

Chapter 25: Persecution after Karbala

Yazid and his infamous army achieved their object of eliminating what they found as the biggest obstacle to their oppression and tyranny by slaying at Karbala Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the small group of his companions. If it were a struggle for power, the persecution should have stopped after Karbala. The fact that the persecution and atrocities continued against the women, children and Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.), and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir the fifth Imam, who were the surviving male members in Imam Husayn's (S) family, proves that the battle of Karbala was a struggle for power. The further fact that over the past thirteen centuries, whosoever was found to have any affection or even sympathy with the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), particularly Imam Ali (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) were and are being persecuted even today, only proves that it is the principles and philosophy underlying the battle of Karbala that are sought to be wiped out.

Ibn Sa'd sent the severed heads to the governor ibn Ziyad in Kufa with an advanced party. He himself remained with the remaining army in Karbala until the afternoon of the eleventh of Muharram. During his stay, he arranged to recover the corpses of his dead soldiers. He performed the Prayer of the Dead over and buried them. However, the beheaded and trampled bodies of the martyrs were left lying in the battlefield, unwashed, unshrouded and unburied.¹

Suffice it to say that the severed heads of some of the martyrs were carried on lances, while the heads of some others were hung on the necks of horses. Yazid's men forcibly snatched the ornaments and jewels from the women and children. The noble women were deprived of their veils and head coverings and made to travel on the bare backs of camels. The camels themselves were prodded into a fast trot, so that the wretched soldiers might collect their rewards at the earliest. Several children died due to slipping and falling from camels. The children were tied to bare backs of camels to prevent them from falling down on the way. They suffered severe injuries due to the friction of camel hide and the tight ropes tied to their legs. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was chained, handcuffed, and made to walk barefooted all the way from Karbala to Damascus.

Instructions were given that the caravan should be taken through the longest route to cover the remotest villages and towns so that the martyrs' heads and the barbarity with which they were treated, might instill

terror and awe in the common man. In big towns and cities, Yazid's soldiers convened huge congregations in the central mosques. Speakers were arranged to denounce and curse Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.) in a repetition of vicious false propaganda branding them as traitors and enemies of Islam. The false and cunning propaganda made earlier by Mu'awiya that he and his son Yazid were the only surviving heirs of the Prophet (S) bore fruit now. The cunning Mu'awiya had already planted false stories and sowed the seeds of hatred against the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) during his long tenure of about twenty years as the governor of Syria and Iraq. Thus, people were made to believe that Yazid was the representative of the Prophet (S) and Islam and that Imam Husayn and his companions were enemies of Islam.

The caravan passed through cities, towns, and villages on its way to Damascus, the seat of Yazid. The accursed Ibn Ziyad had announced that the heads of the mutineers were being brought and he declared that there should be a rejoicing and festivities by general assemblies gathered to witness the event. Throughout the route in every town and village, a false propaganda was made that the enemies of Islam were vanquished. Everywhere, advance parties went and proclaimed that the subdued opponents of Islam and of its ruler Yazid were about to be paraded. Huge gatherings assembled to abuse the captives contemptuously and throw litter at the heads of martyrs dangling from the necks of horses, little knowing that the persons paraded before them were the progeny of the Prophet (S). At several places, people who learnt about the identity of the captives could only sympathize secretly for fear of the dreaded Yazid and his lieutenants.

When Khouli, who had taken charge of the Imam's head, reached his house that was near Kufa, he hid the head from his wife who was a woman from the Ansar. When she saw a radiant light emanating from the place where the head was hidden, she inquired and came to know that the light was emanating from the hidden head of Imam Husayn (a.s.). From that day, she neither dressed her hair nor used any perfume out of her deep mourning for the Imam (a.s.) and she was therefore called '*al-Ayoof*'.²

When the caravan entered Kufa, people dressed in ceremonial attire gathered in large numbers wrongly assuming that the vanquished enemy of Islam was being brought. The crowd was staring at the captives and some were passing comments. On seeing this, Umm Kulthoom (a.s.) shouted, "O You people of Kufa, know that we are members of the Prophet's family and therefore you should be ashamed to look so brazenly at us."³ Some in the crowd felt sorry for the unfortunate captives. They tried to dole out dates and other food, particularly to the children among the captives. On seeing this, Lady Zainab (a.s.) chided the women and prevented them saying, "*We the Ahlul Bayt are forbidden from eating what is given as charity*"⁴

When Khouli brought Imam Husayn's head to Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad's palace in Kufa, the wretched governor treated it with great indignity and he even struck on Imam Husayn's mouth with a baton.⁵

Zaid bin Arqam objected to this saying, "*I have seen the messenger of Allah fondling this very head of al-Husayn and kissing on the lips.*" Ubeidullah said, "*If you were not a senile old man and a companion*

of the messenger of Allah, I would have killed you.” Zaid replied, “Alas! You call me senile, while you yourself are demented with the intoxication of wine, wealth and power. You pretend to respect the companions of the messenger of Allah and yet you kill his progeny and disgrace their severed heads. A slave and a bondsman has now become the governor treating people as if they were his chattel. O Arabs, henceforth you shall live as slaves, for you meekly kept quiet when the son of Marjana⁶ killed the most noble and pious people among all creatures. You have submitted yourself to evil and shall therefore suffer humiliation.” Zaid was severely punished for his bold and truthful stand in condemning the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.).⁷ A similar incident is reported about Jundab ibn Abdullah al-Azdi, a venerable old man.⁸

In the Mosque of Kufa, the accursed ibn Ziyad ascended the pulpit and started abusing and cursing Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), and Imam Husayn (a.s.).⁹ Abdullah ibn Afeef, who was blind due to old age, got up and objected saying, *“I have seen the messenger of Allah when he said ‘Whoever abuses Ali abuses me and whoever abuses me abuses God, and Hell shall be his eternal abode.’ How then, do you dare abusing Ali and his sons? If, at all, anyone deserves to be cursed, it is you and your infidel ancestors.”*¹⁰ Hearing this, ibn Ziyad ordered the blind man to be executed, but his tribesmen gathered in large numbers and saved him. However, ibn Ziyad got him arrested and he was brought before him. Ibn Ziyad insulted Abdullah saying, *“God has rightly blinded you.”* Abdullah replied, *“I thank God that I have only lost my bodily eyes, whereas God has enlightened the vision of my mind. I thank God for enhancing my vision in the perception of right and wrong and to distinguish between a vile tyrant like you and the noble progeny of the messenger of Allah. When I lost my eyesight in the battle of Siffin, I regretted that I was not martyred while fighting on the side of Ali and I prayed that I should not suffer normal death but should be glorified with martyrdom.”* Ibn Ziyad realized that the powerful speech of the blind old man might bring out the truth and cause revolution. He ordered Abdullah to be executed immediately. The old man rejoiced, praising the Lord that at last his long cherished wish to die a martyr was being fulfilled. Ibn Ziyad ordered the severed head of Abdullah to be carried in procession along with the heads of other martyrs, as a lesson to whosoever dared to praise the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) or to oppose Yazid’s regime.

The struggle against the enemy’s injustice was carried on principally by the Lady Zainab (a.s.) and Umm Kulthoom, daughters of Imam Ali (a.s.) and sisters of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Their sermons were delivered in the very court of the tyrant Yazid who sat on his golden throne in his palace durbar surrounded by seven hundred courtesans.

The details of the atrocities committed by Yazid’s forces and the sufferings, which the members of Imam Husayn’s family were subjected to, would have remained concealed and forgotten, if the brutalities committed in Karbala had not been described in the sermons of the noble ladies of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) and the fourth Imam as-Sajjad (a.s.) that were delivered in the face of Yazid in his open court.

It is apt to quote here, Mukulika Bannerjee who wrote, *“Non-violent civil disobedience offered the*

chance of martyrdom in its purest form, since putting one's life conspicuously into one's enemy's hands was the key act and death incurred in the process was not a defeat or a tragedy; rather an act of witness to an enemy's injustice." [11](#)

Sahl as-Sa'idi, a resident of Kufa, was a companion of the Prophet (S). In the year 60 A.H, he went to perform the hajj. The Islamic year is computed from the month of Muharram, which follows the month of Thul Hijjah. When Sahl returned after performing the Hajj, the year 61 A.H. had started. When he arrived in Kufa, he found the entire city fully decorated and people were moving about in their festival clothes. As it was not a season for any festival, Sahl asked an old man about the cause of all round celebration. The old man replied, *"It is true that neither in the pre-Islamic days nor under Islam, this day was celebrated as a joyous occasion. However, I am told that Yazid has subdued some people who rose against Islam and therefore he declared today as a day to joyfully celebrate Yazid's victory. The caravan of the prisoners is to arrive shortly and I too am waiting to see the captives."* Another friend of Sahl took him aside and explained what had transpired at Karbala. Soon, the procession carrying the heads of the martyrs slung in the necks of horses, appeared. Sahl had met and seen Imam Husayn (a.s.) and was a witness to the love and affection that the Prophet (S) showered on him. He was also aware of the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (S) praising Imam Husayn (a.s.). Sahl closely followed the procession, concealing his grief, throughout the journey up to Damascus. Several incidents that took place during the journey were later narrated by him.

Instructions were given to parade the captives through the market and main streets of all the localities of Kufa, which was the capital established by Imam Ali (a.s.). It was then, as now, a big city. Umm Habiba, according to majority of writers, and according to some others Umm Ayman, during the *Caliphate* of Imam Ali (a.s.), had befriended Zainab (a.s.) and Umm Kulthoom (a.s.) and had become a part of their family. Twenty years later, then, Umm Habiba was watching the procession from her balcony. She was told that the captives and heads of some people, who opposed the Islamic rule, were being brought to Kufa.

Umm Habiba, who was taught by Lady Zainab, was a spectator in the crowd. She loved, respected and admired the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.). She was not aware who the captives were. Among the captives, Umm Habiba found that a young girl was restless. Obviously, the severe sun had made her thirsty. Unable to see the plight of the child, Umm Habiba took water to her. She told the child, *"I have heard Ali say that whenever you satisfy the need of a deserving person, ask him to pray for you, because God grants such prayers. I request you to pray that my children may be spared the torment that you have suffered. Secondly, it is a long time since I had seen my lady Zainab and Umm Kulthoom. Pray that I may meet them soon."*

On hearing this, Lady Zainab (a.s.) said, *"Since it appears that you have not met or seen them, would you recognize Zainab and Umm Kulthoom if you meet them?"* Umm Habiba replied, *"Certainly I will, for I have spent a great amount of time in their company, learning the Qur'an and religious tenets from them."*

On hearing this, Lady Zainab (a.s.) was moved to tears and she said, *“Umm Habiba, I am that very Zainab. This is Umm Kulthoom and this child is Sukayna daughter of al-Husayn. Al-Husayn and his companions were slain at Karbala.”* She then pointed to the heads being carried on long lances as those of Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abbas (a.s.), Ali al-Akbar and others. Umm Habiba fell at Zainab’s feet and cried loudly cursing those who propagated lies that the captives were enemies of Islam.

Seeing the emotional scene, the guards feared that it would set an example to others who might approach the captive women and learn the truth from them. They whipped Umm Habiba and prodded the captives with their lances to move ahead.

When the heads of martyrs and the captives were brought before Ibn Ziyad, Yazid’s Governor, who was sitting, full of intoxicated arrogance, on his highly decorated seat, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) addressed him saying,

“Very soon you and I will be presented before God. You claim to profess Islam. When you are questioned about your deeds and the treatment you meted out to us, the Ahlul Bayt, whose respect and love was enjoined upon all Muslims by the Holy Prophet’s, what answer shall you have then?” [12](#)

Ibn Ziyad pretended not to hear the Imam’s words. Instead, he turned towards the women and asked, *“Which one of you is Umm Kulthoom?”* When she was pointed out, he said, *“Your are all liars. Your grandfather was a liar.”*

Umm Kulthoom (a.s.) replied,

“You dare to talk like this about my grandfather, the messenger of Allah and yet you claim to be a Muslim following his religion. You are a degenerate transgressor and a vile sinner who speaks of the Prophet (S) with such disrespect and vilify Islam by your sinful acts. You have slain the most sacred souls on the earth, and for this you shall be burned in the eternal fire.”

Lady Zainab (a.s.) said, *“O you illegitimate, born to an illegitimate. You are a debauch and a sinner. You have forsaken the tenets of Islam, though you claim to be a Muslim. You killed my brother and his companions unjustly. Your deeds are contrary to the injunctions laid down in the Qur’an. You have put us to shame by snatching our veils and head covers and making us stand here like criminals. You shall surely be thrown into Hell.”*

Ubeidullah said, *“I do not know what will happen after I die. But, look how God has humiliated, at my hands, your brother who wanted to snatch the rulership from Yazid. God has frustrated his attempt and here lies his head under my control at my feet.”*

Zainab (a.s.) replied,

“O son of Marjana, your ill-gotten wealth and power and the unclean prohibited food and drink intoxicate you to utter such words. My brother was an Imam. We, the Ahlul Bayt, never aspire for worldly gains.

Assuming that my brother aspired for the Caliphate, it rightly belonged to him and not to you usurpers. You are a liar. My brother came because your people wrote and invited him saying that they were left without a guide in religion. It is under your orders that my brother was surrounded and brought to Karbala. You, under your evil master Yazid, surrounded Husayn with your huge army and prevented us from leaving Karbala. It is you who ordered closure of access to the river. My thirsty brother was slain by your order. Think of the day when you will be tongue-tied and will have no recourse to lies or assistance while standing before God. No false testimony will then help you, nor be there any power to rescue you from God's chastisement. You shall then be burned in eternal fire."

This eloquent reply and the fear of the truth coming out leading to a possible revolt by the public that appeared to tone down ibn Ziyad into saying, "*You are the daughter of the valiant orator Ali, and it is no surprise that you have the courage to speak so boldly to me.*"

Zainab (a.s.) replied,

"Bravery is no part of a lady's quality. Courage lies in telling the *truth*. *I speak the truth and your cowardice makes you spin blatant lies.*"

Fatima al-Kubra (a.s.), Imam Husayn's daughter who was married to Imam Hasan's son, was too an eloquent orator like her grandmother the Immaculate Fatima (a.s.) whom she resembled closely. Fatima al-Kubra delivered the following sermon, after praising Allah and the Prophet (S),

"Muhammad's offspring were slaughtered besides the Euphrates neither for blood revenge nor due to any dispute over inheritance. O my Lord, I take refuge from inventing a lie about you; about what you revealed about the covenants regarding the vicegerency of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the man whose right was usurped, who was killed though he was innocent in the house of Allah (mosque) by hypocrites pretending to profess Islam, and similarly his son (Husayn) was slaughtered only recently. Woe to those who did not defend him against the injustice done to him during his life and at the time of his unjust murder, though they were fully aware that he was most commendable in his dealings with others, was steadfast in his faith and was most meritorious. He was undaunted in carrying out what is just and right and never feared any criticism or blame. O Lord, you guided him and praised his virtues. He constantly enjoined people to follow Your Path and the path shown by the Prophet (S). He never cared for worldly wealth, but aspired only for rewards in the hereafter. He struggled in your cause. You were pleased with him and You chose him for guidance (of mankind) in the Straight Path. O you deceitful and treacherous people of Kufa, on your account (in inviting Imam Husayn) our family is afflicted and we have been put to untold hardships and trial. God has bestowed and entrusted to us knowledge, understanding, cognizance, and wisdom, and He sent down to the earth His Proof and Argument for your guidance and good life. He blessed us by sending the Prophet in our family. And yet, you impute maliciously apostasy and falsehood to us? Have you deemed killing and looting us lawful for you, just as you killed my grandfather (Imam Ali) ? Your swords are dripping with our blood, the blood of the Ahlul Bayt only out of malice and enmity. By rejoicing at the killing of our family members, you claim to gain solace, and for

that you hatched evil plans, while for us Allah is the best of all Planners. Do not rejoice over spilling our blood or looting us, for what has befallen us is indeed a great calamity. Everything that happens is within the Knowledge of Allah and is encrypted in a Book even before anything was created. We do not grieve for what is not ours nor do we unduly rejoice over what we acquire. Soon, very soon severe chastisement will come down upon you. You will be subjugated by tyrants and be tortured. You will suffer for the injustice meted out to us. How could you fight or think of slaying us unless you had surrendered yourself to Satan? The Prophet (S) will seek recompense from you, before God for slaying his brother (Imam Ali) and his progeny. Unmindful of what is awaiting for you, you gloat over killing Ali and his sons and taking his family as captives. You brag about people whose sanctity Allah has declared. You envied us for the favors granted to us by Allah, for He bestows favors upon whom He pleases. Yet out of envy and jealousy, you suppress our virtues and nobility, just like your forefathers did.” [13](#)

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) said, *“O product of illegitimacy, are you not ashamed of yourself? How long will you torment us?”* Ubeidullah threatened to kill the Imam.

The Imam replied, *“We the Ahlul Bayt have inherited martyrdom, as part of our covenant with God. Every prophet, every noble soul was persecuted by the like of you. I am not afraid of your threat, for death in the way of God is dearer to me than the life in the company of a tyrant like you.”*

Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad was silenced by such public chastisement.

Imam Zainul Aabidin then addressed the gathering saying,

“Those who recognize me know who I am. As for those who do not recognize me, I say I am Ali son of Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. I am the son of the man who was slain unjustly, whose properties were plundered and whose family members made captives. I am the son of one who was brutally slaughtered on the bank of the Euphrates. This fact is enough to make me stand up with pride. I beseech you in the name of Allah, are you not the ones who wrote letters to my father making your covenant with him and then you reneged and fought and slew him? You have sinned against your own souls and you are doomed. How will you face the Messenger of Allah when he will ask you, ‘You killed my progeny, violated my sanctity and therefore you are not among my Umma’?”

Hearing this, people said, ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah, do not curse us. We shall abide by your command and follow your directions. We dissociate from the oppressors and shall fight them with you’.

The Imam (a.s.) replied,

“I have no faith in what you say. Do you want to behave with me as you did with my father? My father and his companions were slain only yesterday and the wound is still fresh in my mind. The choking memory of the manner in which you betrayed the Messenger of Allah and killed my father still lingers in my throat.” [14](#)

Imam Husayn's head was set up in Kufa, as a reminder and a lesson to those who opposed Yazid. Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad had planned to keep it installed for some time but a threatening revolt by the people of Kufa compelled Ubeidullah to send it as soon as possible to Yazid. Khouli was ordered to take the heads of the martyrs and the captives to Damascus under an escort of a thousand and five hundred horsemen. Khouli started for the capital of Yazid and proceeded via Mosul. Wherever the heads were carried, Imam Zainul Aabidin, his aunts Zainab, and Umm Kulthoom (peace be on them) addressed the gatherings declaring the truth and exposing the lies planted by Yazid's men.

On the way to Damascus when the caravan halted, an old man leaning on his stick saw the procession and said, *"Thank God for the victory of Islam and its leader Yazid over these heretics."*

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) realized that the old man had love to Islam. The Imam (a.s.) asked him, *"Do you know to whom these heads belong?"* The old man replied, *"Obviously, they belong to opponents of Islam."* The Imam (a.s.) asked, *"Do you recite the Qur'an?"* The old man replied, *"It is strange that you, a heretic and a captive ask me, a devout Muslim, about the Qur'an. I have repeatedly recited the Holy Book and thank God that I am well versed in its connotations."*

The Imam (a.s.) then recited verses from the Qur'an and asked the old man whether he knew in what context the verses were revealed. The old man replied that each of the verses recited by the Imam (a.s.) referred to and glorified the *Ahlul Bayt* [a.s], the progeny of the Prophet (S). Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) asked the old man if he had heard about Hasan, Husayn, Zainab, and Umm Kulthoom (a.s.). The old man replied that they were the noble children of Imam Ali (a.s.) and Fatima (a.s.) the daughter of the Prophet (S), the love for whom the Prophet (S) had made obligatory on every believer.

The Imam (a.s.) pointed to the severed heads hanging from horses of Khouli's and others and said, *"Look! That is the head of al-Husayn. This one is of Husayn's brother Abbas. That one belongs to Ali al-Akbar, al-Husayn's son, and the small one belongs to Ali al-Asghar, the infant son of al-Husayn."*

The Imam (a.s.) then pointed to the caravan and said, *"The women on the camel's back are Zainab and Umm Kulthoom. We are the Ahlul Bayt."*

The old man became agitated when he learnt the truth and with rage, he attacked Yazid's soldiers indiscriminately, shouting out, *"You, liars, renegades, infidels and hypocrites! You have committed the vilest crime in killing the Ahlul Bayt and their supporters. You have propagated falsehood and evil. You have invited God's wrath and are all doomed to Hell for your misdeeds."*

Soon the pious old man was overpowered and killed by Yazid's soldiers. [15](#) Several such incidents are reported from many places during the journey of the caravan to Damascus.

On the way, the caravan halted at a hermitage, where a pious man was spending his time in prayers and fasting. The hermit inquired to whom the heads belonged and who the captives were. Shimr told a lie that al-Husayn (a.s.) had rebelled against Yazid and was killed in Karbala. The heads were those of

Husayn and his companions. The hermit asked if it was al-Husayn the grandson of the Prophet (S). On getting a reply in the affirmative, the hermit said, "God's curse be upon you! You have killed the pious and saintly grandson of the Prophet (S). You are hypocrites, claiming to be Muslims but indeed the real hidden enemies of Islam." [16](#) The wicked Shimr was enraged but waited until midnight, when he entered the hermitage and killed the hermit during his sleep.

The caravan reached Damascus, covering a distance of over 1400 km, after a long time. In fact, the revolutionary response of the people of various towns and cities, on learning the real identity of the captives and the martyrs, compelled Yazid's men to take the caravan through the desert full of prickly thorns, avoiding populated areas. The camels were made to trot at a fast pace often throwing the children from their backs. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) was made to run barefoot, holding the chains and fetters. The fetters had eaten the flesh of his ankles and the chain around his body and neck had made deep gashes.

Yazid, anticipating the arrival of the caravan, had declared festival holidays. When at last in the evening the caravan reached Damascus, the city wore a festive look. All around-the-town people were dressed in their best attire and were celebrating. The caravan was made to halt at the outskirts of the city to be brought in the day through the city market.

In the morning, the caravan was taken through, haltingly, the market place, which had shops with residential portions on the upper floors on both sides with passage itself covered by an arcade. Crowds on both sides, ignorant of the identity of the heads carried on lances and the captives accompanying them, jeered and mocked at them. It took almost the entire day for the caravan to pass the market street.

Sahl bin Sa'd al-Sa'idi relates that in the year 61 AH, he performed the hajj and when he returned to Kufa he found that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was martyred and the members of his family were taken as captives. Sahl, who was a Shia, found that he, being alone, could not do anything to take revenge for the massacre of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Instead, he followed the caravan all the way to Damascus. Many incidents are narrated through Sahl who is considered a reliable and truthful narrator of events.

Sahl relates that at the Market of Damascus, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) [according to some Imam Husayn's daughter Sukaina] called Sahl and asked if he had any money to spare. On his replying in the affirmative, Sahl was asked to pay the money to the persons carrying the heads of the martyrs to induce them to move away from the women so that the attention of the crowds might be diverted in that direction. [17](#)

From one of the balconies in the market street, five women were sitting with their servant girl. One of them threw a stone that hit the head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) being carried on a lance. Her companions clapped their hands in joy at hitting the target successfully. Sahl, who was accompanying the caravan, prayed that God might punish them. No sooner than Sahl prayed, the balcony crashed, killing all its occupants. [18](#) Until date, the balcony is in the same condition, though several efforts were made to

rebuild it.

When the caravan reached the gates of the palace, words reached that Yazid would receive them only on the next day and until then the captives were to be kept in disgrace standing at the gate. In the morning, Yazid took his own time to decorate himself with finery and until noon, the captives were made to stand under the hot sun in front of the palace gate, which came to be known as 'Babul Sa'ah'.

When, finally, the captives were ushered in, the court was filled with over seven hundred persons including several representatives from other countries. Yazid was sitting on his gilded throne, full of arrogance and the liquor he had consumed. He demanded to know if the captives were really those whom they were meant to be or whether the corrupt ibn Sa'd, out of avarice, took bribe to substitute them with some slaves. Ibn Sa'd was aware that Yazid was capable of doing anything when he was intoxicated. Fearing for his life, ibn Sa'd identified the captives as Zainul Aabidin as the son, Zainab and Umm Kulthoom as sisters, Ruqayya and Sukayna as daughters, and Layla and Rabab as the widows of al-Husayn (a.s.).

Yazid found that the women were covering their faces with their tresses and an old woman was standing in front, concealing them. Ibn Sa'd said, "*The old woman is Fidhdha, an Abyssinian princess who had volunteered to become a maid to help the Prophet's daughter Fatima.*"

Yazid asked Fidhdha to move aside and on her refusal, he ordered her to be lifted out. Shimr took a few steps to carry out Yazid's order. Seeing this, Fidhdha cried out to the Abyssinians present in Yazid's court, "*My country men, would you like a woman from your country and your people to be treated so disrespectfully?*" Unitedly, all the Abyssinians in Yazid's court drew their swords and swore that disrespect to their women would not be tolerated. Cunning as he was even in his state of intoxication, Yazid sensed a revolt brewing even from the beginning moments of confrontation with the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

To take out his frustration and humiliation, Yazid took a baton and started striking the lips of Imam Husayn's severed head that was kept in a golden platter, while saying, "*These are the very lips which Muhammad kissed. How delighted would be my forefathers to see it lying here near my feet and receiving strokes with this baton, as a revenge for the defeat they suffered in (the battles of) Badr and Hunayn at the hands of Muhammad and Ali. (the Banu) Hashim only played a game to get power. No angel descended nor did any revelation come down.*" [19](#)

Abu Barzah al-Aslami said, "*I have seen the Prophet (S) kissing these very lips. The Prophet (S) said, 'Hasan and Husayn are the masters of the youth in the paradise'. May Allah curse and throw into hell whoever causes any pain to them.*" On hearing this, Yazid ordered his soldiers to throw out Abu Barzah. [20](#)

Among those, who had witnessed this blasphemy, was Abdul Wahab, a Christian ambassador from another country. He was enraged at the disgraceful treatment of a dead person by Yazid. He only knew

what was proclaimed by Yazid's men to the effect that the heads presented at the court belonged to people who waged war against Islam. He now wanted to know the names and nationality of those to whom the heads belonged.

The highly intoxicated Yazid boasted that he had the Prophet's grandson, his family members and companions killed, for not declaring their fealty to him, as the ruler and the religious head of Muslims. He also prided in proclaiming that the women standing as captives before him were the members of the Holy Prophet's family and the young man in chains was al-Husayn's son Zainul Aabidin.

Hearing this, Abdul Wahab replied, *"I am not a Muslim, but I am sure your conduct in treating the heads of the dead and the members of their family with disrespect does not become of a human being, much less a ruler in your position of power."*

Yazid became enraged and said, *"How dare you comment about my conduct, when my subjects respect and obey me? Had you been a Muslim, I would have ordered you death at this very moment. You are an ambassador and a Christian and this thing saves your life."*

Abdul Wahab replied, *"The religion I follow is immaterial. Your crime is obviously one against humanity and is contemptible. In one of our islands, we have a relic that is the hoof of the donkey, which carried Jesus. We perform pilgrimage to it and pay our respects as much as one would do to a holy relic. You are accursed ones who have no regard for the grandson of the Prophet whose religion you claim to follow. I now realize that these people are noble... who braved an inhuman wretch like you. You claim to spare my life because I am a Christian! Here and now, I declare that I embrace Islam and accept the One and Only Supreme God and that the Prophet (Muhammad) is His Messenger and these people whom you wrongfully revile, are the most noble ones who have suffered injustice at the hands of this vile person. I further declare that Imam Husayn's son, Zainul Aabidin is the true guide and Imam. If I am held guilty for professing Islam and acknowledging the true Imam, I shall gladly suffer death, which, coming from the hands of this devilish tyrant, certainly amounts to martyrdom."*[21](#)

The exasperated Yazid said, "As long as you were a Christian, I could not execute you. Now, that you have become a Muslim, I have no hesitation to kill you." He then made a sign to his executioner who immediately beheaded Abdul Wahab. His head was hung at the palace gate for three days.[22](#)

Still smarting under the insult, Yazid felt that Abdul Wahab's murder was not enough to satisfy his ego. He called his slaves and ordered them to flog Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) saying that the Imam (a.s.) was responsible for the insult.

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) replied, *"Under our covenant with God, we the progeny of the prophets have agreed to bear the afflictions and suffering in the Way of the Lord. Trials and tribulations are a part of our life. However, the disgrace of removing the headdress of our women is your vile doing, which hurts us very much. You have no right to disgrace our women against whom you can hold nothing except their being the members of the Holy Prophet's house, the Ahlul Bayt."*

Yazid recited a verse from the Qur'an²³ which reveals that the Lord of the world gives sovereignty to whomsoever He wills and disgraces whomsoever He wills. Yazid then said, *"Why do you blame me? It was on account of God's Will that I am the Caliph and it was He who willed that al-Husayn should be slain and you should stand a prisoner before me. Had your father the wisdom to accept me as the religious as well as temporal ruler, he would have avoided all the suffering to himself and his family."*

Enraged by these verses, Lady Zainab (a.s.) replied,

"You are a bigot and a hypocrite that you twist the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. You are either ignorant or willfully suppress the verse which reveals that God has declared to Abraham that He will never make an oppressor as an Imam. God has given ample time for the tyrants, but that does not mean that He has approved the tyranny or has let the tyrant go unpunished. You are also ignorant that God has given you independence to choose between right and wrong and has promised reward for those who do good and eternal chastisement for those who prefer the evil of worldly pleasures. Are you not aware that God's retribution is reserved for a time when, after death, you will stand alone, spell bound and helpless before Him and that your own tongue will be witness against you? The Qur'an prohibits bloodshed and creation of discontent and chaos. For what crime my brother was slain? Did he fail to perform his religious obligations? Had he killed any one that he was killed in retaliation for him? Had he deprived you of any property or appropriated your land? Had he brought any changes in Islam? Was he guilty of permitting what was prohibited and prohibiting that which was permitted? Have none of you here heard the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the messenger of Allah where he (the Prophet) asked of you, in recompense, to love and respect his progeny?"

Yazid then recited Ibn al-Ziba'ra's verses of poetry²⁴ that are translated by al-Jibouri as the following:

"I wish my forefathers at Badr had witnessed

How the Khazraj are by the thorns (spears) annoyed

They would have glorified and unified Allah

Then they would joy and say in elation,

'May your hands, O Yazid, never be paralyzed'

We have killed the masters of their Chiefs

And equated it with Badr, and it was so indeed

Hashim played with the dominion so indeed,

No news came, nor was there a revelation revealed

I do not belong to Khandaf if I do not

Seek revenge from Ahmed's children

For what he to us had done”[25](#)

Yazid continued and asked, ‘Does anyone know what made Fatima’s son walk into my trap?’ They answered in the negative. Then, Yazid said, “He (al-Husayn) claimed that his father Ali is better than my father Mu’awiya, that his mother Fatima the daughter of the messenger of Allah is better than my mother, that his grandfather is better than mine, and that he is worthier than me. As regarding his father and my father, my father left the matter for Allah to arbitrate, and you know in whose favour Allah has ruled. As regarding his saying that his mother is better than mine, Fatima daughter of the Messenger of Allah is certainly better than my mother. As regarding his saying that his grandfather is better than mine, it is absolutely true that none who believes in Allah and Doomsday can find anyone equal to the Messenger of Allah. But, he (al-Husayn) spoke with little understanding of the verse: ‘Say: Sovereign of all sovereignty. You bestow sovereignty upon whom You will and take it away from whom you please. You exalt whomever You will and abase whomever You please’ [Qur’an, 3:26]. He (al-Husayn) did not read the verse: ‘Allah gives His sovereignty to whom He pleases.’ [26](#) [Qur’an, 2:247]”

Lady Zainab, after praising God and blessing the Prophet (S), replied, [27](#)

“Evil indeed is the end of the evildoers who denied and scoffed at Allah’s signs [Qur’an 30:10]. O Yazid, Do you think that just because you have made us captives you are superior to us or that we have been degraded before Allah? Just because you have usurped power from us, you have achieved a higher status in the eyes of God? Have you forgotten that God has revealed ‘Let the unbelievers not imagine that We prolong their days for their good. We do so only that they may grow in wickedness. There shall be a shameful punishment. [Qur’an, 3:178]. Is it fair, O son of Tulaqa,[28](#) that you keep your women behind veils in their chambers, while we the children of the Messenger of Allah should be paraded from one place to another, from one country to another, our veils snatched and our faces exposed to the full view of all and sundry without the protection of our men whom you slaughtered? What else can be expected from you; the heir of one who chewed the raw liver which she plucked from the body of a noble martyr? Your flesh grows out of the blood of our martyrs. You envy us, the Ahlul Bayt, and therefore you hate us. Your conscience is dead and therefore you remorselessly recite,

‘Then they would joy and say in elation,

‘May your hands, O Yazid, never be paralyzed’.

“You have the temerity to cane the lips of the severed head of Abu Abdullah; you had killed the progeny of Muhammad (S), who shine like brilliant stars in the family of Abdul Muttalib, because your heart is bereft of all feelings. You speak about your ancestors as if they are present here. Soon you will also join them when you will regret having uttered the blasphemy and done what you did. You would then wish that it had been better if you were paralyzed or had become dumb.

O Allah, avenge on those who oppressed us, take away from them what they had snatched away from us, and let your wrath come down upon those who shed our blood and killed our guardians.

By Allah, you have only harmed yourself. Soon you shall meet the messenger of Allah with the blood of his progeny on your hands and the crime of violating his creed and insulting his kith and kin who are from his flesh and blood. You will be questioned about the atrocities you committed when Allah will gather you along with them to render Justice to them.

You must not think that those who were slain in the cause of Allah are dead. They are alive and well sustained by their Lord.²⁹ Allah shall be your judge, the Prophet shall be your prosecutor, and the Archangel Gabriel shall be your executioner.³⁰ Those who instigated you to do what you did³¹ and who usurped power and illegitimately installed you in the seat of power to enable you to carry out your wicked deeds and oppress the faithful, shall surely be cast in the deepest part of hell.

Though I hold you evil and mean in my esteem, yet I am forced by your taunts and brazen lies to address myself to you despite the great pain and suffering we underwent because of you. The strangest thing is that the noble and honoured people of God are being killed by the Taleeq³² who belong to Satan's party. Your hands are dripping with our blood and your mouths are filled with our flesh, while the corpses of the noble martyrs are left lying in the desert.

If you imagine that you have conquered us as your booty, remember that very soon you will see the tables turned, for the Lord never does injustice. To Allah is my complaint and upon Him do I rely. However much you may try to obliterate our name through your vile and wicked schemes and plots, you shall find that our glory is perpetuated and your shame cannot be washed away. Your days are numbered and your efforts shall go waste when the caller calls out: 'The curse of Allah is upon the wrongdoers'.³³

All glory belongs to Allah the Lord of the worlds, Who bestowed His Blessings and Mercy upon our ancestors and martyrs and upon our companions. We pray that Allah may bestow upon them manifold rewards. Allah is the most Merciful and Compassionate. Allah suffices us, for He is the Great One."³⁴

Yazid was dumbfounded by this oration. The execution of Wahab and the speech and unassailable arguments of Lady Zainab (a.s.) created an uproar and sympathy for the captives. There were murmurs of disapproval all around the court.

Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) then addressed the gathering saying:

“All praise is due to Allah for Whom there is neither any beginning nor any end, for He is Eternal. He is the First, for Whom there is no starting point, and He is the Last, for Whom there is no ending point, and He is the One Who exists eternally after all existence has ceased and nothing exists. He measured the nights and days. He has divided them into parts. Blessed is Allah, the Sovereign of all Sovereigns, the All Knowing.

O People, God has granted us six things and favored us with some more. We have been granted wisdom, clemency, magnanimity, oratory, courage, and love for us in the hearts of the faithful believers. We have been favored with the advent of a Prophet from among us, as-Siddeeq (the truthful one; Imam Ali), at-Tayyar (Ja'far), the Lion of God (Hamza), and the two Masters of the youth of Paradise (al-Hasan and al-Husayn) (are from us).

Whoever recognizes me knows who I am. Let me tell those who do not know me that I am the son of Mecca and Mina. I am the son of Zamzam and as-Safa. I am the son of the one who carried the Rukn (the Black Rock) in his mantel. I am the son of the best of all persons who ever donned the Ihram (consecration) and made the Tawaf (circumambulation) and the Sayee (the trotting between Safa and Marwa during the Hajj). I am the son of the best among those who ever performed the Hajj and recited the Talbiya (the compliance to the call of Allah).³⁵ I am the son of the one who rode on the Buraaq (the means on which the Prophet had gone to the Heavens) and was accompanied by Gabriel to the Sidratul Muntaha (the farthest Lote-tree that none can reach), closer to the Lord to a distance of a bow or still less. I am the son of the one who led the angels in their prayers. I am the son of the one to whom the Supreme One revealed what He wished, during the Me'raj (night ascension).

I am the son of the one who defended and shielded the Messenger of Allah in (the battles of) Badr and Hunain. I am the son of the one who never disbelieved even for the twinkling of an eye. I am the son of the best of all believers. I am the son of the one who is the best among all the vicegerents of prophets. I am the son of the foremost among believers, the Commander of the Faithful. I am the son of the radiant beacon (Noor) who guides all Jihad and killers of renegades, deviators and those who spread the Ahzab (parties). I am the son of the most valiant, and the most steadfast one. Such was Ali ibn Abi Talib, the father of the grandsons of the messenger of Allah; Hasan and Husayn. I am the son of the immaculate Fatima az-Zahra, the principal of all women. I am the son of Khadijatul Kubra. I am the son of the one whose blood was made to flow on the sand. I am the son of one who was slaughtered in Karbala. I am the son of the one for whom the jinn mourned in the darkness of the abyss and the birds filled the space with their lamentations.³⁶

This extraordinary and eloquent speech rendered the hearts of the gathering that burst into uncontrollable cries of lamentation. The lies and hollowness of Yazid's justification for the massacre was fully exposed, as was exposed the myth perpetuated by Mu'awiya during his occupation of the seat of power that he and his son Yazid were the only heirs to the Prophet (S). Great unrest prevailed among the people who started discussing the atrocities committed by Yazid and the unjust treatment towards the captives.

Yazid was a rank hypocrite. Though he derided Islam and the Prophet (S) he pretended to follow Islamic tenets. To confuse the public and to defuse the volatile situation, Yazid cunningly took recourse to religion and ordered that the call for prayers be called out.

When the caller of Azan (mu'azzin) cried, '*Allaho Akbar*', Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) said, '*Unbound is*

God's Majesty and unbound is His Glory'. When the caller cried, *'I testify that there is no God but Allah'*, the Imam said, *'Verily I testify that God is One without a second and He has no participants.'* When the caller cried, *'I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah'*, Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) said, *"O Mu'azzin stop for a moment."* He then turned towards Yazid and asked him, *"O Yazid, tell these people here, whether Muhammad is my grandfather or your grandfather."* Not finding an answer, Yazid suddenly rose and slunk away, instructing the guards to confine the captives in a dark small dungeon which had only walls but no roof over it, where the tyrant wanted to torture the captives. From the roofless dungeon, Sukaina watched the birds flying. She asked innocently whereto the birds were flying. Lady Zainab replied that they were going to their homes. Yearning to go back home, the child cried bitterly.

Sukaina (a.s.) fell seriously ill after seeing her father's severed head being beaten and abused by the accursed Yazid. She saw her father Husayn (a.s.) in her dream and started crying, calling out to him. She suddenly felt silent. The captives suffered the extremities of heat and cold and the vicissitudes of seasons. As a result, Sukaina (a.s.) breathed her last. Yazid did not permit her to be buried outside the prison for fear of incurring the wrath of the public. The child was buried in the confines of the cell. The wailing in the dungeon revealed the death of the innocent child that became the immediate and compelling cause for Yazid to release the captives.

Like the Pharaoh's wife, Hind the wife of Yazid was a true and noble believer, but she concealed her faith for fear of Yazid. Now, she prevailed upon him describing the plight of the captives due to their prolonged confinement and the death of Sukaina. She persuaded Yazid to release the prisoners.

Meanwhile, Yazid himself was being tormented by awful dreams and had lost his sleep. Some historians relate that Yazid being tormented by his guilt used to often cry out *'What wrong had Husayn done to me that I ordered his slaying?'* Assuming this story to be true, it is like the drowning Pharaoh's crying out *'I declare my faith in the God of Aaron and Moses'*, for which the reply came: *'What! Now you declare your faith!'*

Yazid ordered the captives to be released and he provided the means of their travel to wherever they wished to go. Lady Zainab (a.s.) demanded that as a first step, they should be allowed to hold a congregation to explain what exactly transpired at Karbala. Thus, the very first proclamation of the innocence of the martyrs was made from the very bastion of the tyrant.

We have not detailed numerous pathetic incidents that took place both in the battlefield at Karbala and the torturous journey of the captives to Damascus and back to Karbala and Medina. Our object is not to create pathos but to recall the words exchanged between the two sides, for the words men utter are truly windows showing glimpses of the personality of the speaker. We are ever thankful to the Ahlul Bayt (S) who passed on the speeches, sermons, and dialogues from generation to generation and to those honest and fearless historians who dared to publish them. As we have noted earlier, Imam Husayn (S) is the golden link in the chain of Prophets starting with God's Command to prostrate before one He had

created in His Lofty similitude.

Yazid is the ultimate and the crudest link in the chain of representatives of Cain, Nimrod, Pharaoh...etc., leading to Satan himself, who championed evil, bloodshed and chaos and unsuccessfully attempted to bend man's will to patiently strive for good. The likes of Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya, and Yazid spared no effort on their part as Satan's deputies, to support Satan's challenge that he will try to destroy the innate nobility and dignity of humankind and disprove the validity of God's command to prostrate before one whom He created in His likeness.

Satan left Yazid as his heir, successor, and progeny. Yazid in turn has left his progeny who spare no effort to vilify the pious and noble, and seek to create universal confusion, discord, bloodshed, and chaos under the garb of religion. Such persons deserve to be cursed as much as Yazid himself deserves.

1. Al-Khawarizmi's Maqatal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p. 39.
2. Al-Balathuri's Ansabul Ashraaf, vol. 5 p.238 quoted in al-Jibouri's Kerbala and beyond, p.67.
3. Ibn Nama's al-Lahuf, p.81.
4. Al-Qazwini's Tadhallum az-Zahra, p. 150, Ar-Rasiti's Asrarul Shuhada, p. 477, quoted in al-Jibouri's Kerbala and Beyond, p. 73, 86.
- 5.
6. Ubaidullah bin Ziyad whose mother's name was Marjana.
7. As-Saduq's al-Irshad, Tr. IKA Howard, p. 364, as-Sawa'iq of ibn Hajar, p.118, at-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, p.262, ibn Kathir's al-Bidaya, vol. 8, p. 190, ibn Asakir's Tarikh, vol.4, p 340.
8. Ibn Nama's Muthir al-Ahzan, p.51, al-Qazwini's Riyadhul Ahzan, p.52, al-Khawarizmi's Maqatal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.55.
9. At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 1 p.34.
10. Ibid., vol. 6, p.263, History of the Saracens.
11. The Pathan Unarmed.
12. Life of Husayn the Saviour , p.212.
13. Extracted from al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 77-79 based on al-Lahuf of ibn Tawus and ibn Nama's Muthir al-Ahzan.
14. Extracted from al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 79-80 based on al-Lahuf of ibn Tawus and ibn Nama's Muthir al-Ahzan.
15. Al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p. 100, Tafseer of ibn Katjhir, vol. 4 p. 112, al-Khawarezmi's Maqatal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p. 61, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beynd, p. 104-105 Life of Husayn, p.217-218.
16. Tathkiratul Khawas of ibnul Jawzi, p. 150, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 102.
17. Al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 104, Maqatal al-Awalim of al-Bahrani, p. 145, Life of Husayn the Saviour, p. 220.
18. Life of Husayn The Saviour, p.220-221.
19. At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, p.267, ibnul Athir's Tarikh, vol. 4, p. 35, Ibn Hajar's as-Sawa'iq, p. 116, Ibn Kathir's al-Bidaya, vol. 8, p. 192, Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2, p.225, al-Beyruni's al-Aathar al-Baqiya, p.33, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p.110, Life of Husayn, p.221.
20. Al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p. 102, at-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6, p.267, Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p.26.
21. Ibn Hajar's as-Sawa'iq, p. 119, al-Bahrani's Maqatal al-Awalim, p. 151, al-Khawarezmi's Maqatal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.72, Ibn Nama's Muthirul Ahzan, Life of Husayn, p.222, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 111.
22. Al-Khawarezmi's Maqatal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.75, al-Bidaya of Ibn Kathir, vol.8, p.204, al-Maqrizi's Khutut, vol.2, p. 289, Habib al-Sayyar's A'lamul Nubala, vol. 3 p.216.
23. Qur'an, 3:26.

- [24.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqtal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p. 64, al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p. 102, al-Bayruni's Athaar al-Baaqiya, p.331.
- [25.](#) Al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 112.
- [26.](#) At-Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 6 p.266, al-Bidaya of Ibn Kathir, vol. 8, p. 195.
- [27.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqtal al-Husayn, vol. 2 p.64, al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p. 102, al-Bayruni's Athaar al-Baaqiya, p.331.
- [28.](#) Tulaqa were the Meccans (people of Quraysh who were unbelievers yet) whom the Prophet released after conquering Mecca.
- [29.](#) Qur'an, 3: 169.
- [30.](#) What Lady Zainab meant is that Yazid had arrogantly declared that no messenger was ever sent nor was any revelation made. He had thus denied the Prophethood of Muhammad [s], the Book revealed to him and the Archangel who brought the revelations. Thus, he had become an apostate deserving to be cast in hell.
- [31.](#) Committing the massacre of Husayn, his kith and kin and followers.
- [32.](#) Taleeq is the singular for of Tulaqa.
- [33.](#) Qur'an, 11: 18.
- [34.](#) Al-Khawarezmi's Maqtal al-Husayn, vol. 2, p.64, al-Lahuf of Ibn Tawus, p. 102, al-Bayruni's al-Athaar al-Baaqiya, p.33, al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 114 – 116.
- [35.](#) Special statements recited in the Hajj.
- [36.](#) Al-Jibouri's Kerbala & Beyond, p. 108–109.

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