

Imam Husayn (a.s.) meets al-Hurr

He, peace be on him, went on from Batn al Aqaba until he stopped at Sharaf (for the night). At dawn he ordered his boys to get water and more for the journeys when he continued from there until midday. While he was journeying, one of his followers exclaimed, *“God is greater (Allahu akbar)!”* *“God is greatest (Allahu akbar).”* responded al Husayn, peace be on him. Then he asked: *“Why did you say Allahu akbar?”* *“I saw palm-trees,”* answered the man.

“This is a place in which we never see a palm-tree,” a group of his followers asserted.

“What do you think it is then?” asked al Husayn, peace be on him.

“We think it is the ears of horses,” they answered.

“By God, I think so too,” he declared. Then he said, *“(So that) we can face them in one direction (i.e. so that we are not surrounded), we should put at our rear whatever place of refuge (we can find).”*

“Yes,” said to him, *“there is Dhu Husam over on your left. If you reach it before them, it will be (in) just (the position) you want.”* So he veered left towards it and we went in that direction with him. Even before we had had time to change direction the vanguard of the cavalry appeared in front of us and we could see them clearly.

We left the road and when they saw that we had moved off the road, they (also) moved off the road towards us. Their spears looked like palm branches stripped of their leaves and their standards were like birds' wings. Al Husayn ordered his tents (to be put up) and they were erected. The people came up; (there were) about one thousand horsemen under the command of al-Hurr Ibn Yazid al-Tamimi. (It was during the heat of midday (that) he and his cavalry stood (thus) facing al Husayn, peace be on him. Al Husayn, peace be on him, and his followers were all wearing their turbans and their swords (ready to fight).

“Provide (our) people with water and let them quench their thirst and give their horses water to drink little by little,” al Husayn ordered his boys. They did that and they began filling their bowls and cups and took them to the horses. When a horse had drunk three or four or five draughts, the water was taken away

and given to another horse—until they had all been watered.

‘Ali Ibn al Taan al Muharibi reported:

I was with al-Hurr on that day, I was among the last of his followers to arrive. When al Husayn, peace be on him, saw how thirsty both I and my horse were, he said: *“Make your beast (rawiya) kneel.”* I thought rawiya meant water-skin so he said, *“Cousin, make your camel (jamal) kneel.”* I did so. Then he said, *“Drink.”* I did so, but when I drank, water flowed from my water-skin.

“Bend your water-skin,” said al Husayn. I did not know how to do that. He came up (to me) and bent it (into the proper position for drinking). Then I drank and gave my horse to drink.

Al-Hurr Ibn Yazid had come from al-Qadisiyya. Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad had sent al Husayn Ibn Numayr and ordered him to take up (his) position at al-Qadisiyya. Then al-Hurr had been sent in advance with one thousand horsemen to meet al Husayn.

Al-Hurr remained positioned opposite to al Husayn, peace be on him, until the time for the midday prayer drew near. Al Husayn, peace be on him, ordered al-Hajjaj Ibn Masruq to give the call to prayer. When the second call to prayer immediately preceding the prayer (iqama) was about (to be made) al Husayn came out (before the people) dressed in a waist-cloth (czar) and cloak (rida¹) and wearing a pair of sandals. He praised and glorified God, then he said, *“People, I did not come to you until your letters came to me, and they were brought by your messengers (saying), ‘Come to us for we have no Imam. Through you may God unite us under guidance and truth.’ Since this was your view, I have come to you. Therefore give me what you guaranteed in your covenants and (sworn) testimonies. If you will not and (if you) are (now) averse to my coming, I will leave you (and go back) to the place from which I came.”*

They were silent before him. Not one of them said a word.

“Recite the iqama,” he said to the caller for prayer (mu’adhdhin) and he recited the iqama.

“Do you want to lead your followers in prayer?” he asked al-Hurr Ibn Yazid. *“No,”* he replied, *“but you pray and we will pray (following the lead of) your prayer.”*

Al Husayn, peace be on him, prayed before them. Then he returned (to his tent) and his followers gathered around him. Al-Hurr went back to the place where he had positioned (his men) and entered a tent which had been put up for him. A group of his followers gathered around him while the rest returned to their ranks, which they had been in and which now they went back to. Each of them held the reins of his mount and sat in the shade (of its body).

At the time for the afternoon (asr) prayer, al Husayn, peace be on him, ordered his followers to prepare for departure. Then he ordered the call to be made, and the call for the asr prayer was made, and the iqama. Al Husayn, peace be on him, came forward, stood and prayed. Then he said the final greeting (of the prayer) and turned his face towards them (al-Hurr’s men).

He praised and glorified God and said, *“People, if you fear God and recognise the rights of those who have rights, God will be more satisfied with you. We are the House of Muhammad and as such are more entitled to the authority (wilaya) of this affair (i.e. the rule of the community) over you than these pretenders who claim what does not belong to them. They have brought tyranny and aggression among you. If you refuse (us) because you dislike (us) or do not know our rights, and your view has now changed from what came to us in your letters and what your messengers brought, then I will leave you.”*

“By God,” declared al-Hurr, *“I know nothing of these letters and messengers which you mention.”*

“Uqba Ibn Siman,” al Husayn, peace be on him, called to one of his followers, *“bring out the two saddle-bags in which the letters to me are kept.”*

He brought out two saddle-bags which were full of documents, and they were put before him.

“We are not among those who wrote these letters to you,” said al-Hurr, *“and we have been ordered that when we meet you we should not leave you until we have brought you to Kufa to 'Ubayd Allah.”*

“Death will come to you before that (happens),” al Husayn, peace be on him, told him. Then he ordered his followers, *“Get up and get mounted.”*

They got mounted and (then) waited until their women had been mounted, *“Depart,”* he ordered his followers.

When they set out to leave, the men (with al-Hurr) got in between them and the direction they were going in.

“May God deprive your mother of you,” said al Husayn, peace be on him, to al-Hurr, *“what do you want?”* *“If any of the Arabs other than you were to say that to me,”* retorted al-Hurr, *“even though he were in the same situation as you, I would not leave him without mentioning his mother being deprived (of him), whoever he might be. But by God there is no way for me to mention your mother except by (saying) the best things possible.”*

“What do you want?” al Husayn, peace be on him, demanded.

“I want to go with you to the governor, Ubayd Allah,” he replied.

“Then by God I will not follow you.”

“Then by God I will not let you (go anywhere else).”

These statements were repeated three times, and when their conversation was getting more (heated) al-Hurr said, *“I have not been ordered to fight you. I have only been ordered not to leave you until I come with you to Kufa. If you refuse (to do that), then take any road which will not bring you into Kufa nor take you back to Medina, and let that be a compromise between us while I write to the governor,*

'Ubayd Allah. Perhaps God will cause something to happen which will relieve me from having to do anything against you. Therefore take this (road) here and bear to the left of the road (to) al-Udhayb and al-Qadisiyya.'

Al-Husayn, peace be on him, departed and al-Hurr with his followers (also) set out travelling close by him, while al-Hurr was saying to him, *"Al-Husayn, I remind you (before) God to (think of) your life; for I testify that you will be killed if you fight."*

"Do you think that you can frighten me with death?" said al-Husayn, peace be on him. *"Could a worse disaster happen to you than killing me? I can only speak (to you) as the brother of al-Aws said to his cousin when he wanted to help the Apostle of God, may God bless him and grant him and his family peace."*

His cousin feared for him and said: Where are you going, for you will be killed? But he replied: I will depart for there is no shame in death for a young man, whenever he intends (to do what is) right and he strives like a Muslim, (Who) has soothed righteous men through (the sacrifice of) his life, who has scattered the cursed and opposed the criminal.

If I live, I will not regret (what I have done) and if I die, I will not suffer. Let it be enough for you to live in humiliation and be reviled."

When al-Hurr heard that he drew away from him. He and his followers travelled on one side (of the road) while al-Husayn, peace be on him, travelled on the other, until they reached Udhayb al-Hijanat. Al-Husayn, peace be on him, went on to Qasr Bani Muqatil.

He stopped there and there a large tent had (already) been erected.

"Whose is that?" he asked.

"That belongs to Ubayd Allah Ibn al-Hurr al-Jufi," he was told.

"Ask him to come to me," he said.

The messenger went to him and said, *"This is al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali, peace be on them, and he asks you to come to him."*

"We belong to God and to Him we shall return," said 'Ubayd Allah. *"By God, I only left Kufa out of dread that al-Husayn, peace be on him, would enter Kufa while I was there. By God, I do not want to see him, nor him to see me."*

The messenger returned to him (al-Husayn). Al-Husayn, peace be on him, rose and went over to him. He greeted him and sat down.

Then he asked him to go with him. Ubayd Allah Ibn al-Hurr repeated what he had said before and

sought to excuse himself from what he was asking him (to do).

“If you are not going to help us,” al Husayn, peace be on him, said to him, “then be sure that you are not one of those who fight against us. For, by God, no one will hear our cry and not help us without being destroyed.”

“As for that (fighting against you),” he replied, “it will never happen, if God, the Exalted, wishes.”

Then al Husayn, peace be on him, left him and continued to his camp. Towards the end of the night, he ordered his boys to get provisions of water. Then he ordered the journey (to continue). He set out from Qasr Bani Muqatil.

– Kitab al Irshad

Shaykh al Mufid

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