

Muslim Ibn Aqil leaves for Kufa

Al Husayn, peace be upon him, summoned Muslim Ibn Aqil and despatched him with Qays Ibn Mushir al Saydawi and Umara Ibn Abd Allah al Saluli, and Abd Allah and Abd al Rahman, sons of Shaddad al Arhabi. He enjoined him to be pious before God and to conceal his affair, and to act in a kindly way. If he saw that the people were united and had committed themselves to an agreement, he should speedily inform him of that.

Muslim, the mercy of God be on him, departed until he came to Medina. There he prayed in the mosque of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, and said farewell to the dearest members of his family. Then he hired two guides. These two set out with him, but they missed the way and got lost. Both were struck by severe thirst and were unable to continue their journey. They indicated the path to him after it again appeared clear to them. Muslim carried on along the path and the two guides died of thirst. Muslim Ibn Aqil, the mercy of God be with them both, wrote a letter from the place known as al Madiq and sent it with Qays Ibn Mushir:

I set out from Medina with two guides and they missed the way and got lost. Both were overcome by thirst and soon died. But we kept going until we came to water. We were only saved at the last moment of our lives. That water is in a place called al-Madiq in a low valley. I have taken this as a bad omen for my mission. If you consider it so, you could relieve me and send another in my place.

Greetings.

Al Husayn, peace be upon him, wrote (back):

I am afraid that your urging me in the letter to relieve you from the task which I sent you on is only cowardice. Therefore go on with your task which I gave you.

Greetings.

Muslim read the letter, he said:

"It is not for myself that I am afraid." So he continued (once more) until he came to a well belonging to

(the tribe of) Tayyi'. He stayed there (the night) then as he rode off (he saw) a man hunting. He saw him shoot a fawn as it came into his sight, and kill it. Muslim said: *"(Thus), will we kill our enemies, God willing."* He went on until he entered Kufa.

There he stayed in the house of al-Mukhtar Ibn Abi Ubayda, which is called today the house of Muslim Ibn al-Musayyi Ibn The Shia began to come regularly to (see) him. Whenever a group of them gathered together with him, he would read the letter of al Husayn, peace be upon him, and they would weep. The people pledged allegiance to him (on behalf of al Husayn) to the extent that eighteen thousand men made such a pledge to him.

Therefore Muslim wrote to al Husayn, peace be upon him, informing him of the pledge of allegiance to him of the eighteen thousand and urging him to come.

The Shia began to visit Muslim Ibn Aqil so frequently that his place (of residence) became well-known. Al-Numan Ibn Bashir, who had been Muawiya's governor of Kufa and had been confirmed in office by Yazid, knew of his whereabouts. He went up on the pulpit and after praising God said:

"Servants of God, fear God and do not rush into rebellion and discord, for in that men will be destroyed, blood will be shed, and property will be plundered. I do not combat anyone who does not combat me, nor do I disturb those of you who remain quiet. I do not oppose you, nor do I apprehend (you merely) on grounds of suspicion, accusation or hearsay.

However, if you turn your faces away from me, violate your pledge of allegiance and oppose your Imam, by God, other than Whom there is no deity, I will strike you with my sword as long as its hilt remains in my hand, even though I do not have any of you to help me. Yet I hope that those among you who know the truth are more numerous than those whom falsehood will destroy."

Abd Allah Ibn Muslim Ibn Rabi'al al-Hadrami, an ally of the Banu Umayya stood before him and said: *"O governor, what you see can only be adequately dealt with by violence; for the view which you hold about what (should be done) between you and your enemy is that of the weak."* *"I would prefer to be one of the weak (while remaining) in obedience to God than to be one of the mighty (while at the same time being) in rebellion against God,"* answered al-Nu'man. Then he went down (from the pulpit).

Abd Allah Ibn Muslim went out and wrote the (following) letter to Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya:

Muslim Ibn Aqil has come to Kufa and Shia have pledged allegiance to him on behalf of al Husayn Ibn Abi Talib, peace be on them. If you have any need for Kufa, then send it a strong man, who will carry out your orders and act in the same way as you would against your enemy. Al-Nu'man Ibn Bashir is a weak man, or he is acting like a weak man.

Umara Ibn Uqba wrote to him in a similar vein, as did Umar Ibn Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas. When the letters reached Yazid, he summoned Sarjun, a retainer (mawla) of Muawiya and asked (him): *"What is your*

view (of the fact) that Husayn has sent Muslim Ibn Aqil to Kufa to receive pledges of homage on his behalf? I have (also) learnt that Numan is weak, and had other bad reports of him. Who do you think that I should appoint as governor of Kufa?"

Now Yazid was angry with 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad so Sarjun answered him, *"Do you think, if Muawiya was alive and advising you, that you would take his advice?"*

"Yes," he answered.

Sarjun produced a (letter of) appointment for 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad (as governor) of Kufa, and said: *"This is the advice of Mu'awiya, which he ordered before he died. So join the two cities of Basra and Kufa (under the authority) of Ubayd Allah."* "I'll do that," replied Yazid. *"I'll send the letter of authority (which my father wrote) for 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad to him."* After this he summoned Muslim Ibn 'Amr al-Bahili and he sent him to 'Ubayd Allah with the following (letter):

My Shia among the people of Kufa have informed me that Ibn 'Aqil is there gathering units in order to spread rebellion among the Muslims. Therefore, when you read this letter of mine, go to Kufa and search for Ibn Aqil as if you were looking for a bead until you find him. Then bind him (in chains), kill him or expel him.

Greetings.

In this way he gave him authority over Kufa. Muslim Ibn 'Amr went to Ubayd Allah at Basra and brought him the authorization and the letter. 'Ubayd Allah ordered that preparations should be made immediately and that the departure for Kufa would take place on the next day. He himself left Basra after he had made his brother, 'Uthman, his deputy. He took with him Muslim Ibn Amr, Sharik Ibn al- A'war al-Harithi, together with his entourage and household.

When he reached Kufa, he was wearing a black turban and he was veiled. News of al Husayn's departure had reached the people and they were expecting his arrival. When they saw Ubayd Allah, they thought that he was al Husayn. He (i.e. Ubayd Allah) did not pass a group of people without them greeting him. They were saying:

"Welcome, son of the Apostle of God, your arrival is a happy (event)." He saw in their welcoming of al Husayn something which (greatly) troubled him. Muslim Ibn Amr said, when their number had become so great (that) they were delaying them: *"This is the governor 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad."* He went on so that he was approaching the (governor's) palace at night. With him was (still) a great crowd who had gathered round him and who did not doubt that he was al Husayn. Al-Numan Ibn Bashir had (the palace) bolted against him and against his entourage. One of those with him called on him to open the door to them.

But al-Numan, still thinking that he was al Husayn, went up to the balcony and called down: *"I invoke*

God before you, unless you withdraw (from me), by God, I will not hand over my office (amana) to you but I have no wish to fight you.” (Ibn Ziyad) did not answer him. But he went closer while al- Nu'man was hanging over the balcony of the palace. Then he began to say to him: *“Open, you have not opened yet and you have already had a long night (in which you have slept instead of governing).”*

A man behind him heard this and withdrew to the people from Kufa who had followed (Ibn Ziyad) (believing) him to be al Husayn.

He said: *“O people, it is Ibn Murjana, by Him other than Whom there is no deity.”* Al-Numan opened the door for him and he entered. They slammed the door in the faces of the people and they dispersed.

Ref:

– The History of al Tabari Volume 19 The Caliphate of Yazid Ibn Muawiyah, Pages 22 – 65 (Abu Mikhnaf's Account on Muslim Ibn Aqil) Translated by I.K.A Howard

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– Kitab al Irshad, Shaykh al Mufid, Pages 305 – 326, Translated by I.K.A Howard

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