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Chapter 2: Imam al-Hassan's Pacifism (Session 2)

Our discussion was about Imam al–Hassan's ('a) peace. In the previous session we made a sketch of the issues regarding war and peace in Islam on the basis of the Islamic jurisprudence. We specifically said that, in general (as evident from Islamic history) and in certain situations, it is permitted (or possibly compulsory) for an *imam* or the leader of Muslims to sign a peace agreement in the same manner that the Prophet (s) officially agreed to do so in different situations.

In certain situations, he signed peace agreements with the 'People of the Book' [ahl al-kitab] and at times even with the pagans. Of course, in other specific cases he would fight them.

Then, we gave a summary of the Islamic jurisprudence and we said that, on the basis of the so-called intellectual juristic preferences, it is not wise to assert that if a religion or a system (or call it whatever you wish) permits the law of war then it means that this religion or that system considers it necessary in all situations and in no case whatsoever does it allow for peace or coexistence by means of abandoning hostility.

The opposite point to this is just as wrong, which is when someone claims that they are essentially 'anti-war' and wholly 'pro-peace'. It is likely that many wars created the basis for a more comprehensive peace while much reconciliation prepared the basis for victorious battles.

This was the summary of what we said in the previous session. We then decided to speak about the kind of situation Imam al–Hassan ('a) was in and what the conditions were, upon which Imam al–Hassan agreed to make peace, or more precisely, forced to do so. Also, what the differences were between the circumstances of Imam al–Hassan and the circumstances of Imam al–Husayn('a) that Imam al–Husayndecided not to make peace? There are many differences, the aspects of which I will tell you about and you can judge for yourselves later.

Contrasting the circumstances of Imam al-Hassan ('a) and Imam al-Husayn('a)

The first difference is that Imam al–Hassan ('a) was in the caliphate position and Mu'awiyah had the label of a governor. It seems that at the time he had not yet started to call himself the caliph of the nation or the Commander of the Faithful. However, he rebelled as a mutineer and a protestor during Imam 'Ali's ('a) time as caliph, under the slogan of not accepting 'Ali's regency, he claimed that 'Ali had given shelter to 'Uthman's killers and that 'Ali himself was involved in the assassination of the true caliph of the Muslims; therefore, he could not be the rightful caliph.

As such, Mu'awiyah rebelled as a protestor in a group of protestors under the same slogan—a combat against a government that was not lawfully established and whose leader has blood on his hands.

Up to then, he never claimed vice regency and people had not started referring to him as the Commander of the Faithful. He would just claim that they were a group of people who did not wish to obey the government.

Imam al-Hassan takes the position of vice-regent after Imam 'Ali. Mu'awiyah became more powerful day by day. Due to specific historical reasons the circumstances of Imam 'Ali's government, that Imam al-Hassan later inherited, was being weakened from within.

It has been written, that 18 days after 'Ali's martyrdom, Mu'awiyah leaves to conquer Iraq (these eighteen days include the time it took for the news to spread as far as Damascus and Mu'awiyah's announcement for public preparation and mobilization of an army). Here, Imam al-Hassan is in a particular situation: he is the caliph of Muslims and a rebellion has risen against him.

Imam al-Hassan's murder in this situation would mean the murder of the caliph of the Muslims and defeat of the core of the caliphate. Imam al-Hassan's resistance to the point of getting killed was similar to that of 'Uthman during his time. However, it was not similar to Imam al-Husayn's resistance.

Imam al-Husayn's situation was a situation of protest against the ruling government. If he would get killed (which he did), his death would be an honorable one, which in fact became so. He objected to the situation, the government of the time and the spread of corruption. He believed that they did not qualify for the task and during the passed twenty years they proved what kind of people they really were. He remained persistent upon his word until the very end. For this reason, specifically, his uprising was and continues to be considered honorable and courageous.

Form this point of view, the circumstances of Imam al–Hassan are exactly contrary to those of Imam al–Husayn: he was someone who was placed in the position of governor who faced objections from an opposition. As mentioned before, if he were to be killed, his death would mean the death of a rightful leader. This in itself was an issue which even Imam al–Husayn refrained from: that no one in the position

of prophet or a vice regent must be killed. We see that Imam al-Husaynis not willing to get killed in Mecca, Why? He said: it would be the respect for Mecca that would be destroyed. They will kill me anyway. Why should they kill me in such a place of sanctity, which would only cause disparagement to the House of Allah?

We see that during the rebellion against 'Uthman,2 'Ali is trying extremely hard to respond to their demands in order to stop 'Uthman from being killed (this has also been mentioned in the *Nahj al-Balaghah*). He defended 'Uthman to such an extent that once he said, "I have defended 'Uthman so much that I have fears of being sinful for it."3

But why did he defend 'Uthman? Was he a supporter of 'Uthman as a person? No. The extent of his defence was explained when he said: I fear that you will be 'the assassinated caliph'. It would be a disgrace for the Muslim World to have a caliph of the Muslims killed during his time at rule. It will be considered as disrespect to the caliphate as a whole. This is why 'Ali said that they have lawful demands. He advised 'Uthman to fulfil their demands so that they go back to where they came from. On the other hand, 'Ali did not want to give the rebels the expression that they should go about their business, forget about the truth and not complain about a situation that was getting worse by the day, even though it would inevitably mean more power for a ruler who was being obdurate. Of course, he would never say these words and he should not have. But at the same time, he did not want 'Uthman to get killed while he was still in power. At the end, in spite of 'Ali's desire this took place.

If Imam al-Hassan had resisted then, from what is apparent from history, the final result would have been getting killed, which means the death of the Imam and the Caliph in power. Imam al-Husayn'sgetting killed was the death of a protester. This is one difference between Imam al-Hassan's circumstances and Imam al-Husayn's. The second difference was in connection with the weakening of Iragi forces, i.e. the forces in Kufah, which is true.

However, this did not mean that they were destroyed completely and if Mu'awiyah had attacked, he would have conquered Kufah in one swoop, which is incomparable to the ease and simplicity the Prophet conquered Mecca with. Numerous companions of Imam al-Hassan had betrayed him and the number of hypocrites in Kufah had risen and so Kufah was in a chaotic situation, which was the cause of many historical incidences.

One of the biggest disasters that took place in Kufah was the appearance of the Kharijites. 'Ali considered the reason for their appearance to be the unrestricted conquers that took place one after the other, without the corresponding training and discipline that were required after such conquers. People who had not been disciplined or had not become acquainted with the depth of Islamic teachings had come among the Muslims, yet claimed to be better Muslims than Muslims themselves.

Nevertheless, disunity had appeared in Kufah. We can all confess to the fact that the hands of the one who is not bound to principles of humanity, religion, faith or morals are more open to different options or

methods than the hands of the one who does abides by such principles

Mu'awiyah had founded the establishment of an enormous base in Kufah. He would constantly send spies to Kufah who would either distribute a lot of money in order to buy people's consciences or spread false rumours in order to ruin their spirits.

All of this put aside, if Imam al-Hassan had resisted and at the same time prepared a massive army to confront Mu'awiyah—an army of about thirty to forty thousand, or may be as some historians claim even one hundred thousand so he could match Mu'awiyah's huge army of one hundred and fifty thousand—what would have been the outcome? In Siffin, when the Iraqi forces were better and more powerful, Imam 'Ali fought Mu'awiyah for eighteen months. After those eighteen months, when he was about to be defeated, Mu'awiyah and his army carried out that treacherous act of raising the Qur'an on spears. If Imam al-Hassan was to fight, a war would have taken place which would have lasted for many years between these two enormous groups of Muslims of Iraq and Damascus. Furthermore, thousands of people would have been killed without achieving a final goal.

As history shows, there was no chance for them to defeat Muʻawiyah and in all probability Imam al–Hassan would have been defeated in the end. What kind of honor is there in fighting for years, causing thousands of people to get killed from both sides and a final outcome of either weariness for both sides and going back where they came from or Imam al–Hassan's defeat and later being killed in the position of vice–regent.

Imam al-Husayn, however, had a troop which did not exceed seventy two men. He even dismisses them saying, "Leave if you want to, I will stay on my own." But they resisted until they got killed. They were killed with one hundred percent glory. Therefore, these two differences have been named for the time being:

- 1. Imam al-Hassan was in the seat of caliphate and if he was to be killed, the caliph would have been killed.
- 3. Imam al-Hassan's army did not equalize Mu'awiyah's and the outcome of initiating this war would have been a continuation of this war for a long time, large numbers of Muslims getting killed, without achieving the right final purpose.

The elements contributing to Imam al-Husayn'suprisal and their contrasts with Imam al-Hassan's circumstances

Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn('a) differed from each other in many other situations. There were three fundamental elements involved in Imam al-Husayn'suprisal. When we observe any of these three elements, we see that they had different forms during Imam al-Hassan's time.

The first element that caused Imam al-Husayn's uprisal was the demand of the tyrant government of the time for Imam al-Husaynto pledge an oath of allegiance to them, "Get al-Husaynto pledge allegiance! Grab him hard. Have no mercy upon him. He must pledge his allegiance."

They requested for Imam al-Husaynto pledge his oath of allegiance. Taking this into consideration, Imam al-Husayn's response was only, "No, I will not swear allegiance. And he did not. His response was negative."

What about Imam al-Hassan? Did Muʻawiyah ask Imam al-Hassan to swear allegiance to him, when he had decided to make peace with Muʻawiyah? (Swearing allegiance means acceptance of government.) No. On the contrary, one of the conditions of the peace treaty was that there should be no requests for oaths of allegiance. Apparently, historians have also claimed that neither Imam al-Hassan nor anyone from his people, including Imam al-Husayn, his other brothers, companions or other followers of Imam al-Hassan gave their oaths of allegiance to Muʻawiyah. The issue of giving oath of allegiance was never put forward. Therefore, the element of swearing in allegiance which was one of the issues that forced Imam al-Husayn's resistance did not exist in Imam al-Hassan's case.

The second element causing the uprising of Imam al–Husaynwas the Kufah invitation as a prepared city. After twenty years of toleration under Muʻawiyah's rule, torture and oppression, the people of Kufah had truly become desperate. You can even see some people who believed that Kufah had become a one–hundred–percent prepared city and a sudden course of events transformed the situation.

The people of Kufah wrote eighteen thousand letters to Imam al–Husaynannouncing their preparation. However, when Imam al–Husaynfinally came, they did not help him. Everyone, of course, says, "Then, the grounds were not ready completely." However, from a historical point of view, if Imam al–Husaynhad not taken those letters into consideration, then history would have found him guilty. Historians would have said that he lost a perfectly prepared opportunity, whereas in Kufah during the time of Imam al–Hassan, the situation was the opposite. Kufah was tired and irritated. Kufah was depressed and disturbed. Thousands of disagreements could be found there. As we see, Kufah was the city about which Imam 'Ali, toward the end of his government, constantly complained about. He complained about its people and their lack of preparation. He always prayed, "Oh Allah! Please take me away from these people and give them the government that they deserve so that they may later realize the value of my government. When I say a 'prepared Kufah', I mean that an ultimatum had been issued to Imam al–Husayn."

Unlike others I do not want to say that Kufah was truly prepared or that Imam al-Husayn('a) was truly counting on Kufah. No. The ultimatum issued to Imam al-Husayn('a) took place in a situation that even if the grounds were not fully prepared, he could not disregard this ultimatum. What about the case of Imam al-Hassan? In Imam al-Hassan's case the opposite of issuing an ultimatum had taken place. The people of Kufah had already shown that they were not ready.

The situation inside Kufah was so bad that even Imam al–Hassan avoided most of Kufah's people. He would wear his armour under his cloth whenever he came out, even for prayers. This was because the Kharijites and Muʻawiyah's protégés were plentiful and there was a danger of him getting killed. Once when he was praying, he was shot but because he was wearing his armour the shooting did not take affect. Other than this, he would have been murdered.

Thus, an ultimatum was issued to Imam al-Husaynby the invitations from the people of Kufah and because it was issued Imam al-Husaynhad to considered it. But Imam al-Hassan's circumstances differed in that the people of Kufah had almost announced their lack of preparation.

The third element involved in Imam al–Husayn's uprising was the aspect of 'enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil' [al–amr bi'l–ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al–munkar]. That is to say, despite the fact that they were demanding for allegiance from Imam al–Husain, his reluctance to do so, regardless of the fact that the ultimatum had been issued by the invitations from the people of Kufah, and his announcement in response of his willingness, this was another element which caused Imam al–Husayn to rise up.

This means that if they had not invited him or had asked him to swear in allegiance with them, he would have still revolted for the sake of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. Since Muʻawiyah acquired the caliphate, whatever he carried out was against Islam. His government was tyrannical and oppressive. His oppression and hostility was known by all and can still be seen up to this day. He changed Islamic rules. He was embezzling and misusing the public treasury. He had shed the blood of respectable people and so forth. The worse sin he committed was choosing his alcoholic, gambler son as his 'crown prince' and forcefully gave him his position. It is an exigency on us to object to them. As the Prophet says, "If anyone sees an oppressive ruler with these indications and does not object to the ruler's sayings or actions, he has committed a sin that deserves the same punishment Allah assigns for the oppressive ruler."5

There is no discussion, however, in the fact that this was virtually the case during the time of Muʻawiyah. Imam al-Hassan had no doubt about Muʻawiyah's identity. During Imam 'Ali's time, Muʻawiyah objected and said that he only wanted to take vengeance for the blood of 'Uthman, but now he says, "I am willing to follow the Book of Allah one hundred percent, the customs of the Prophet (*s*) and the path of the previous caliphs. I will not designate a successor for myself. After me, the caliphate is for Hassan ibn 'Ali and even after him for Husaynibn 'Ali." This means that he confessed to their rights upon the caliphate. "They just have to submit the affairs" (the word in the clause of contract was 'submit the affairs'), which meant bequeath affairs to me. "This is all I am saying. Imam al-Hassan will step aside for the time being and hand over the job to me and I shall undertake it following these conditions." He sends a signed blank piece of paper and says, "Any condition Hassan ibn 'Ali desires can be put down here and I will accept it. If I do not follow the rules of Islam completely, then I would no longer want to have this position. Up to then, people had not had any experience the like of Muʻawiyah."

Now let us assume that the opposite had been presented to us by history. In a similar way Mu'awiyah

sends a signed paper to Imam al-Hassan and accepted such pledges saying, "You agree to step aside. What would you want the caliphate for? I will administrate your desires. The only issue remaining is whether the one who is going to execute the Book of Allah and the divine customs will be you or me? Do you want to start a bloody battle because you want to be the one who is going to do this? If Imam al-Hassan had not submitted under such conditions and continued to go through with the war, one hundred thousand of people would have been killed.

There would have been much destruction and in the end Imam al-Hassan himself would have been killed. Today's history would have blamed Imam al-Hassan and said that such a situation demanded for peace (and he should have made peace). The Prophet also made peace in many instances. After all, one must make peace in some circumstances. Yes, if we were present, then, we would have said that this was nothing other than Mu'awiyah wanting himself to be the ruler. All right, he can rule. He is not asking you to accept him as a caliph.

He does not want you to call him the Commander of the Faithful⁶ nor does he want you to swear allegiance with him. Even if you would have said that the life of all Shi'ahs was in danger, he would sign that all the followers (Shi'ahs) of your father are under protection and I shall cross out all the resentment I have from them since Siffin. From a financial point of view, I am willing to cancel the taxes of parts of this country and allocate it to you so you can manage yourself and your followers as well as your relatives, so that you would not be in need of us financially.

If Imam al-Hassan had not accepted peace under these conditions he would have been condemned by history. He agreed and when he did, history condemned the other side. Because of his jittery Mu'awiyah accepted all these conditions. The outcome was his victory from political aspect, showing that he was one hundred percent a man of politics and that there was nothing but diplomacy in his nature.

Therefore, as soon as he acquired the seat of power and the position of vice–regent, he abandoned all the conditions in the contract he agreed to by not abiding by a single one of them. By doing so he proved his devious personality. Even when he came to Kufah, he bluntly said, "Oh people of Kufah! I never fought with you to make you pray, fast, go to *Hajj* or pay Islamic taxes. I fought you so that I could be your chief and leader." He later realized that this statement was not to his advantage and therefore continued, "I know that you will fulfil these duties yourselves and that there is no need for me to insist on them."

One of the conditions on the contract was that after him the vice regency belonged to Hassan ibn 'Ali and after him to al-Husaynibn 'Ali. But after seven or eight years passed from the start of his government he started raising the issue of Yazid's succession to throne after him.

According to the contract he agreed to leave the followers of 'Ali in peace. However, he inconvenienced them greatly before causeing problems between them.

What, in fact, was difference between Mu'awiyah and 'Uthman? There is no difference other than that

'Uthman, more or less, saved his position among Muslims (non-Shi'ahs) as a great caliph who, of course, made some mistakes. As for Mu'awiyah, he only became famous as a scheming politician. The jurists' view about Mu'awiyah and the ones who came after him among the row caliphs who came after the Prophet (s) to execute Islam is that they deviated completely from the Islamic route and got labelled as kings, monarchs and princes.

Therefore, when we compare the situation of Imam al-Hassan to that of Imam al-Husayn, we will see that they are incomparable in every way.

The last issue that I want to talk about is the fluent logic and the sharp blade that Imam al–Husayn('a) possessed. What was that?

If anyone sees an oppressive ruler who is doing such and such (i.e. being domineering) and keeps silent about it, he is considered sinful by Allah. This was, however, not applicable to Imam al-Hassan. What was actually offered to Imam al-Hassan was that if he were to follow up such an issue, they would react by doing such and such. Thus, by saying that "they will do such and such" is different to something already being carried out by them and which now only serves as evidence against them.

This is why it has been said that Imam al-Hassan's peace prepared the grounds for Imam al-Husayn's uprising. It was necessary for Imam al-Hassan to step aside for a while so the hidden and concealed identity of the Umayyad Dynasty became evident for the people. Therefore, the consequent uprising is more justified in history.

After this peace contract, when it became obvious that Muʻawiyah was not bound to any of the conditions of the contract, some Shiʻahs came to Imam al-Hassan and said, "This peace contract is annulled." They were right. Because Muʻawiyah had breached it; therefore, come and revolt. He said, "No uprising will come after Muʻawiyah." This means he gave more time so that their staus was made more obvious, then the time for uprising would have come. This sentence means if Imam al-Hassan was alive after Muʻawiyah and present in the time of Imam al-Husayn, he too would have risen against him most definitely.

Therefore, according to the three above–mentioned elements, the uprising of Imam al–Husaynwas serious, lawful and correct. Imam al–Hassan's situation, however, was completely different and contradictory. Allegiance had been demanded from Imam al–Husaynbut never demanded from Imam al–Hassan (allegiance itself was an issue for Imam al–Husayn). An ultimatum was issued by the people of Kufah. People claimed that Kufah had awakened after twenty years.

They claimed that after twenty years under Mu'awiyah's rule, Kufah was not the same as it was before. They had now become grateful to 'Ali, grateful to Imam al-Hassan and to Imam al-Husayn. When the name of Imam al-Husaynwas mentioned among the people of Kufah, they shed tears. Their tree is now bearing its fruit and the grounds have become green. Come! The grounds are completely prepared. These invitations were an ultimatum to Imam al-Husayn. This was the opposite for Imam al-Hassan.

Anyone who saw the status of Kufah, he/she would say Kufah is not at all prepared.

The third issue were the corrupt acts of the government (I do not mean the corruptness of the ruler, no, that is another issue and the corrupt acts of the government is another). Mu'awiyah still has to show his real self and prepare the grounds for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil (i.e. for uprising) or produce the so-called obligation. This, however, was completely the case in the time of Imam al-Husayn.

The conditions in the contract

Now I will read you some of the conditions that were included in the contract so you can see what status they had. This is how conditions of the contract had been written:

1) Ruling will be bequeathed to Mu'awiyah under the condition that he follows the Book of Allah, the conducts of the Prophet (s) and the way of the eminent caliphs (it is necessary for me to have a say here: 'Ali has a principle according to which he says: I will not rise for vice–regency which is my right or I become the caliph or anyone else. This is the people's duty. I will rise when I see the one who has taken the reins of power has digressed from the affairs).

The following has been mentioned in the Nahi al-Balaghah,

"As long as oppression is only toward me and they have taken away my rights and other affairs are in their line, I submit. I will rise when they have crossed the line concerning the affairs of Muslims."8

This is actually a clause from the contract. Imam al–Hassan concludes a contract this way. As long as oppression is towards me and they have deprived me of my right but the usurper is willing to undertake upon himself Muslims' affairs in its correct manner, I am willing to step aside under this condition.

- 2) After Muʻawiyah, the government belongs to Imam al-Hassan and if anything happens to him, it will go to Imam al-Husayn. This sentence meant that the peace agreement was intended for a temporary period of time. Imam al-Hassan had not agreed to leave power to Muʻawiyah so that he may do whatever he wished for as long as he wished. They had agreed that the peace treaty would be in force "until Muʻawiyah was still in power". This peace is for that given period and did not include the time after Muʻawiyah. Therefore, Muʻawiyah did not have the right to plan for anything ahead of his time or to choose himself a successor.
- 3) Mu'awiyah had made cursing and profanity towards Imam 'Ali ('a) a custom in Syria. It was mentioned in the text of the contract that he should put a stop to this, "Mu'awiyah has to stop cursing 'Ali in his prayers and can only evoke him in goodness." This was signed with commitment by Mu'awiyah. They propagandized against 'Ali and said, "We curse 'Ali because he (God-forbid) digressed from the religion of Islam." The individual who signed this contract has agreed to this much at least: if you call 'Ali somebody worthy of cursing, then why did you pledge to evoke him by anything but goodness? And if he

is worthy of cursing and what you declare is right, why do you act in this way? Afterwards, he even breached this clause and this carried on for ninety years.

4) The Muslims' treasury which had a balance of five million *dirhams* was an exception and was not included in the submission of government. Mu'awiyah had agreed to send Imam al–Hassan two million *dirhams* every year. This was proposed so that the Shi'ahs were financially capable to fulfil their own needs and that if they did have any demands, they could be implemented by Imam al–Hassan and Imam al–Husayn.

"To give privileges of gifts and donations to the Bani Hashim and divide one million *dirhams* among relatives of the martyrs who were killed alongside Imam 'Ali in the Battle of Siffin and Jamal, these must be reimbursed from the expenses of "Dar Abjard". Dar Abjard is a region near Shiraz from where taxes and expenses were made exclusive to Bani Hashim.

5) "People in every corner of Allah's land, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or Hijaz should be safe and sound. Black and red should both benefit from security and must disregard their blunders." This clause was intended for the spitefulness that existed in the past because these people had in fact fought Mu'awiyah in Siffin. "And none should be reprimanded for his previous mistakes.

Also, grudges must not be held against the people of Iraq; 'Ali's companions must be safe and sound wherever they are and from among them none should be vexed or be fearful for their life, property, family and children. No one should stalk them or injure them. Everyone should be given his/her rights. Whatever is in the hands of 'Ali's companions should not be taken away from them. No one should attempt to murder Hassan ibn 'Ali, his brother or anyone from the Prophet's (*s*) Household, overtly or covertly."

These conditions, especially conditions three and five which were about blasphemy against 'Ali, were mentioned because when Mu'awiyah promised to follow the Book of Allah and the conducts of the Prophet and the path of the previous caliphs has this naturally hidden in it. Nevertheless, they knew that Mu'awiyah paid special attention to these issues and that he would act contrary to them in private. So, they added another point to the conditions of the contract, "And in no Islamic land shall a threat or intimidation be towards them." Therefore, he would not be able to use any justification for the acts that he committed. They also wanted to show that: we (the *Ahl al–Bayt*) are cynical towards your way from the very beginning. This was a collection of the conditions and clauses of this contract.

Mu'awiyah had a representative by the name of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amir who he sent to Imam al-Hassan with the blank letter he had signed and said, "I shall agree with any conditions you set. Imam al-Hassan put down all these conditions in the peace treaty. Later, Mu'awiyah read these conditions while saying in many parts I take Allah and His Messenger as my witnesses: if I do not do such and such, then so and so, and they signed the contract.

Therefore, it does not seem that there were any problems with Imam al-Hassan's peace during the

circumstances of his time. Comparing Imam al-Hassan's peace in the position of leader and Imam al-Husayn'suprising as a protestor is not correct. Therefore, it seems that if Imam al-Hassan had not been there during that time and Imam al-Husayn had become the caliph after 'Ali's martyrdom, he too would have signed the peace treaty. Likewise, if Imam al-Hassan was alive after Mu'awiyah, he would have rebelled against him like Imam al-Husayn. These all resulted from the differences in their circumstances.

Question and answer

Question: Would 'Ali have made peace if he was in Imam al-Hassan's position? Imam 'Ali had said that he was not willing to tolerate Mu'awiyah's rule even for one day. How did Imam al-Hassan assent to Mu'awiyah's governance?

Answer: As to the first question, regarding whether Imam 'Ali would have made peace, had he been in Imam al-Hassan's position cannot be answered so simply. Yes, if Imam 'Ali had been in such a situation as Imam al-Hassan's, he too would have made peace. The same also goes if there was a possibility of death in the seat of leadership. But we are aware that Imam 'Ali's circumstances differed greatly with the situation of Imam al-Hassan. Social turmoil had broken out toward the end of Imam 'Ali's time; the war of Siffin was progressing and had the Kharijites not divided the society from within, 'Ali would have definitely become victorious.

There is discussion on that issue. However, when you asked, 'Why did Imam al-Hassan put up with Mu'awiyah's governance when Imam 'Ali had refused to accept his rule even for a day', then you are mixing the two issues. Imam 'Ali was not willing to accept Mu'awiyah as his deputy or as someone chosen by him even for one day.

However, not only does Imam al–Hassan Imam 'Ali was not willing to accept Mu'awiyah as his deputy not want to place Mu'awiyah as his deputy, but he wants to step aside completely. Imam al–Hassan made peace by stepping aside and not being committed. No clause in the contract mentioned anything about ruling. There was no mention of 'Ali's name or a successor for the Prophet (s). They agreed for Imam al–Hassan to step down and that Mu'awiyah could take over under the condition that this person, who under no circumstances qualifies for this task, did the job properly. Thus, there are many differences between the two. 'Ali said that he was not willing that a person like Mu'awiyah represents him somewhere or be his deputy. Imam al–Hassan was also reluctant for this to happen and the conditions in the peace treaty did not conclude anything other than this.

Question: Had 'Ali made mention in his will of Imam al-Hassan about anything regarding how to deal with Mu'awiyah?

Answer: I do not remember coming across anything as such. But the situation seemed clear. Even if there is nothing in the historical texts, the state of affairs was clear. 'Ali himself supported fighting Mu'awiyah until the end. Even though towards the end 'Ali's situation had become chaotic, what

disturbed 'Ali the most was Mu'awiyah's state, therefore he believed that Mu'awiyah must be dealt with and destroyed.

'Ali's martyrdom became a new obstacle for fighting Mu'awiyah. In one of 'Ali's famous sermons in the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, when 'Ali invites people to *jihad* and remembers his loyal companions, he says, "Where are the brothers of mine who traversed the path of truth and left the world while joining the Truth. Where is 'Ammar? Where is the son of Tayhan? And, where is the man called Dhu al-Shahadatayn?"9

And then he cried. He read this sermon during Friday Prayers and invited people to move. It is written that it was not before the next Friday that he was struck down by a sword and martyred.

Initially, Imam al-Hassan decided to fight Muʻawiyah but he later changed his mind and made peace. This was when he realized the apparent lack of preparation in his companions and the internal conflicts. Imam al-Hassan realized that this would be a disgraceful battle. Going to war with such army would be disgraceful and would cause shame. It was in "Sabath" that one of his own companions hit his foot with a spear.

One of the advantages of Imam al-Husayn'smovement was that he created a strong religious core of men who had been trained to resist the hardships that they faced. There is no record in history shows any of joining the enemy's army. However, it has been mentioned in history that a large group from the enemy's army joined them in the event of 'Ashura. This means there was no one in Imam al-Husayn'sarmy who showed weakness other than one or maybe two. His name was al-Dhahhak ibn 'Abd Allah al-Mashriqi. When he first came to Imam al-Husayn'sarmy, he told Imam al-Husaynthat he would joint them under the condition that he stays until his presence brought use for Imam al-Husaynand his army. "However, the instant I realize that my presence ceases to bring you an ounce of good, I shall leave," he continued. He set this condition and Imam al-Husaynaccepted. He was there until the last moments of the day of 'Ashura, but then he went up to Imam al-Husaynand said, "According to the condition I set, I can now be dismissed, because I feel that my presence is of no use to you." The Imam said, "If you want to go, you may go." He owned an excellent running horse.

He mounted on the horseback and whipped the horse to get the horse prepared. Imam al-Husayn's army was completely surrounded, therefore, in order to leave he focused on a point and attacked it. As soon as the army broke apart he ran away on his horse. A group of Mu'awiyah's men tried to follow and he was almost about to get caught.

However, one of the people in that group, who happened to be acquainted with him, told the others to let him go. He told them that he only wanted to flee and not fight. Other than this, no one showed weakness, unlike Imam al–Hassan's men who showed weakness from the very start. Therefore, if the Imam had not made peace, death would have been associated with stigmatization from his companion's. These therefore are different.

What I want to say is that both Imam 'Ali and Imam al-Hassan initially intended to fight; however, the

circumstances which later appeared in Kufah caused the Imam to rethink his decision of going through with war. The Imam even marched the little number of people that had joined his army out of the city. He told them to go to Nukhaylah in Kufah.

He read a sermon and invited the people. When his sermon was finished no one showed a positive response until when 'Uday ibn Hatam got up, reproached the people and then told them that he was leaving. He had one thousand people with him. Then, other people started to leave. Imam al-Hassan also went to Nukhaylah in Kufah. He stayed there for ten days. This time a large crowd joined him but again showed weakness there. Mu'awiyah and his people gave money to a group of their chiefs to make them leave Nukhaylah; another group in another way and so forth. The Imam then realized that the grounds for an honourable fight were not prepared anymore.

Question: When you say, "If Imam al–Hassan had not made peace, then history would have blamed him, claiming that even though he could fit any condition in the peace treaty, he did not do so," does not sound right. I say this because people considered the arrival of that signed blank piece of paper nothing but a fraud. It meant that Imam al–Hassan could write whatever he wanted. Muʻawiyah would still not keep his word. People had come to know Muʻawiyah during the time of Imam 'Ali ('a).

Answer: It just so happens that Mu'awiyah could have used a different con with that signed paper which was to see whether the conditions set by Imam al-Hassan abided by Islam or not. Because Mu'awiyah wanted to be sure of what Imam al-Hassan wanted both for the sake of his own position and for the sake of veracity (both Imam al-Hassan and Mu'awiyah wanted this to happen).

To whose benefit were these conditions, to his benefit or to the benefit of the Muslims? We see that all the conditions were to the advantage of the Muslims and that Imam al-Hassan could not do anything other than this. You say that people perceived this as a fraud. People at the time actually thought to themselves: what a good human he is! And would say to Imam al-Hassan give him your conditions, let us see what you want then! Is remaining as caliph your only condition or do you have something else to say? If you do not have anything else to say he is truly willing to bring prosperity to the Muslims.

You then said people had become knowledgeable about Mu'awiyah in the time of 'Ali. It just so happens that they considered him as a bad person but a good ruler. This is one of the reasons why the people of Kufah became weak. They would say that it is true, Mu'awiyah is a bad person but he treats the peasant very well. Look at how he treats the Syrians! How happy the Syrians are with him.

This is how those who had become knowledgeable about Mu'awiyah saw him: he is a bad person but a good ruler. If he becomes the ruler, he would not discriminate between the people of Kufah and others. Mu'awiyah had become especially famous for his patience and forbearance. He had a political forbearance which historians have criticised him for. He could not use his political forbearance in Kufah. Even if he had, he would have become victorious in spirituality as well as politics.

People would go and swear at him but he would only laugh in their faces because he knew that he

would later buy them with money. They would say: you cannot find a better person to govern. Now that he is a bad person, let him be a bad person. On this basis, Imam al-Hassan decided on peace as if he was telling people: fine, we brought the person to do the job. Now let's see if this bad person is going to execute the job as well as you expect him to or not?

Mu'awiyah was never known for being a tyrannical ruler. He was only known as an ambitious man and nothing more. During the period when Imam al-Hassan agreed on peace, Mu'awiyah's true colors were introduced, with regards to what kind of ruler he truly was.

Question: Did Imam al-Husaynsign the peace letter or not? And was he at all objective to Imam al-Hassan's peace agreement?

Answer: I have not come across anything concerning Imam al-Husaynsigning the peace treaty, simply because there was no need for Imam al-Husayn's signature under the peace treaty. At that time Imam al-Husaynwas a follower and submissive to Imam al-Hassan. He agreed and committed to whatever Imam al-Hassan did. Even when the group who was against Imam al-Hassan's peace treaty came to Imam al-Husaynand said: "We do not agree to this peace treaty. May we come and swear allegiance with you?" He said: "No, I will follow whatever my brother Imam al-Hassan does." It has been proven by history that Imam al-Husayncomplied with Imam al-Hassan's peace treaty. This means that he did not express even the smallest amount of opposition toward his brother over the issue of the peace treaty. When he sees Imam al-Hassan's determination to peace, he submits. No, no objection has been observed from him. \blacksquare

- 1. Now I do not care whether Imam al-Husayn was a rightful protestor and that Imam al-Hasan was a rightful imam or that his objector was illegitimate. I am analyzing the situation from a social point of view.
- 2. Whose riot was rightful meaning their protests were all proper (now even the Sunnis accept that the protest of the rioters was proper and in place) and thus 'Ali respected them during the time of his ruling. Malik al–Ashtar and Muhammadibn Abu Bakr were among the protestors and the assassins of 'Uthman. And later they became one of the special and particular people of 'Ali, just as they were before.
- 3. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 245.
- 4. Such as the author of "Shahid-e Javid" [the Eternal Martyr].
- 5. Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 7, p. 300.
- 6. They inserted as a condition that Mu'awiyah should never expect Imam al-Hasan ('a) to call him "the Commander of the Faithful".
- 7. The interpretation here is "government", but the Arabic phrase is "submitting affairs", which means the job will be handed over to him.
- 8. Nahj-al-Balaghah, sermon 74.
- 9. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 181.

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