saidawi [5] Raja' ibn Munqith al-Abdi [6] Salim ibn Khaythama al-Ju'fi [7] Wahidh ibn Ghanim [8] Hani ibn Thubeit al-Hadhrami [9] Salih ibn Wahab al-Ju'fi and [10] Useid ibn Malik.2

Before trampling the body, the accursed Ishaq ibn Hawiyyah pillaged the shirt from Imam Husayn's headless body; al-Akhnas ibn Marthad ibn Alqama al-Hadhrami took his turban; al-Aswad ibn Khalid took his sandals; Jamee' ibn al-Khalq al-Awdi or according to some others, Aswad ibn Handhala took his sword; Badjal took Imam Husayn's ring by cutting his finger.

When the severed heads of the Hashimites were counted, Umar bin Sa'd noticed that the head of the infant Ali al-Asghar (a.s.) was missing. He ordered his men to find it soon. They started poking the ground with lances to find the sift soil where Ali al-Asghar (a.s.) was buried by Imam Husayn (a.s.). Soon, a lance struck a soft spot and when probed deeper out, came the body of the infant transfixed on the lance. The infant's head was severed and mounted on a lance with the other heads of the seventeen Hashimites.3

We have dealt with some detail in order to show that the headless bodies trampled and left in the battlefield were practically unrecognizable. Though there are several reports that men from the tribe of Banu Asad buried the bodies on the night of the eleventh of Muharram, 4 Shiite sources discount such accounts, firstly on the ground that Banu Asad could not have identified the bodies, and secondly, on account of a fundamental belief that the *Imam* being Immaculate could only be buried by another *Imam*.

The Waqifites believed that Imamate ended with the seventh Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.). Ali bin Hamza, a *Waqifite* man, argued that since Ali bin Musa ar-Redha (a.s.) was in Medina when his father Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) died in Baghdad, he (ar-Redha) could not have buried his father, being in Medina away from Baghdad, and so ar-Redha (a.s.) could not be the Imam.

Imam ar-Redha (a.s.) asked, "Tell me, who buried Imam Husayn at Karbala?" The Waqifite man answered, "Of course, it was Imam Ali ibnul Husayn Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) who buried Imam Husayn (a.s.)." Imam Reza (a.s.) said, "But Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was unconscious with fever and was taken to Kufa as a captive. How could he have buried Imam Husayn?" The Waqifite replied, "Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) by his miraculous powers came from Kufa to Karbala in the night after Ashura, buried his father and other relatives and he returned to Kufa before Umar bin Sa'd or ibn Ziyad could notice his absence."

Imam ar-Redha (a.s.) replied, "The same powers that enabled Imam Zainul Aabidin to come from Kufa to Karbala in order to bury Imam Husayn enabled me as the Imam to come from Medina to Baghdad to bury my father." The incident is reported in detail by Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi.5

There are no detailed reports available about the burial, probably because the historians recording the incidents moved to Kufa along with the caravan on the eleventh of Muharram. According to Shiite tenets, Imam Ali Ibnul Husayn Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) with the assistance of the tribesmen of Banu Asad, Angels and the believers from the Jinn identified the bodies and buried Imam Husayn's headless body along with that of the infant Ali al-Asghar (a.s.). At the foot of Imam Husayn's tomb, he buried Ali al-Akbar (a.s.). The body of Habib ibn Mudhahir was buried near the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.). The bodies of the other Hashimites along with other companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.) were buried in a common graveyard at the foot to one side of Imam Husayn's tomb as we find them today in the miraculous shrine in Karabala. After some weeks, the captives were released and the heads of the martyrs given back to them. Lady Zainab insisted that the martyrs' families be allowed to mourn their deads. The caravan reached Karbala. They found that a companion of the Prophet (S) Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari had already reached the tombs and was offering his supplications. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) Joined the heads to the bodies of the martyrs with the help of the men from the tribe of Banu Asad.

- 1. Imam Husayn and the Tragic Saga of Karbala, p.304.
- 2. At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, P. 161, Ibnul Athir's Tarikh, vol. 4, P.33, al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab, vol. 2, p.91, al-Bidaya of Ibn Kathir, vol. 8, p. 189, Tarikh al-Khamis, vol. 3, p. 333, Manaqib of Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p.224, at-Tabrasi's A'lamul Wara, p.662, Imam Husayn & the Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 314-316, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.65.
- 3. Life of Imam Husayn the Saviour, p. 242.
- 4. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 120 quoting Shahr Ashub and al-Mas'udi.
- 5. Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 122-123.

https://www.al-islam.org/hidden-truth-about-karbala-ak-ahmed-bsc-bl/chapter-24-burial-martyrs#co
mment-0