

## The Events of The 9th of Muharram

### **Ibn Sa'd Advances Against al-Husayn (as)**

[Harith bin Hasirah] reports: “Ibn Sa'd announced after the ‘asr prayers [saying]: “O soldiers of Allah! Get on your mounts and receive the good tidings [of Heaven]!” The soldiers mounted and advanced against [al-Husayn (as) and his companions].

Al-Husayn (as) was [at that time] sitting in front of his tent with his sword on his lap and his head on his knees having a short sleep. His sister, Zainab, heard the clamour [of the approaching soldiers] so she went near her brother and said: “O my brother! Do you not hear the noises that have drawn nearer?!”

So al-Husayn (as) raised his head and said: “I have just seen the Messenger of Allah (S) in my sleep and he said to me: ‘You are coming to us [soon].’ So his sister struck her face and cried out [in grief]: “Woe onto me!” So he said to her: “May you not see any distress O sister. Keep calm, may the All-merciful have mercy on you!”

‘Abbas bin ‘Ali (as) said: “O my brother! The army has come!” So al-Husayn (as) got up and said: “O ‘Abbas! Get on your mount, may I be sacrificed for you –O brother, and go to meet them and ask them: ‘What is the matter with you? What has appeared [appropriate] to you? And what has brought them?’”

So ‘Abbas went to meet them with about twenty horsemen, among whom were Zuhair bin al-Qain and Habib bin Mu‘ahir. ‘Abbas said to them: “What has appeared to you? What do you want?”

They replied: “We have received an order from the governor that we should offer you [an opportunity] to submit to his authority, or else we should force you to do so.”

He said: “Do not hurry until I have gone back to Abu ‘Abdillah and told him what you have said.”

So they stopped and said: “Go to him and inform him, and tell us what he says to you.”

‘Abbas went galloping back to al-Husayn (as) to give him the information. His companions stood [by the

enemy] addressing the people. Habib bin Mu<sup>3</sup>ahir<sup>1</sup> said to Zuhair bin al-Qain: “Talk to this people if you like, or else I shall speak to them.” So Zuhair said to him: “You came up with this [idea], so you be the one to talk to them.”

Habib bin MuZahir told him: “By Allah, the most wretched of the people before Allah tomorrow are a people who shall meet Him while they are guilty of having killed the children, progeny and household of His Prophet (S), and the devout men of this city who strive [in worship] at dawn and who remember Allah much.” [He said this to Zuhair bin al-Qain such that the army could hear him, and among those who heard was ‘Azarah bin Qais].

‘Azarah bin Qais<sup>2</sup> said to him: “You are asserting purity for yourself!”

So Zuhair replied him: “O ‘Azarah! Allah has indeed purified and guided his soul. Fear Allah O ‘Azarah; I am [sincerely] advising you. I beseech you by Allah, O ‘Azarah, not to be of those who help the misled in killing the pure souls!”

‘Azarah said: “O Zuhair! We had never been –in our opinion– among the followers of the people of this House. Rather, you were a partisan of ‘Uthman (*‘uthmani*).”<sup>3</sup>

Zuhair answered: “Have you still not come to know –after seeing my stand– that I am one of them! By Allah! I never wrote to [al-Husayn], nor did I send to him any messenger, nor did I promise him my support. But it was the way that brought us together. When I saw [al-Husayn], he made me recall the Messenger of Allah (S) and his position to him. So I knew the enemy he is going to face, that is your party. So I decided to help him and be in his party and lay down my life for him, in defence of those rights of Allah and His Prophet (S) which have been violated by you.”

When ‘Abbas bin ‘Ali came to al-Husayn (as) with the proposal of ‘Umar bin Sa‘d, he said to [‘Abbas]: “Go back to them and if you can, delay them until the morning and keep them away from us this evening. Perhaps we may [be able to] spend the night praying to our Lord, supplicating to him and seeking his forgiveness; for he knows that I have always loved praying to Him, reciting His Book, [making] many invocations and seeking His forgiveness.”

So ‘Abbas bin ‘Ali (as) galloped his horse and went back to them and said: “O people! Abu ‘Abdillah is requesting you to grant him respite for tonight, so that he may consider the matter; for there has not taken place any discussion [so far] between you and him concerning this [proposal]. So we shall now meet in the morning, if Allah wills. [Either] we would give consent to it and do what you want from us and are insisting upon; or we would dislike it and therefore reject it.”

By doing so [al-Husayn (as)] intended to keep them away that night so that he might [have the opportunity to] give his instructions and make his will to his family.

‘Umar bin Sa‘d said: “O Shamir! What do you think?”

He said: “It is up to you. You are the commander and the decision lies with you.”

[‘Umar] said: “I wish I had not been there!” He then turned to his army and said: “What is your opinion?”

‘Amru bin al-Hajjaj bin Salamah al-Zubaidi said: “Glory be to Allah! By Allah! [Even] if they were from Dailam and had asked from you such [a thing], it would have been incumbent on you to grant them their demand.”

Qais bin Ash’ath<sup>4</sup> said: “Grant them their request. I swear by my life that they are definitely going to fight you tomorrow morning!”

[Ibn Sa’d] said: “By Allah, if I knew that they are going to do so, I would not have left them for tonight.”<sup>5</sup>

‘Ali bin al-Husayn (as) says: “Then a messenger came to us from ‘Umar bin Sa’d and stood at a point where he could be heard. He said: ‘We have granted you a day until tomorrow. If you surrendered, we will send you to our governor, ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyad. But if you refused to do so, then we are not going to leave you!’”<sup>6</sup>

1. We mentioned him when discussing those among the followers of the Imam (as) who wrote to him from Kufah.

2. We have given his biography when mentioning those among the hypocrites of Kufah who had written to the Imam (as).

3. This is the first report related to the events of Karbala’ in which this title has been attributed to Zuhair bin al-Qain. This is the first title that caused disunity among the Muslims in their differences about whether ‘Uthman was on the right or wrong. Accordingly, one who followed ‘Ali (as) was called ‘alawi or shi’i, while the one who followed ‘Uthman and believed that he was on the right and was killed unjustly, came to be known as ‘uthmani.

4. Al-Tabari: On the day of ‘Ashura’ he was leading the quarter of Kindah and Rabi’ah (5:422). He was the one who plundered the Imam’s silken cloak and came to be known after that as ‘Qais of the cloak’ (5:453). He was with Shamir bin Dhi al-Jaushan, ‘Amru bin al-Hajjaj and ‘Azarah bin Qais in carrying the heads of the companions of the Imam (as) to Ibn Ziyad in Kufah (5:456). He was leading the Kindah who were carrying thirteen of these heads (5:468). Ibn al-Ash’ath is the brother of Muhammad bin Ash’ath –the assassin of Muslim, and the brother of Ja’dah –the killer of al-Hasan (as).

5. Al-Tabari (5:415): “[I narrate] on the authority of Harith bin Hasirah, from Sharik al-Amiri who said...” See also al-Irshad (pg.230).

6. Al-Tabari (5:417): “Harith bin Hasirah has related to me from ‘Abdullah bin Sharik al-Amiri, who reported from ‘Ali bin al-Husayn (as) that...”

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