

## Chapter 7: The Tragedies Of Karbala’

The Umayyad government determined to destroy Islam and to annihilate its foundations and forces. Then it decided to degrade the Muslims, to paralyze their physical and mental activities, and to prevent them from practicing the principles of their great religion. Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, witnessed this severe ordeal as his father, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, witnessed it during the days of the government of Mu‘awiya and Yazid. He shared his father’s pain and sorrow.

Imam al-Husayn was unable to carry out his great revolt during the days of Mu‘awiya because he understood that his revolt would fail, and that he would be unable to change the situations standing in the country. Because Mu‘awiya used strong policy and ruled with wisdom, it was impossible for Imam al-Husayn to overcome him and abort his plans. When this tyrannical person (Mu‘awiya) died and Yazid took the reins of government, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, decided to accomplish his religious duty. He determined to resist Yazid and to overthrow his government.

Accordingly, he would be able to preserve the Muslims’ interests and rights. Moreover he would be loyal to the fundamentals of the religion of his grandfather. So he, peace be on him, declared his great revolt through which Allah made the Book clear, and which He made a lesson for the wise. Hence we will briefly mention some sides of this great revolt, which showed terrible events to Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin. Although he was ill, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin was able to understand all the stages of this tragedy through his sensitive feelings and his careful sentiment. That is as follows:

### [On the Plateau of Karbala’](#)

The pure family of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, adopted the rights of the oppressed and the persecuted, so they head for Iraq. When they arrived at the Plateau of Karbala’, they were afflicted by ordeals, misfortunes, and disasters, so they were sure of the destructive catastrophe. This occurred when they found themselves surrounded by the wicked forces who intended to shed their blood and to force them to yield to abasement, but Allah refused to accept that for them.

Imam al-Husayn looked at the young men from among the members of his family, they were in the

bloom of youth, so he burst into tears and began saying: “O Allah, we are the Household of Your Prophet, Muhammad, peace be on him. We have been banished from the Sacred City of our grandfather, and the Umayyads have transgressed against us, so, O Allah, take our right from them, and grant us victory over the oppressive people.”

Then he addressed the heroes from among his Household and his companions, saying: “The people are the slaves of this world, and the religion is licking on their tongues. They encompass it (the religion) as long as their livelihoods stream, but when they are tested by tribulation, they are a few in following the religion.<sup>1</sup>”

These brilliant words show the practical reality of the life of the people throughout the stages of history, so they are the slaves of this world at every place and time. As for the religion, it has no shade in their inner selves. When disasters befall them, they deny it and turn away from it, so, indeed, it is licking on their tongues.

Then Imam al-Husayn turned to his companions and said to them: “Then after, you have seen what has befallen us, and the world has changed and neglected (us), its kindness has turned away (from us), and nothing has remained of it except a rest like the rest of the container and a mean life which is like an unhealthy food. Don't you see that the (people) do not put the truth into effect and do not prevent each other from (doing) falsehood? Indeed, the believer is desirous of meeting Allah. So, indeed, I see that death is (nothing) except happiness, and that life with the oppressive is (nothing) except boredom.<sup>2</sup>”

In this speech, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, showed that all kinds of ordeals and tribulations befell them, and that the thinking of the world toward them changed, for fate brought to them tiresome misfortunes, but the grandson of the great Prophet was brave enough to face them, for he saw that the people did not put the truth into effect and did not prevent each other from doing falsehood, and that life became abominable and martyrdom in the way of Allah was happiness.

When Imam al-Husayn finished his speech, all his companions rushed toward death to give people the most wonderful examples of sacrifice for establishing justice and fairness. Each one of them spoke with the words of sincerity, so the Imam thanked and lauded them for that.

## **Imam al-Husayn announced his Death**

On the night of Muharram 10th, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, was sure of death, so he entered his own tent, prepared his own sword, and said:

*Time, shame on you as friend! At the day's*

*dawning and the sun's setting!*

*How many a companion or seeker will be*

*a corpse! Time will not be satisfied with any*

*substitute.*

*The matter will rest with the Almighty one,*

*and every living creature will have to journey*

*along my path.*

In these lines of poetry, the Imam announced his death. He was in the tent of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin and of the granddaughter of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, Zaynab, daughter of Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. When Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin heard these lines, he understood what his father wanted, so tears choked him, and he kept silent and knew that tribulation had come upon them, as he said: “As for my aunt, Zaynab, she felt that her brother and the rest of her Household had determined to meet death and to attain martyrdom. She could not control herself; she jumped up, tearing at her clothes, sighing and went to him.” “Then I will lose a brother,” Zaynab said to him, “Would death deprived me of life, (for) my mother Fatima, is dead, and my father, ‘Ali, and my brother, al-Husayn, peace be on them (all).”

“O sister,” al-Husayn said to her as he looked at her with his eyes full of tears, “don’t let Satan take away your forbearance.”

However, Zaynab became pale, and sorrow tore up her gentle, tortured heart, so she lamented to her brother al-Husayn: “O my grief, your life will be violently wrenched from you and that is more wounding to my heart and harsher to my soul.”

When she was sure that her brother would be killed, she could not control her forbearance, so she tore her garment, struck at her face, and then she fell down in a faint. Then the granddaughters of the Prophet shared that severe ordeal with her. Among them was Umm Kulthu’m, who lamented: “Oh Muhammad! Oh ‘Ali! Oh Imam! Oh Husayn! We will be lost after you!”

That distressing sight had a great effect on the soul of Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him. Sorrow and sighs melted his heart, so he walked towards the granddaughters of the Prophet and ordered them to cling to forbearance and to bear the burdens of this severe ordeal, saying: “O sister, O Umm Kulthu’m, O Fatima, O Rabab, when I am killed, you must not tear your clothes, nor scratch your faces, nor cry out with grief and loss!<sup>3</sup>”

Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, ordered his womenfolk to cling to forbearance during those severe ordeals that had come upon them, and he ordered them not to say obscene words.

## The Day of 'Asura'

There was no event in history similar to the event that came upon Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, on the Day of 'Asura' because all the ordeals of the world came upon the plant of sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, talked about that tragic day which is immortal in the world of sorrows. He said: "No day was more difficult for Allah's Messenger than the Day (Battle) of Uhud in which his uncle Hamza b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, the lion of Allah and the lion of His Messenger, was killed, and after it was the Day (Battle) of Mu'ta in which his cousin Ja'far b. Abi Talib was killed." Then he (Zayn al-'Abidin) said: "There was no day like the Day of al-Husayn, when thirty thousand men advanced against him (while) they claimed that they belonged to this community, and that they (wanted) to seek proximity to Allah, the Great and Almighty, through (shedding) his blood. He (al-Husayn) reminded them of Allah, but they did not learn (from him) till they killed him out of (their) oppression and aggression.<sup>4</sup>"

In the world of Islam, throughout history, there is no day more difficult than that of al-Husayn, for this great Imam revolted (against Yazid) to establish for all the peoples of the East an honorable life, freedom, welfare, security, and tranquillity. However, those wicked people rose against him and shed his blood in a savage way in which history has never seen. They committed these crimes to live under the yoke of slavery, oppression, and injustice.

## Imam al-Husayn's Sermon

Before the fire of the battle broke out, Imam al-Husayn thought that he had to establish proof for those corrupt people, to refute their justifications, and to make them understand clearly their affairs, so he, peace be on him, ordered his horse to be brought to him. He rode it and walked toward them in a highly impressive manner which was similar to that of his grandfather, Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. He delivered among them his historical sermon, which is the purest and most eloquent one in Arabic literature. He called them at the top of his voice to make them all hear his words.

He said to them: "People, listen to my words and do not hurry (to attack me) so that I may remind you of the duties you have towards me and so that (by telling you the true circumstances) I may free myself from any blame in (your attacking me). If you give me justice, you will become happier through that. If you do not give me justice of your own accord (as individuals), then agree upon your affairs (and your associates); let not your affairs be in darkness to you. Then carry (it) out against me and do not reflect (any further). Indeed my guardian is Allah, Who sent down the Book; He takes care of the righteous."

The air carried Imam al-Husayn's words to the womenfolk of the Prophet and they lamented loudly, so the Imam sent to them his brother al-'Abbas and his son 'Ali and said to them: "Calm them. By my life, their weeping will be very much." When they became quiet, he went on delivering his sermon. He praised and glorified Allah, and he called down blessings upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his

family, and said concerning that countless words. No speaker has ever been heard before or after him more eloquent in his speech than he was<sup>5</sup>. He continued: “People, indeed Allah, the Most High, created this world and made it the abode of annihilation and vanishing. It changes its inhabitants from state to state, so the conceited one is he whom it deludes, and the miserable one is he whom it charms. So let not this world delude you because it cuts off the hope of him who has confidence in it and despairs the greediness of him who desires for it. I see that you have unanimously agreed on an affair through which you have made Allah angry with you, turn his Holy Face away from you, and send down his vengeance upon you. So the best lord is our Lord, and you are the worst slaves! You acknowledged obedience (to Allah) and believed in the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, and then you have crept against his progeny and his family, you want to kill them. Satan has wholly engaged you, so he has made you forget the remembrance of Allah, the Almighty. So woe to you and to what you want! To Allah we belong and to Him is our return. These are people who have disbelieved (in Allah) after their belief (in Him). So away with the oppressive people!”

Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, preached to the people with these words. He warned them against the delusion of this world and gave them proofs for its unsuccessful final results and prevented them from killing the family of their Prophet, for they would disbelieve in Islam and be worthy of Allah’s punishment and vengeance. Then the great Imam continued: “People, trace back my lineage and consider who I am. Then look back at yourselves and remonstrate with yourselves. Consider whether it is right for you to kill me and to violate the honor of my womenfolk. Am I not the son of the daughter of your Prophet, of his testamentary trustee (wasi) and his cousin, the first of the believers in Allah and the man who (first) believed in what His Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, brought from his Lord? Was not Hamza, the lord of the martyrs, my uncle? Was not Ja’far, the one who flies in Heaven, my uncle? Have you not heard the words of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, concerning myself and my brother: ‘These are the two lords of the youths of the inhabitants of heaven’? Whether you believe what I am saying– and it is the truth, for by Allah I have never told a lie since I learnt that Allah hated people (who told) them– or whether you regard me as a liar, there are among you those, if you asked them, would tell you: Ask Ja’far b. ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu’ Sa’id al-Khudari, Sahl b. Sa’ad al-Sa’idi, Zayd b. Arqam, and Anas b. Malik to tell you that they heard these words from the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, concerning myself and my brother. Is there not (sufficient) in this to prevent you from shedding my blood?”

It was appropriate for this sermon to change the views of the units of that army and to make a military revolt among their ranks. Through this sermon Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, summoned them to return to their intellects, to consider carefully his affair, for he was the grandson of their Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, the son of his trustee, his womb relative, the lord of the youths of the inhabitants of heaven. All these factors were enough to prevent them from shedding al-Husayn’s blood and violating the honor of his womenfolk, but that army did not understand such excellent preaching, so it was inclined to crime and drowned in error.

However, the wicked sinner, Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan interrupted Imam al-Husayn, saying: "If I understand what you are saying, then I only worship Allah (very shakily) on the edge."

Habeeb b. Muzahir, an excellent Muslim believer, answered Shimr, saying: "I think that you worship Allah (very shakily) on seventy edges, for I testify you are right. You do not understand what he is saying, for Allah has impressed (ignorance) upon your heart."

Then the great Imam (al-Husayn) continued: "If you are in doubt about these words, you are in doubt that I am the son of the daughter of your Prophet. By Allah there is no son of a prophet other than me among you and among the peoples from the East to the West. Shame on you, are you seeking retribution from me for one of your dead whom I have killed, or for property of yours which I expropriated, or for a wound which I have inflicted?"

These words shook the ground under their feet. They became perplexed, not knowing what to say. Then Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, called the commanders of the army, who wrote letters to him to come to their city, saying: "Shibth b. Rib'i, Hajjar b. Abjar, Qays b. al-Ash'ath, Yazid b. al-Harth, didn't you write: 'The fruit has ripened; the dates have grown green; come to an army which has been gathered for you'?"

But those wicked sinners did not feel shame in betraying a promise and breaking a covenant; they all unanimously agreed on telling lies, saying: "We didn't do (that)."

The Imam was astonished at their answer, so he said: "Glory belongs to Allah! Yes, by Allah, you did it."

Thus, the Imam turned his face away from them and addressed the units of the army, saying to them: "People, if you hated me, then let me go to a safe place in the land."

However, Qays b. al-Ash'ath, a wicked sinner in Kufa who belonged to a corrupt family, interrupted him, saying: "Submit to the authority of your kinsmen (the Umayyads). They have never treated you with anything but what you liked."

"By Allah, I will never give you my hand like a man who has been humiliated; nor will I flee like a slave," said al-Husayn, peace be on him. Then he called out: "O Servants of Allah, I take refuge in my Lord and your Lord from your stoning. I take refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every haughty man who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning."

Unfortunately, this excellent sermon did not penetrate their hearts, for ignorance had been impressed upon them, so they were like the cattle, rather they were more straying (than them) in way.

## [The Battle](#)

Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, took numerous measures to preserve peace and to avoid shedding

blood, but ‘Umar b. Sa‘d declared public war against him, for he advanced toward the Imam’s camp, took an arrow, threw it at the Imam, and said: “Bear witness for me with the Governor that I was the first to throw (an arrow) at al–Husayn’s camp.”

This aggressive, mean person (‘Umar b. Sa‘d) asked his army to bear witness for him with his governor, b. Marjana (i.e., ‘Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad) that he was the first to throw an arrow at the Camp of the truth, dignity, and honor. Then his bowmen showered arrows upon al–Husayn and his companions and hit them all, so the Imam turned to his companions and said to them: “Noble men, stand up! These are the messengers of the people for you!”

Thus, the vanguards of the truth from among the companions of the Imam headed for the battlefield. With that, the battle started between the two armies; it was the most violent battle that ever occurred on the earth.

## **The Martyrdom of the Righteous**

The army of the truth met the army of misguidance and falsehood. The companions of Imam al–Husayn eagerly competed with the male members of his House for death to attain Paradise. With that they led the movement of faith. None of their spirits became weak, so, with their unique sacrifice, they gave a proof of the greatness of Islam, which granted them such a steadfast spirit through which they, though few in number, were able to meet that savage army and cause it heavy casualties.

The companions of al–Husayn and the male members of his Household proved themselves brave, especially as it concerns Aba al–Fadl al–‘Abbas, peace be on him, who sacrificed his life for his brother al–Husayn. Throughout the history of humanity, there is no brotherhood more truthful, nobler, and more sincere than that of al–‘Abbas, so Imam Zayn al–‘Abidin, peace be on him, lauded and praised it when he said: “May Allah have mercy on my uncle al–‘Abbas, for he preferred (his brother to himself), showed extreme courage, and sacrificed his life for his brother to the extent that his hands were cut off, so Allah, the Great and Almighty, gave him two wings to fly with the angels in Heaven, as He had given Ja‘far b. Abi Talib. Al–‘Abbas has a great position with Allah, the Exalted, so all the martyrs will envy it on the Day of Judgment.<sup>6</sup>”

Aba al–Fadl al–‘Abbas was the last brother of al–Husayn to be killed. The Imam, peace be on him, stood beside al–‘Abbas’s holy corpse and said with great sorrow: “My back has just broken and my strength become little.”

Imam al–Husayn, peace be on him, felt loneliness and loss when he lost his brother, who was kind and obedient to him. In our book ‘Hayat al–Imam’ al–Husayn (the Life of Imam al–Husayn), We have spoken in detail about his martyrdom and the attitude of al–Husayn toward him.

## Imam al-Husayn sought Help

Imam al-Husayn, who was afflicted with disaster, looked with great sadness and sorrow at the members of his family and his companions. He saw them slaughtered like sheep on the sand of Karbala' under the heat of the sun's rays, and he heard his womenfolk weeping and lamenting over their martyred ones. He did not know what would happen to them after his martyrdom. That tragic sight had a great effect on him, so he sought help to protect the womenfolk of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: "Is there anyone to protect the womenfolk of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family? Is there any monotheist to fear Allah through us? Is there any helper who seeks hope from Allah through helping us?"<sup>7</sup>

When Imam Zayn al-'Abidin heard his father asking those people for help, he left his bed and leant on a stick because of his severe illness. When al-Husayn saw him, he called his sister Umm Kulthum, saying: "Hold him back lest the earth should be void of the descendants of the family of Muhammad!" So his aunt brought him back to his bed, and he suffered psychological pain more than he suffered from his illness. Ordeals and misfortunes filled his mind when he saw that brilliant group of his brothers and cousins martyred on the ground, their sincere companions slaughtered like sheep, his father was surrounded by the enemies of Allah, and the womenfolk of the Prophet shaking with fear. Nevertheless he faced those tragedies with forbearance and entrusted his affair to Allah.

## Martyrdom of the great Imam

Those savage criminals surrounded the plant of the sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, stabbing him with their swords and spears and hitting him with stones. Bleeding sapped his strength, so the wicked criminal, Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan hurried to behead him. The narrators said: "On the lips of Imam al-Husayn, there was the smile of pleasure and of immortal victory which he gained."

Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, sacrificed his life to establish the state of Truth in the regions of this East, to destroy oppression and injustice, to divide the bounties of Allah among the deprived and the persecuted, and to save the community from the government of the Umayyads who denied human rights and turned the Muslim countries into a farm and took from it whatever they wanted.

## Setting the Tents to Fire

The rude and roguish Umayyads set fire to the tents of Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, paying no attention to the Prophet's womenfolk and children who were in them. They carried firebrands in their hands and cried out: "Set fire to the houses of the oppressors!"

These people thought that the tents of al-Husayn were the houses of oppression while the houses of the

Umayyads and of their agents were the houses of justice. They forgot that the Umayyads had drowned the Muslim countries in oppression and tyranny.

When they set the tents to fire, the women of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, escaped to the desert while the fire was following them. As for the orphans, they cried and ran away towards the desert asking the people for help, but nobody helped or aided them. That was the most tragic sight which Imam Zayn al-'Abidin saw. He did not forget it throughout his lifetime. After the martyrdom of his father, he always said: "By Allah, when I look at my aunts and my sisters, tears choke me because I remember the day of al-Taff when they escaped from tent to tent and the caller of the people was calling: 'Set fire to the houses of the oppressors!'<sup>8</sup>"

## **The Attack against Zayn al-'Abidin**

The rude unbelievers attacked Imam Zayn al-'Abidin whose strength was sapped by illness, and whose heart was torn by the terrible tragedies. The wicked criminal, Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan wanted to kill him, but Hameed b. Muslim scolded him, saying: "Glory belongs to Allah! Do you really kill children? He is only a sick lad!"

But Shimr paid no attention to Hameed, so his aunt, the wise lady Zaynab, hurried to him and cling to him, saying: "You will not kill him before killing me first."<sup>9</sup> So, the mean ones left him alone

## **Imam Zayn al-'Abidin became Impatient**

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin felt greatly grieved and worried. He wished that he left life. This is because he witnessed the horrible tragedies which befell the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them. He was about to die when he saw the corpse of his father, the corpses of the male members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), and of his companions exposed to the wind. When his aunt, the wise lady Zaynab, saw him, she consoled him, saying: "Why do I see you pleading for death, O the legacy of my grandfather, of my father and brothers?"

By Allah, this is something which Allah had divulged to your grandfather and to your father. Allah took a covenant from the people whom you do not know, the mighty ones on this land, and who are known to the people of the heavens, that they would gather these severed parts and wounded corpses and bury them, then shall they set up on his Taff a banner for the grave of your father, the lord of martyrs, the traces of which shall never be obliterated, nor shall it ever be wiped out so long as there is day and night. The leaders of apostasy and the promoters of misguidance shall try their best to obliterate and efface it, yet it shall become more and more lofty instead.<sup>10</sup>"

## His Burying the Pure Corpses

The rude and mean ones from among the Kufans buried the corpses of their dead and left on the hot sand of Karbala' the corpse of the plant of the sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, (i.e., al-Husayn), the corpses of the male members of his family, and of their companions. So some of the Banu Asad, who did not take part in the battle, dug graves for those pure corpses. They were perplexed because they could not identify the corpses especially since the killers had separated the heads from the bodies. While they were perplexed, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, according to the Shi'ite sources, came and informed them of the names of the martyrs from among the male members of the House, and of their companions. The Imam himself carried the corpse of his father and buried it in its final resting place while he was shedding bitter tears and saying: "Congratulations to the land that contains your pure body, for the world after you is dark whereas the hereafter in your light shall shine. As for the night, it is the harbinger of sleep, while grief remains forever, for Allah shall choose for the members of your House your abode wherein you shall abide. From me to you is greeting, O son of the Apostle of Allah, and the mercy of Allah and his blessings."

On the holy grave he wrote these words: "This is the grave of al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the one whom they killed even as he was a thirsty stranger. Beside the legs of Imam al-Husayn, he buried his son 'Ali al-Akkbar. He buried the martyrs from among the Hashimites and other than them in one grave. Then he went with the Banu Asad to the river of al-'Alqami, where he ordered a grave to be dug and in it he buried Qamar Banu Hashim (the Moon of the Hashimites), Abu' al-Fadl al-'Abbas b. 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. Then he burst into bitter tears and said: "May the world after you be obliterated, O Moon of Banu Hashim, and greetings from me to you, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings."<sup>11</sup>"

Those pure graves have become a symbol for the dignity of humanity, for every sacrifice stands on honor, justice, and the truth. They have become the holiest center for worship in Islam.

## The Captives of the Household taken to Kufa

The wise ladies of Revelation and the Message were taken prisoners to Kufa, so the Umayyad army blew its trumpets and raised its banners to show its victory over the plant of the sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, and lord of the youths of the heaven. Muslim al-Jassas described that sight, saying: "Ibn Ziyad summoned me to repair the House of the Governor in Kufa. While I was plastering the doors, I heard cries coming from everywhere in Kufa, so I went to the servant of the palace and asked him: "Why is Kufa noisy?"

"This hour, they will bring the head of a rebel (kharijite) who revolted against Yazid," answered the servant.

"Who is this rebel?" I asked.

“Al-Husayn b. ‘Ali,” was the answer.

He (Muslim al-Jassas) said: “So I left the servant, struck at my face to the extent that I feared that I would become blind, washed my hands from plaster, left the palace, and went to al-Kanas. While I was with the people waiting for the arrival of the captives and the heads, forty camels came carrying women and children, and ‘Ali b. al-Husayn came riding a camel without saddle. Both sides of his neck were bleeding. He was weeping and repeating these verses:

*O community of evil, may your region be not*

*watered,*

*O community that never respected in our regard*

*our grandfather,*

*on bare camels of burden have you transported*

*us as if we never put up a creed for you !<sup>12</sup>*

Jadhlam b. Bashir said: “When I came to Kufa in the year 61 A. H., ‘Ali b. al-Husayn along with the womenfolk came from Karbala’ to Kufa surrounded by soldiers. They were (riding) bare camels. The people came out to look at them, so the women of Kufa wept and lamented over them. I saw that ‘Ali b. al-Husayn was sapped by illness, chains were placed on his neck and he was handcuffed.<sup>13</sup> He was saying with a weak voice: ‘They are weeping and lamenting over us! So who has killed us?’<sup>14</sup>”

## **Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin delivers a Speech**

The Kufans surrounded Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, so he thought that he had to address them to make them know the sin of what they committed against themselves and the community. He, peace be on him, lauded and praised Allah, and then he said: “O men, whoever recognizes me knows me, and whoever does not, let me tell him that I am ‘Ali b. al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. I am the son of the man whose sanctity has been violated, whose wealth has been plundered, whose children have been seized. I am the son of the one who has been slaughtered by the Euphrates neither on blood revenge nor on account of inheritance. I am the son of the one killed in the worst manner. This suffices me to be proud.

“O men, I plead to you in the Name of Allah: Do you not know that you wrote my father then deceived him? Did you not grant him your covenant, your promise, and your allegiance, then you fought him? May you be ruined for what you have committed against your own souls, and out of your corrupt views! Through what eyes will you look at the Messenger of Allah when he says to you: ‘You killed my progeny, violated my sanctity, so you do not belong to my community’?”

Those slaves who blackened the face of history wept loudly and lamented, and they said to each other: “You have perished, yet you are not aware of it.”

The Imam continued his speech, saying: “May Allah have mercy on anyone who acts upon my advice, who safeguards my legacy with regard to Allah, His Apostle, and his Household, for we have in the Apostle of Allah a good example of conduct to emulate.”

So they all said with one tongue: “We, son of the Apostle of Allah, listen and obey, and we shall safeguard your trust. We shall not turn away from you, nor shall we disobey you; so, order us, may Allah have mercy on you, for we shall fight when you fight, and we shall make peace when you do so; we dissociate ourselves from whoever oppressed you and dealt unjustly with you.”

In response to this false obedience, the Imam said: “Far, far away it is from you to do so, people of treachery and conniving! You are separated from what you desire. Do you want to come to me as you did to my father? No, by the Lord of those (angels) that ascend and descend, the wound is yet to heal. My father was killed only yesterday, and so were his Household, and the loss inflicted upon the Apostle of Allah, upon my father, and upon my family is yet to be forgotten. Its pain, by Allah, is between both of these (sides) and its bitterness is between my throat and palate. Its choke is resting in my very chest.<sup>15</sup>” Then the Imam refrained from speech, turning away from those treacherous conniving people who were the mark of disgrace against mankind. It was they who killed the plant of the sweet basil of Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, (i. e., al-Husayn), who came to free them and to save them from the oppression and tyranny of the Umayyads. After that, they repented and wept over him.

## [The Tyrant with Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin](#)

The captives of the Household of Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, were caused to enter the palace of the Governor of Kufa, b. Marjana (i. e., ‘Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad). When the tyrant, b. Marjana, saw Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, who was sapped by illness, he asked him: “Who are you?”

“I am ‘Ali b. al-Husayn,” answered the Imam.

“Did not Allah kill ‘Ali b. al-Husayn?” Ibn Ziyad asked the Imam.

The Imam carefully replied: “I used to have an older brother also named ‘Ali whom you killed. He will request you on the Day of Judgment.”

Ibn Ziyad burst with anger and shouted at the Imam: “Allah killed him!”

The Imam answered him with bravery and steadfastness: “Allah takes the souls away at the time of their death; none dies except with Allah’s permission.”

Ibn Marjana was perplexed, not knowing what to answer this young captive who defeated him through giving proofs and quotations from the Qur'an, so he shouted at him, saying: "How dare you answer me like that!"

The wicked sinner, b. Marjana, ordered one of his swordsmen, saying: "Take this lad and behead him!"

The wise lady Zaynab, granddaughter of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, put her hands around the Imam and bravely said to b. Marjana: "O Ibn Ziyad, it suffices you what you have shed of our blood! Have you really spared anyone other than this? If you want to kill him, kill me with him as well!"

The tyrant admired her and said to the swordsman with astonishment: "Leave him for her! Amazing is their tie of kinship; she wishes to be killed with him!"

Were it not for this heroic attitude of the wise lady Zaynab, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin would have been killed and the rest of the progeny of Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, who was the source of good and honor in the earth, would have been destroyed. In his book 'al-Rasa'il', al-Jahiz reported that b. Marjana said to his companions concerning 'Ali b. al-Husayn: "Let me kill him, for he is the rest of this progeny (i. e., the progeny of al-Husayn), so through him I will sever this horn, deaden this disease, and cut off this material."

However, they advised him to refrain from killing him, for they thought that the Imam would be destroyed by his illness. [16](#)

## [A Kufan Kidnaps the Imam](#)

A Kufan Kidnapped the Imam, hid him in his house, entertained and treated him kindly. When he saw the Imam, he burst into tears. The Imam thought that the Kufan was trustworthy. A short time later, the caller of b. Ziyad announced: "Whoever finds 'Ali b. al-Husayn and brings him will have three hundred dirhams." When the Kufan heard the caller, he put a rope around the Imam's neck, tied his hands with the robe, and took the dirhams. [17](#) This initiative, if correct, gives a picture of the Kufans who spared no effort to get money.

## [The Captives of the Household taken to Damascus](#)

The womenfolk and the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, were taken as prisoners to Damascus. They were in a condition the sight of which would cause anyone's soul to melt. All the Kufans went out to see the captives of their Prophet off. The men and the women wept for them. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, wondered at their attitude and said: "They killed us and are weeping over us! [18](#)"

The wicked sinner, Shimr b. Dhi al-Jawshan, ordered a rope to be put around Imam Zayn al-'Abidin's

neck. [19](#) The historians said: “Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin did not say even a word to the rude people who accompanied him, nor did he ask them for a thing throughout the journey, for he knew that they were wicked and ignoble, and that they would not respond to any of his requests.

The caravan of the captives arrived at a place near Damascus and stopped there because the Umayyads wanted to decorate the city to show their rejoicing and the victory which the grandson of Abi Sufyan gained over the grandson of Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family.

When Damascus was fully decorated, the captives of the Household of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, were caused to enter it.

## [A Syrian with Zayn al-‘Abidin](#)

An elderly Syrian, who was misled by the false rumors, came near Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, and said to him: “Praise belongs to Allah Who annihilated you and Who granted the governor the upper hand over you.”

The Imam looked at the elderly Syrian. He understood that the elderly Syrian misunderstood the truth and was deceived by the false Umayyad mass media, so he asked him: “Shaykh, have you read the Qur’an?”

“Yes,” answered the man.

“Have you read,” continued the Imam, “the verse saying: ‘ Say: I do not ask you for a reward for it except that you treat my kinsfolk with kindness,’ the verse saying: ‘ and give the (Prophet’s) kinsfolk their due rights,’ and the verse saying: ‘and be informed that whatever you earn by way of booty, for Allah belongs the fifth thereof and for the Messenger (of Allah) and for the (Prophet’s) kinsfolk’? ”

The elderly Syrian admired the Imam and said to him with a faint voice: “Yes, I have read all of them.”

The Imam said to him: “We, by Allah, are the kinsfolk referred to in all these verses.” Then the Imam asked him: “Shaykh, have you read these words of Him, the exalted: ‘Allah only desires to take away uncleanness from you, O Household (of the Prophet) and purify thoroughly’? ”

“Yes,” was the answer.

“We are the Household (of the Prophet) whom Allah singled out with the Verse of Purification.”

The elderly Syrian shook all over. He wished that the earth had swallowed him up before saying his words. Then he asked the Imam: “I ask you in the Name of Allah, are you really them?”

“By our grandfather, Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, we are, without any doubt,” replied the Imam.

It was then that the elderly Syrian fell on Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin’s hands kissing them. His tears flowed down his cheeks, and he said: “I dissociate myself before Allah from those who killed you!”

The elderly Syrian sought repentance from the Imam from whatever rude remarks he had made earlier. So he, peace be on him, forgave him.[20](#)”

## **Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin in the Assembly of Yazid**

The police men of Yazid tied with ropes the wise women of Revelation and the children of Imam al-Husayn, as sheep are tied. The beginning of the rope was around the neck of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, then around the neck of his aunt Zaynab, up to all the daughters of Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. Whenever they relaxed in their walking, they (the police men of Yazid) whipped them. They brought them in this condition whose terror cracked the mountains and made them stop before Yazid. So Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin turned to him and asked him: “What do you think the reaction of our grandfather, Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, might have been had he seen us looking like this?”

The tyrant, Yazid, collapsed. All those who were in his assembly wept. Yazid felt pain of that tragic sight, so he said: “May Allah detest b. Marjana the ugly. If there had been (any bond of) kinship between him and you, he would not have done this to you; he would not have sent you in this state.” Then the tyrannical one, Yazid, ordered the ropes to be cut off, turned to Zayn al-‘Abidin and said him: “How did you, ‘Ali, see what Allah did to your father al-Husayn?”

Al-Husayn’s brave son (Zayn al-‘Abidin) answered with calmness and tranquillity: “Whatever misfortune befalls the earth or your own selves is already in a Book even before we cause it to happen; this is easy for Allah, so that you may not grieve about what you missed nor feel elated on account of what you receive. And Allah does not love those who are haughty and proud.”

The tyrant, Yazid, burst in anger, his elation went away, and recited these words of Him, the Exalted: “Whatever misfortune befalls you is due to what your hands commit.” The Imam answered him, saying: “This (verse) concerns those who do wrong, not those who are wronged.” Then he turned his face away from him to disdain him and his position.[21](#)

## **Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin delivers a Sermon**

Yazid permitted all the people to come to his palace, so the hall of his palace became full of people who came and congratulated him on the false victory. He was pleased and happy, because the world yielded to him, and the kingdom belonged to him only. So he ordered the orator to ascend the pulpit and to defame al-Husayn and his father, Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. The orator ascended the pulpit and went too far in slandering the pure family (of the Prophet), and then he lauded in a false way Yazid and his father Mu‘awiya. Thus, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, interrupted

him, saying: “Woe unto you, orator! You have traded the pleasure of the creature for the wrath of the Creator, so take your place in the fire (of Hell).”

Then the Imam turned to Yazid and asked him, saying: “Do you permit me to ascend this pulpit to deliver a speech that will please Allah, the Almighty, and that will bring good rewards for these folks?”

The attendants were astonished at this sick lad, who interrupted the orator and the governor while he was a captive. Yazid refused, but the people begged him. He said to them: “If he ascends the pulpit, he will not descend (from it) till he expose me and the family of Abi Sufyan.”

The people asked him: “What will this sick lad do?”

The people did not know the Imam. They thought that he was like the other people, but the tyrant, Yazid, knew him, so he said to them: “These are people who have been spoon-fed with knowledge.”

They kept pressuring him till he agreed. So the Imam ascended the pulpit and delivered the most wonderful speech in history in eloquence. He made the people weep. The folks were confused because the Imam’s speech controlled their hearts and feelings. The following is some of what he said: “O people, we were granted six things and favored with seven: We were granted knowledge, clemency, leniency, fluency, courage, and love for us in the hearts of the believers. We were favored by the fact that from among us came the chosen Prophet, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, al-siddiq (the very truthful one), al-Tayyar (the one who flies in the heaven), the Lion of Allah and of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, the mistress of the women of the world Fatima the chaste, and both lords of the youths of Heaven from among this nation”

Having introduced his family, the Imam continued his speech explaining their outstanding merits, saying: “Whoever recognizes me knows me, and whoever does not recognize, let me tell him who I am and to what family I belong: I am the son of Mecca and Mina; I am the son of Zamzam and al-Safa; I am the son of the one who carried Zakat in the ends of the mantle; I am the son of the best man who ever put on a loincloth and clothes; I am the son of the best man who ever put on sandals and walked barefooted; I am the son of the best man who ever made tawaf (the procession round the Kaaba) and Sa’i (ceremony of running seven times between Safa and Marwa); I am the son of the best man who ever offered the hajj and pronounced talbiya (Here I am at your service); I am the son of the one who was transported on the buraq in the air; I am the son of the one who was made to travel from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque, so glory belongs to Him Who made (His Servant) travel; I am the son of the one who was taken by Gabriel to sidrat al-muntaha; I am the son of the one who drew near (his Lord) and suspended, so he was the measure of two bows or closer still; I am the son of the one who led the angels of the heavens in prayer; I am the son of the one to whom the Almighty revealed what He revealed; I am the son of Muhammad al-Mustafa; I am the son of ‘Ali al-Murtada; I am the son of the one who fought against the creatures till they said: There is no god but Allah. I am the son of the one who struck (the enemies) with two swords before Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family,

and stabbed (them) with two spears, emigrated twice, pledged allegiance twice (to the Prophet), prayed in the two qiblas, and fought (against the unbelievers) at Badr and Hunayn and never disbelieved in Allah not even as much as the twinkling of an eye. I am the son of the best of the believers, the heir of the prophets, the destroyer of the unbelievers, the Commander of the Muslims, the light of the mujahidin, the ornament of the worshippers, the crown of the weepers, the most patient of the patient, and the best of the steadfast from among the family of Yasin, and the Messenger of the Lord of the world's inhabitants. I am the son of the one who was backed by Gabriel, supported by Mikael.

I am the son of the one who defended the Muslims, killed the oath breakers of allegiance and the unjust and the renegades, struggled against his tiring enemies, the most excellent one of those who walked (to war) from among Quraysh, the first to respond to Allah from among the believers, the prior to all the previous ones, the breaker of the aggressors, the destroyer of the atheists, an arrow from among the shooting-places of Allah against the hypocrites, the tongue of the wisdom of worshippers, the supporter of the religion of Allah, the protector of the affair of Allah, the garden of the wisdom of Allah, the container of the knowledge of Allah, tolerant, generous, benevolent, pure, Abtahi, satisfied, easily satisfied, intrepid, gallant, patient, fasting, refined, steadfast, courageous, honored, the severer of the backbones, the scatterer of the allies, the calmest of them, the best of them in giving free rein (to his horse), the boldest of them in tongue, the firmest of them in determination, the most powerful of them, a lion, brave, pouring rain, the one who destroyed them at the battles and dispersed them in the wind, the lion of al-Hijaz, the possessor of the miracle, the ram of Iraq, the Imam through the text and worthiness, Makki, Madani, Abtahi, Tuhami, Khay'ani, 'Uqbi, Badri, Uhdi, Shajari, Muhajiri, the Lord of the Arabs, the Lion of war, the inheritor of al-Mash'arayn, the father of the two grandsons (of the Prophet) al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the one who manifested miracles, the one who scattered the phalanxes, the piercing meteor, the following light, the victorious Lion of Allah, the request of every seeker, the victorious over every victorious, such is my grandfather, 'Ali b. Abi Talib. I am the son of Fatima, the chaste. I am the son of the mistress of women. I am the son of the purified, virgin (lady). I am the son of the part of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family.<sup>22</sup> I am the son of the one who was covered with blood. I am the son of the one who was slaughtered at Karbala'. I am the son of the one for whom the Jinns wept in the dark and for whom the birds in the air cried.<sup>23</sup>"

The Imam continued saying 'I am....' until the people wailed. Yazid thought that a discord would occur, for the Imam made a cultural revolt through his speech when he introduced himself to the Syrians and made them know what they did not know, so Yazid ordered the muadhhdhin to say the adhan and he said: "Allahu Akbar!"

The Imam turned to him and said: "You have made great the Great One who cannot be measured and cannot be perceived by senses, there is nothing greater than Allah."

The muadhhdhin said: "Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah!"

'Ali b. al-Husayn said: "My hair, my skin, my flesh, my blood, my brain, and my bones bear witness that

there is no god but Allah.”

The muadhhdhin said: “Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasool Allah!”

The Imam turned to Yazid and asked him: “Yazid, is Muhammad your grandfather or mine? If you say that he is yours, then you are a liar, and if you say that he is mine, then why did you kill his family?<sup>24</sup>”

Yazid became silent and was unable to answer, for the great Prophet was Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin’s grandfather. As for Yazid’s grandfather, he was Abu’ Sufyan, who was the mortal enemy of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family. The Syrians understood that they were drowning in sin, and that the Umayyad government spared no effort to delude and mislead them.

The Imam confined his speech to introducing the Prophet’s Household to the Syrians. He indicated to them that the Prophet’s Household had a great position with Allah, that they waged jihad against the enemies of Islam, and that they suffered persecutions. The Imam mentioned nothing other than these matters. I (the author) think that this confinement to these matters is among the most wonderful considerations and among the most exact type of eloquence. This is because the Syrians knew nothing about the Prophet’s Household except what the pseudo clergy men fabricated against them; the authority and its mercenaries fed the Syrians on enmity toward the Prophet’s Household and on obedience to the Umayyads.

Anyhow, the Imam’s speech had a great effect on the Syrians, who secretly told each other about the Umayyad false mass media, and about the disappointment and loss at which they reached, so their attitudes toward Yazid changed<sup>25</sup> and they looked at him with disdain.

## [The Imam with al-Minhal](#)

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, met al-Minhal b. ‘Amr and he asked him: “How have you received the evening, O son of the Apostle of Allah?”

The Imam looked at him and said to him: “We received the evening like the Israelites among the people of Pharaoh: they kill their sons and take their women captive. The Arabs brag before the non-Arabs saying that Muhammad was one of them, while Quraysh boasts before the rest of the Arabs of Muhammad belonging to it. We, his Household, are now homeless; so, to Allah we belong and to Him is our return.<sup>26</sup>”

The greatest Prophet was the original source for the honor of the Arab community. It was he who planned the honorable life for it and established for it the strongest state in the world, but Quraysh, who boasted before the rest of the Arabs of Muhammad belonging to it, killed his children and took his womenfolk as captives.

## The Tyrannical apologizes to the Imam

When the Syrians became indignant with Yazid because of his killing the plant of sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, he (Yazid) summoned Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, apologized to him, and regarded b. Marjana ('Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad) responsible for killing al-Husayn, saying: "May Allah curse b. Marjana! By Allah, if I had been with him (al-Husayn), he would never have asked me for a favor without me granting him it; I would have protected him from death with all my power even through destroying some of my sons. But Allah has decreed what you have seen. My little son, write to me and everything that you need is yours.<sup>27</sup> Affairs will occur among your people, so do not take part in them.<sup>28</sup>"

However, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin turned away from him and said nothing to him, for he knew that the reason for his apology was an escape from the crime he committed.

## A Scholar asks about the Imam

A Jewish scholar was in the assembly of Yazid. He admired Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, so he asked Yazid: "Who is that lad?"

"Ali b. al-Husayn," replied Yazid.

"Who is al-Husayn?" asked the Jewish scholar.

"Son of 'Ali b. Abi Talib," answered Yazid.

"Who is his mother?" asked the Jewish scholar.

"Muhammad's daughter," replied Yazid.

"Glory belongs to Allah," explained the Jewish scholar, "this is the son of the daughter of your Prophet, (why did) you kill him? You opposed him by doing evil to his blood relations. By Allah, if our Prophet, Mu'sa b. 'Umran, had left a grandson among us, we would have worshipped him instead of Allah. Your Prophet left you yesterday; nevertheless you revolted against his grandson and killed him. How bad a community you are!"

The tyrannical one, Yazid, became angry and ordered the Jewish scholar to be hit on the mouth, still the Jewish scholar said: "Kill me if you want to. I have found in the Torah that whoever kills the progeny of a prophet will be cursed as long as he remains (living). When he dies, Allah will cause him to enter the fire of Hell.<sup>29</sup>"

## [The Imam with Yazid](#)

The tyrannical one, Yazid, met Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin and asked him to ask his needs, so the Imam, peace be on him, said: “I want you to show me my father’s face, and bring back to the women what had been taken from them, for among it is the inheritances of fathers and mothers. If you want to kill me, send with the family someone to guide them to Medina.”

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, asked Yazid to show him his father’s head to bid the final farewell to it or to bury it with the holy corpse, but the tyrannical one (Yazid) refused to give him the head because he intended to show it around the country to spread fear among the people and to be a lesson for those who might revolt against him.

He also asked him to bring back what was taken from the women on Muharram 10th. With this the Imam did not mean the ornaments, rather he meant the dear things he inherited from his grandfather, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, such as his turban, his breastplate, and his sword.

Yazid, the tyrannical, bowed his head. He thought about the Imam’s requests. Then he raised his head and said: “As for the face of your father, you will never see it. As for what was taken from you, it will be brought back to you. As for the women, no one will repatriate them except you. As for you, I will not kill you.<sup>30</sup>”

## [The Journey to Medina](#)

Yazid ordered al-Nu‘man b. Bashir to escort the womenfolk of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and to send them back to Medina.<sup>31</sup> He ordered him to take them out at night because he feared dissension and repercussions.<sup>32</sup> The caravan walked and began covering the desert. The Alid women asked al-Nu‘man b. Bashir to take them to Karbala’ to renew their covenant with the grave of the Lord of martyrs, peace be on him.

Having reached Karbala’, the Alid women hurried to the grave of Imam Abi ‘Abd Allah, peace be on him, weeping and wailing. They stayed there mourning al-Husayn for three days to the extent that their voices became hoarse and their hearts became broken. Some sources mentioned that Jabir b. ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari, a great companion of the Prophet, visited the grave of al-Husayn, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, met him and told him about the tragedies which the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, faced, and then they left Karbala’ and headed for Medina.

## [Bishr announced the Death of Imam al-Husayn](#)

When Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, came close to Medina, he alighted, set up a tent where he lodged his aunts and his sisters, turned to Bishr b. Hadhlam and said to him: “O Bishr, may Allah have mercy on your father, who was a poet! Can you compose any of it at all?” “Yes, O son of Allah’s

Apostle,” replied Bishr. So the Imam ordered him to enter Medina and to announce the death of Imam al-Husayn among its people. Hence, Bishr set off towards Medina. When he came near the Mosque of the Prophet, he cried loudly and recited these verses:

*O people of Yathrib! May you never stay*

*therein!*

*Al-Husayn was killed, so my tears now rain,*

*His body is in Karbala' covered with blood*

*While his head is on spear displayed.*

The people went in a hurry to the Mosque of the Prophet weeping loudly for the Imam, peace be on him. They gathered around Bishr, who was weeping, asking him for more information of al-Husayn, so he said to them: “Here is ‘Ali b. al-Husayn accompanied by his aunts and sisters; they have all returned to you. I am his messenger to you to inform you of his place.[33](#)”

The people went out to receive Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin all weeping and wailing. The historians said that that day was like the day when Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, passed away.[34](#) They surrounded the Imam to offer him their condolences.

## **Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin delivers a Speech**

The Imam, peace be on him, thought that he had to tell the people about the tragedies which they were subjected to. The Imam was unable to stand up to deliver a speech, for he was sapped by illness and overcome by grief, so a chair was brought for him. He sat in the chair and said: “Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, the King of the Day of Judgment, Creator of all creation, Who is the Exalted in the high heavens, Who is so near, He hears even the silent speech. We praise Him on the grave events, on time’s tragedies, on the pain inflicted by such tragedies, on the crushing of calamities, on the greatness of our catastrophe, on our great, monstrous, magnanimous and afflicting hardships.

“O People, Allah, the Most Exalted One, praise belong to Him, has tried us with great trials and tribulations, with a tremendous loss suffered by the religion of Islam. Abu’ ‘Abd Allah, al-Husayn, and his family have been killed, and his womenfolk and children taken captives. They displayed his head in every land from the top of a spear. Such is the catastrophe similar to which there is none at all.

“O people, which men among you are happy after him, or which heart is not grieved on his account? Which eye among you withholds its tears and is too miser with its tears? The seven great heavens wept over his killing; the seas wept with their waves, and so did the heavens with their corners and the earth

with its expanse; so did the trees with their branches and the fish in the depths of the seas. So did the angels who are close to their Lord. So did all those in the heavens.

“O People, which heart is not grieved with his killing? Which heart does not yearn for him? Which hearing hears such a calamity that has befallen Islam without becoming deaf.

“O people, we have become homeless, exiles, outcasts, shunned, distanced from all countries as though we were the offspring of the Turks or of Kabul without having committed a crime, nor an abomination, nor afflicted a calamity on Islam! Never did we ever hear such a thing from our fathers of old. This is something new. By Allah, had the Prophet required them to fight us just as he had required them to be good to us, they would not have done to us any more than what they already have. So we belong to Allah and to Him is our return from this calamity, and what a great, painful, hard, cruel, and catastrophic calamity it is! To Allah do we complain from what has happened to us, from the sufferings we have endured, for He is the Omnipotent, the Vengeful.”

Sa'sa'a, an invalid who could barely walk on his feet, stood up and apologized to the Imam for not rushing to help his family due to his handicap. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, responded to him by accepting his excuse, telling him that he thought well of him, thanked him and asked Allah to have mercy on his father. Then the Imam walked accompanied by his aunts and sisters. The people surrounded him weeping and wailing until they reached the Mosque of the Prophet. There Zaynab, the wise lady of the family of Abi Talib, took both knobs of the door of the mosque and cried out and addressed her grandfather, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, saying: “O my grandfather, I mourn to you my brother al-Husayn!<sup>35</sup>”

The wise ladies who were born and grew up in the lap of the Prophet held a mourning ceremony for the Lord of the martyrs. They put on the most coarse clothes and shrouded themselves in black and continued weeping and wailing.

## Imam Zayn al-'Abidin's Grief

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, kept weeping day and night over his father and the members of his Household. Imam al-Sadiq, peace be on him, said: “My grandfather, 'Ali b. al-Husayn, wept over his father for twenty years. When food was put before him, he wept.<sup>36</sup>” One of his retainers blamed him, saying: “I fear for you lest you should perish.”

So the Imam kindly said to him: “I only convey my complaints and my grief to Allah, and I know from Allah what you all do not know. Ya'qu'b (Jacob) was a prophet from whom Allah caused one of his sons to be separated. He had twelve sons, and he knew that his son (Joseph) was still alive, he wept over him till he lost his eye sight. I looked at my father, my brothers, my uncles, and my companions (and saw them) slain all around me, so how can my grief end? Whenever I remember how Fatima's children were slaughtered, tears choke me. Whenever I look at my aunts and sisters, I remember how they were

fleeing from one tent to another.[37](#)”

When the Imam looked at water, his weeping increased, and his pain doubled. This is because water reminded him of the thirst of his father and the members of his Household. The narrators said: “When he took some water to drink, he wept. So he was asked about that, and he answered: ‘How do I not weep (while) my father was prevented from drinking the water which was free for beasts and wild animals?’[38](#)”

The Imam always wept over his father, and it was said to him: “You always weep, even if you kill yourself, you will increase (nothing) with this.” So he said: “I have killed my soul, and over it I weep.[39](#)”

A group of his retainers and the members of his Household felt pity for him because of his abundant weeping, so one of them asked him: “Has n’t your grief end yet?”

The Imam answered him, saying: “Woe unto you! Ya‘qu‘b (Jacob) was a prophet from whom Allah caused one of his sons to be separated. He had twelve sons, and he knew that his son (Joseph) was still alive in the world, he wept over him till he lost his eye sight. I looked at my father, my brother, my uncle, and seventeen (persons) from the members of my Household (and saw them) slain all around me, so how can my grief end?[40](#)”

His heart melt with pity for his father, his Household, and his friends whose heads the swords of aggression severed in a cruel manner.

## **His Paying the Debts which his Father owed**

Imam al–Husayn, peace be on him, was indebted to a group of people for more than seventy thousand dinars, so Imam Zayn al–‘Abidin, peace be on him, took great care of paying them to the extent that he prevented himself from having food and water. When he prepared this sum (of money), he hurried to pay every debt to the person to whom it was owed, and thus he could free his father from such an obligation.[41](#)

## **His Kindness to the Family of ‘Aqil**

Imam Zayn al–‘Abidin, peace be on him, was very kind to the Family of ‘Aqil. He preferred them to his cousins and the members of his family, for they had an outstanding attitude during the Battle of Karbala’. That was when the sons and the honorable grandsons of ‘Aqil sacrificed their souls for Imam al–Husayn, peace be on him, while they were still young. They competed with each other for martyrdom, so they were all killed at that battle, and thus they sacrificed their lives for the religion of Allah.

Imam Zayn al–‘Abidin, peace be on him, had mercy on them and preferred them to the surviving members of his family. He was asked about that, and he, peace be on him, replied: “I remember their day with Abu ‘Abd Allah (al–Husayn), so I feel pity for them.[42](#)” An example of his kindness to the family of ‘Aqil was that al–Mukhtar b. Yousif, a great revolutionist, gave him a lot of money, and he built with it

houses for them, but the Umayyad government ordered the houses to be demolished.[43](#)

## His Staying in Medina

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, stayed in Medina and did not leave it except for performing the hajj to the Sacred House of Allah. The narrators said: “He traveled to Iraq to visit the grave of Imam (‘Ali) the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him.[44](#)” It is certain that he visited the grave of his father, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him. With this we will end our talk about the tragedies of Karbala’, and the oppression and persecution to which Imam’ al-Husayn was subjected.

- [1.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, p. 97.
- [2.](#) Al-Tabarani, al-Mu‘jam. Ibn ‘Asakir, Tarikh, vol. 13, p. 74.
- [3.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 1, pp. 172 – 173.
- [4.](#) Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 9, p. 147.
- [5.](#) Al-Tabari, Tarikh, vol. 6, p. 242.
- [6.](#) Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 9, p. 147.
- [7.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, p. 274.
- [8.](#) Ibid., p. 3.
- [9.](#) Al-Qarmani, Tarikh, p. 108.
- [10.](#) Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 261.
- [11.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, pp. 324 – 325.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p. 333.
- [13.](#) Shaykh al-Mufeed, al-Amali, p. 143.
- [14.](#) ‘Abd Allah, Maqqtal al-Husayn.
- [15.](#) Ibn Nama, Muthir al-Ahzan.
- [16.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Yusayn, vol. 3, pp. 345 – 347.
- [17.](#) Mir’at al-Zaman fi Tawarikh al-A‘yan, p. 98. Ibn al-Jawzi, vol. 5. Ibn Sa’d, Tabaqat.
- [18.](#) Mir’at al-Zaman fi Tawarikh al-A‘yan, p. 99.
- [19.](#) Ansab al-Ashraf, Q1/vol. 1.
- [20.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, p. 371.
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 376.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 387.
- [23.](#) Nafs al-Mahmu`m, p. 242.
- [24.](#) Al-Khawarizmi, Maqqtal al-Husayn, vol. 2, p. 242.
- [25.](#) Jawhart al-Kalam fi Maddh al-Sada al-‘Alam, p. 128.
- [26.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, p. 291.
- [27.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Tarikh, vol. 3, p. 300.
- [28.](#) Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 1, p. 157.
- [29.](#) Al-Hada`iq al-Wardiya, vol. 1, p. 131. Al-Futu`h, vol. 5, p. 246.
- [30.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, p. 414.
- [31.](#) Jawhart al-Kalam fi Maddh al-Sada al-‘Alam, p. 128.
- [32.](#) Tafsir al-Matalib fi Amali Abi Talib, p. 93. Al-Hada`iq al-Wardiya, vol. 1, p. 133.
- [33.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, vol. 3, p. 423.
- [34.](#) Al-Luhu`f, p. 116.
- [35.](#) Al-Muqrim, Maqtal al-Husayn, p. 472.
- [36.](#) Ahmed Fahmi, al-Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, p. 31.
- [37.](#) Al-Muqrim, Maqtal al-Husayn, p. 47. A narration similar to this has been reported in Hulyat al-Awliya’, vol. 3, p. 138.

[38.](#) Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46, p. 108.

[39.](#) Ibid, p. 109.

[40.](#) Ibid, p. 108.

[41.](#) Sir al-Silsila al-'Alawiya, p. 32.

[42.](#) Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 107.

[43.](#) Ghayat al-Ikhtisar, p. 160.

[44.](#) Ibid.

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