

Stops on the Imam's Journey

Tan'im

The Imam left Mecca, and at Tan'im he met a caravan which carried luxury goods and royal robes and gowns. It was a delivery for the "king", Yazid Ibn Muawiyah from his governor at Yemen. The Imam ordered that all the cargo of the caravan be taken and given to poor people.

He said, "Who is to have this luxury while poor people starve?" Then, he announced to the people and to the workers on the caravan, "Whoever wants to come with us, is welcome, and whoever wants his wages, we will give him his pay, and whoever wants to leave is free to leave."

The Imam and his followers took none of the silk robes and royal gowns woven with gold thread. Those who wanted their pay received their portion and the rest was immediately given to poor people.

Safah

Here, a man was on his way to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage. The man came closer and asked someone, "Whose caravan is this?" And he was informed that it was the camp of Imam Husayn. To himself, he thought that he should pay his greeting of peace to the grandson of the Messenger of God.

The Imam asked him, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am al-Farazdaq, son of Ghalib."

The Imam greeted the famous poet kindly, then after some time, he asked him, "What do you know about the attitude of the people?"

Al-Farazdaq answered, "Their hearts are with you, but their swords are with the Umayyads, and the destination comes from heaven."

Imam said, "You spoke the truth, and everything is up to God. He does what He wishes, and we ask help only from Him." Then, al-Farazdaq asked him some religious questions.

Dhat al-'Irq

The Imam set camp here, and met Bishr Ibn Ghalib. When Bishr met the Imam, he saw him leaning on something, reading a book. Bishr asked him, "O grandson of the Messenger of God! What made you come to this desert?"

The Imam replied, "These people have threatened me and these letters arrived from the people of Kufah whom I know are going to turn against me. If they do so, God will send someone to humiliate them."

The Imam asked him about the people of Kufah and he replied, "Their swords are with the Umayyads and their hearts are with you."

The Imam said, "You are speaking the truth."

Hajir

Here, the Imam set camp. He wrote a letter to Muslim Ibn 'Aqil and gave it to Qays Ibn Mashar al-Saydawi to take to Kufah. In it he wrote, "O people of Kufah! I have received the letter of Muslim Ibn 'Aqil stating that you have gathered to help us and ask for our rights. I ask Almighty God to reward you for this action. For this reason, I left Mecca on Thursday the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah. When my messenger arrives, be united until I reach Kufah in a few days."

Meanwhile, the spies of Yazid were following him. For some time, the Imam stayed at the water of 'Abdullah Ibn Muti' who tried to convince the Imam not to go to Iraq, but the Imam refused.

When Qays Ibn Mashar al-Saydawi reached al-Qadisiyyah, Ibn Ziyad's army captured him. When they tried to search him, he tore the letter apart. He was brought to the governor's castle in Kufah, and Ibn Ziyad asked him, "Why did you tear the letter?"

Qays replied, "So you will not know what was in it."

Ibn Ziyad said, "You have to tell me what was in it!"

Qays refused. Then Ibn Ziyad said, "You have to go on the pulpit and curse Husayn, his brother, and his father. Otherwise, I am going to cut you into pieces!"

Qays went on the pulpit and blessed Amir al-Mu'minin Imam 'Ali and Hasan and Husayn, and cursed Ibn Ziyad and his father and the Ummayyads. Then he said, "O people! I am the messenger of Husayn to you!" He told them where he left the Imam and said, "Go help him!"

Ibn Ziyad ordered for him to be thrown from the top of the castle. He fell and died.

Khuzamiyyah

The Imam set camp and stayed in Khuzamiyyah one day and one night. In the morning, his sister Zaynab came to him and told him that she heard someone reciting this poem:

“O, the eyes try to be firm!

Who would cry after me, on these martyrs?

Cry on those people who are led

By death to the final destination.”

The Imam said to his sister, “Whatever God wishes will happen.”

Zarud

Here, the Imam set camp. Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn al-Bajali was in the area and set camp near him. Zuhayr did not like the Imam and did not want to set camp near him, but, because there was water at Zarud, he had no other choice. At mealtime, a messenger of the Imam came to him and said that the Imam wanted to meet him. Zuhayr hesitated to reply but his wife, Dilham, told him to go to the Imam and see what he wants. Zuhayr went to him and immediately came back to his people with a happy face. He ordered to take his camp closer to the Imam’s camp and told his wife, “Go join your family, I do not want any of you to be harmed in any way because of me.”

Then, he faced his people again and said, “Whoever wants to help the grandson of the Messenger of God should come with me. Otherwise, Goodbye!”

He revealed a conversation he had with Salman al-Farsi long ago. He said, “We went with Salman in Balanjar. Salman told me ‘When you reach Imam Husayn and are able to help him and fight on his side, you should be more than happy to.’”

His wife said, “Whatever you decide, I go with your decision. Please remember me on the Day of Judgment with Imam Husayn’s grandfather.”

Also at this stop, the news of the murder of Muslim and Hani Ibn Urwah reached the Imam. The Imam was deeply upset and many times said, “God bless them.” He and other people cried with the sad news, the ladies wailed, and the whole camp was in mourning.

Then, two of his companions stood and said, “O grandson of the Prophet of God! Please change your decision and do not go to Kufah.”

Others disagreed and said, “We have to continue and die the same way as Muslim and Hani died for the

cause.”

The Imam listened to each conversation and looked deeply into their faces and then said, “There is no goodness in life after these two.” (Muslim and H̄ni)

Tha’labiyyah

Here, someone came and asked Imam Husayn, “What is the Verse of Quran ***‘The day when we shall call all people by their leader.’***¹ about?”

The Imam replied, “A leader who calls to guidance and people obey his call and a leader who calls to misguidance and others follow him. One leads to heaven and the other leads to hell.”

Also at this stop a man from Kufah met with the Imam and the Imam told him, “If I had met you in Medinah, I would have shown you the place of Gabriel in our house. (The window, in the house of the Prophet Muhammad, which was used as an entrance by the angel Gabriel, whenever he came to visit the Prophet) Do you think we do not know what we are doing?”

Another came and said, “O son of the Messenger of God! I see you with only a few followers.”

The Imam pointed to a sack of letters and said, “This is filled with letters.”

Shuquq

Here, the Imam saw a man coming from Kufah and asked him about the people there. The man said, “All of them are against you.”

The Imam said, “Whatever God wishes will happen.”

Zubalah

There was still no reply from his third messenger to Kufah, Qays Ibn Mashar al–Saydawi, but here, at Zubalah, the news reached the Imam that ‘Abdullah Ibn Yaqtar, his second messenger to Kufah, was killed.

When he was captured he was sent to Ibn Ziyad, and Ibn Ziyad ordered him to go to the pulpit and curse the liar son of liars. ‘Abdullah showed his willingness to do so, but when he went up he said, “O, people! I am the messenger of Husayn son of Fatimah, to help him against son of Marjanah! (Ibn Ziyad)”

Ibn Ziyad ordered him to be toppled from the top of the castle. He fell and broke most of his bones, but he was still able to talk. A man named Lakhmi, one of Ibn Ziyad’s soldiers, came and cut off his head. When the people in the street asked him why he did that, he said, “To put him out of his misery.”

After this news, the Imam announced, “Anyone who has joined this caravan for any purpose other than dying for this cause should leave now.” And people left him except for those who chose to stay, his family, and his companions.

Batn al-Aqabah

Here the Imam announced, “I am going to be killed and I saw in a dream that dogs are going to eat my flesh and the worst of those dogs will be an albino dog.”

At this point, ‘Amr Ibn Luthan asked the Imam to return to Medinah. The Imam replied, “I know your opinion but I do not do but what God wishes. Indeed, they are not going to leave me alone until they take out my insides and if they do that, they will be the most humiliated nation in the world.”

Shiraf

Here, the Imam set camp and asked his children to re-supply with water and carry more water than they needed. When he heard one of his followers saying “Allahu Akbar,” the Imam asked him, “Why did you say that?”

He answered, “I see palm trees in the far distance.”

All the people around him said, “There are no palm trees around here in this desert?”

When they looked carefully, they saw spears and horses.

The Imam agreed and said, “That must be it.” Then he asked, “Is there any shelter here?”

They told him there is a place called Dhu-Hasm on the left and that is the best place to take shelter. The Imam went there and set his camp.

Then, at noon, Hurr al-Riyahi, with 1,000 soldiers, appeared in front of the Imam, carrying a message from Ibn Ziyad ordering him to prevent the Imam from returning to Medinah or capture him and bring him to Kufah.

When the Imam saw that the army of Hurr was thirsty, he asked his followers to give them and their horses water. They gave all of them and all of their horses water except for the last animal. The inexperienced rider of this last camel came to the Imam, not knowing how to water his animal, and Imam Husayn told him, “Anikh al-Rawiyah.”

In the Hijazi Arabic dialect, it means “loosen the ropes around the camel’s neck” (so it can drink), but in the Kufi Arabic dialect it means “loosen the neck of the water bag.” So, the soldier loosened the knot around the water bag and the water spilled out.

Then, Imam Husayn did it himself and showed the soldier how to loosen the ropes and let the camel drink. Then, after all of the army and their animals were finished drinking, the Imam stood and said, “I did not come here until all of your letters came to me, and the letters say that you do not have any leader and that you need me to help teach you guidance. If that is still your demand, give me something that shows that you are truthful in your promises, and if you do not like me, I will return to where I came from.”

The soldiers were silent. No one spoke a word. Then, Hajjaj Ibn Masraq made the call to prayer for the Dhuhr –Noon– Prayer. The Imam said to Hurr, “You are the chief of your army. You go and pray with your own people.”

Hurr replied, “No. We pray with your prayer.” and Hurr, with all of his troops, prayed with the Imam.

When the Imam finished the prayer, he stood and said, “O people! Fear God and find the truth and follow it. We are the members of the House of the Prophet. We deserve trust more than those who do injustice. If you do not like us or you ignore our rights or you have changed your minds from whatever you have written to us before, then I will leave you.”

Hurr said, “Written? I do not know what letters you are talking about!” The Imam asked one of his followers to bring two sacks of letters.

Hurr said, “I am not one of these people. I have been ordered not to leave you alone until I bring you back to Kufah to Ibn Ziyad.

The Imam said, “Death is before that.” He turned and told his followers to get ready to ride their horses, but Hurr stopped them from going.

Then, for the first time in his life, the Imam spoke an insult, “Your mother sits mourning you.” Then he said, “What do you want from us?”

Hurr replied, “If anyone beside you had said those words to me, I would have replied the same to him, but I cannot do that to you. However, take a road between you and Kufah, which does not reach Kufah nor goes to Medinah, until I write to Ibn Ziyad and see what his orders are. May God relieve me from this catastrophe.”

Then he said to the Imam, “I bear witness that if you fight, you will be killed.”

The Imam said, “Are you threatening me with death? Are you going to kill me? Are you helping the Messenger of God?”

When Hurr heard this, he turned around and left the Imam. He did not want a confrontation with the Imam.

The Imam's caravan continued in an unknown direction, and Hurr's army followed behind.

Baydhah

Here, the Imam gave a sermon to the people of Hurr:

“O people! The Messenger of God said, ‘Whoever sees an unjust governor who changes the forbidden to allowed and who breaks his promise, who is against the tradition of the Prophets, who acts unjustly and does not do anything against it in action or in words, God will enter him where the unjust person enters.’

Indeed, these people follow Satan and have left the obedience of God. They spread mischief, they abandon all rules, they misuse wealth, and they make the illegal legal and the legal illegal. I deserve this leadership more than anyone else. Your letters came to me and your deputies came to me offering allegiance to me, saying that you will not betray me and that if I lead you, you will succeed. I am Husayn, son of ‘Ali and Fatimah, daughter of the Messenger of God. My soul is with your soul, my family is with your family, and I am one of you. If you do not do so and change your promise and your allegiance to me, that would not be a surprise to me. You have done so before to my father, my brother, and my cousin (Muslim Ibn ‘Aqil). If you do that, you have missed your chance and you have lost your share and whoever breaks his promise he breaks it against himself. Peace be upon you.”

Ruhaymah

Here, a man met the Imam and asked him, “Why did you leave the house of your grandfather? (meaning Medinah)”

The Imam replied, “Indeed, the Umayyads called our most honorable kin bad names, and I was patient. Then, they took my wealth, and I was patient. And they sought my blood and I ran away. Indeed, by God, they are going to kill me. Then, God will humiliate them, making them the most humiliated nation in the world.”

Adhib al-Hajanat

Here, four people from Kufah met the Imam. The Imam asked them about the situation of the people and they told him, “The dignitaries were bought by bribes. As for the common people, their hearts are with you, but their swords are against you.”

They told him how Qays Ibn Mashar al-Saydawi was killed. Then, the Imam recited,

“Among the believers are men who are true to whatever covenant they made with God. Some of them have fulfilled [their covenant], some of them are waiting [to do so], and have not made any

changes [in the religion].”²

Tammah Ibn ‘Uday al-Ta’y said to the Imam, “I saw people before leaving Kufah and asked what the commotion was. They said that they were being recruited and sent to fight against the Imam. I urge you, by God, not to go to them. I do not see anyone with you. I request you to come with us to our mountain called Aja. We were able to isolate ourselves from the kings of Ghassan and Himyar. If you stay with us for ten days, I guarantee you that 20,060 of my tribe, the Tays would follow you and do whatever you order.”

The Imam refused and said, “We have a promise between us and these people and we can not leave until we see the result.”

The Imam thanked him, but refused. Then Tammah asked permission to go by himself to deliver what he has to deliver for his family, and then return to join the Imam’s camp. The Imam allowed him to do so, and he went, but he was too late in his return. On his way, he heard that Imam was killed.

Qasr Bani Maqatil

When the Imam set camp here, he saw another camp already set. He asked about them and they told him it is for ‘Ubaydullah al-Ju’fi. When the Imam sent some of his followers to see him, Ju’fi asked them what they wanted, and the messenger said, “This is a message from Imam Husayn, asking you to help him.”

Ju’fi replied, “I swear by God, I left Kufah only because of what I saw, that people were leaving to fight against him and I knew that he is going to be killed and I am not going to help him. That is why I left Kufah so that I would be safe. I do not want to see him and I do not want him to see me.”

The messengers brought the reply back to Imam Husayn. The Imam got up, and with a group of his followers, went to Ju’fi’s camp. Ju’fi received him well, honored him, and said, “I have not seen anyone of better character or more handsome than Husayn.”

Then, Ju’fi asked the Imam if he used red henna or black dye to dye his beard.

The Imam replied, “O! Aging and gray hair came to me soon.”

When they sat, the Imam said, “Your people have written to me and asked my help and invited me to come to them. Now, it appears that it is not the case. You have sins in your life. Do you wish to erase them by repentance?”

Ju’fi said, “What is that, O son of the Messenger of God!”

The Imam replied, “You help the son of the daughter of the Prophet and fight by his side.”

Ju'fi said, "Indeed, I know that whoever follows you will be happy in the Hereafter, but what can I do to help? I saw no one in Kufah who would help you, and I do not like to die. Therefore, I give you my horses as gifts to you. This horse of mine, which is called Malhaqah, is the best horse to give victory to me, and I was not willing to give it to anybody in my life."

The Imam replied, "If you are not willing to fight with us, we do not need your horses and we do not need you." Then, the Imam quoted, "And I am not one who takes the support of people who are astray."³

The Imam said to Ju'fi "I do not take those who are astray as helpers. Now I will advise you as you have advised me. If you are able to avoid our call and not watch us die, do so. Indeed, whoever hears us and does not help us will go to hell."

Also at this stop, the heads of two other Arab tribes met the Imam. The Imam asked them, "Are you coming to help us?"

They said, "We have children and we have been trusted with the wealth of people and we want to keep their trust."

The Imam said the same to them, "Leave. Do not hear our call for help. Indeed, whoever hears our call for help and does not help us will end up in hell."

At the end of the night, the Imam ordered his followers to leave Qasr Bani Maqatil

Naynawa

When the Imam's caravan came near this place, they saw a man on a horse coming towards them. He was carrying a message from Ibn Ziyad to Hurr.

Hurr came and read the letter to Imam Husayn, "Be firm with Husayn. When you read my letter, do not let him camp anywhere but in the desert where there is no water and no fortification."

The Imam said, "Then, let us go to Nineveh or Ghadariyyah or Shufayyah."

Hurr replied, "I cannot do that because the messenger is a spy on me."

Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn said, "O, grandson of the Messenger of God! To kill these people now is easier than fighting with the reinforcements that will come after them. Let us start fighting and finish them. After these will come people that we will not be able to fight."

The Imam said, "I am not going to start the fighting."

Zuhayr said, "There is a village here on the Euphrates and has a fort and the Euphrates crosses it. Let us go there."

The Imam asked, “What is it called?”

He said, “It’s called Aqr (in Arabic, means ‘the cutting’).”

The Imam said, “I seek refuge with God from Aqr.”

Then, the Imam asked Hurr to let him go a little bit further. Hurr agreed and the Imam’s caravan went with Hurr’s troops following behind until they reached *Karb^{la}*.

- [1.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of al-Israa 17:71
- [2.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of al-Ahz^{ab} 33:23.
- [3.](#) The Holy Qur’an; Sura of al-Kahf 18:51.

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