

The First Journey – Madina to Mecca

After saying good-bye to the graves of his grand-father and his mother, Imam Husayn went to Bibi Zainab's house. Bibi Zainab was Imam's sister and was married to their cousin Hazrat Abdullah ibn Ja'far ibn Abu Taalib. After exchanging greetings with Hazrat Abdullah, Imam Husayn advised his cousin of what had happened and what he had decided. Hazrat Abdullah tried to persuade Imam not to leave Madina but Imam insisted that it was the only way to save Islam. He then requested Hazrat Abdullah to permit Bibi Zainab to accompany him. Hazrat Abdullah looked at his wife and said, "Bismillah!" Bibi Zainab said farewell to her husband and her sons Aun and Muhammad. The brother and sister walked to Imam's house.

When all the men who had accompanied Imam Husayn to the Governor's palace got back, the ladies came to know about the journey. Hazrat Abbas, Hazrat Ali Akbar, Hazrat Qasim and all the young men got busy with the preparations. Bibi Fatimah Soghra watched. She was lying in bed, too ill even to get up. No one was saying anything about her going. She decided to wait till her father's return.

Bibi Fatimah Soghra was Imam Husayn's daughter. She was about eight years old. She lay on bed praying that her father would agree to take her. How could she possibly live alone? How could she survive without Asghar? Ever since he was born she spent all her time next to Asghar's little bed playing with him. Now he had begun to recognize faces and smiled whenever he saw Soghra. Soon he would be talking and she was anxious to hear him call out her name. "Ya Allah!", Soghra murmured, "I hope I would not be left alone in Madina!"

Just then she heard her father's foot-steps. She quickly wiped away the tears from her eyes, propped herself into a sitting position and put on a brave smile to convince her father that she was well enough to travel.

Imam Husayn sat on the bed, put his hand on Soghra's head and said, "When you were born, my dear. I named you after my mother Fatimah Zahra. You know that your grand mother was also known as Saabira, which means the patient one. I want you also to be a saabira and agree to stay in Madina with Ummul Baneen and Umme Salmah. Will you do that?"

What could Soghra say? She nodded her head fighting back her tears. Imam kissed her and left the room.

Whenever the children of the Ahlul Bait were troubled by any thing, they took their problem to Hazrat Abbas. Soghra thought of her dear uncle, smiled hopefully, and sent for Abbas. Surely, he would find a way to solve her problem?

Abbas came in. He was accompanied by Hazrat Ali Akbar.

Soghra looked at them and said, "I know how much you two love me. How can you then leave me and go away? If I die who will bury me?" They explained her that she was too ill to travel and promised her that they would come and fetch her as soon as they had settled some where.

Bibi Fatimah Soghra said, "I will accept that as I do not wish to disobey my father. I will be brave and stay here." She looked lovingly at her brother and added, "Ali Akbar, promise me one thing though. When after you get married and return to Madina, and find Soghra gone, promise that you and your bride will visit my grave and recite Fatiha."

Akbar and Abbas could not control their tears as they said good bye.

At dawn the caravan departed. Supported by Umme Salmah on one side and Ummul Baneen on the other, Soghra waved good-bye. It was difficult to part with Asghar and both Imam Husayn and Bibi Rubaab had to hold and console Soghra as she kissed her little brother good-bye.

The story of Karbala' is a tale of five journeys of tears. This was the first journey. From Madina to Mecca. Each journey had its hero and heroine. The hero of this first journey was Imam Husayn and the heroine was the memory of Bibi Fatimah Soghra, his beloved daughter whom he had left behind. Until they turned the corner, Imam kept looking back. He would bravely smile and wave to his daughter. Hazrat Ali Akbar of course could not even do that because he was unable to control his tears. As soon as they were out of sight, Imam Husayn stopped his horse and began to sob! It is always so very difficult and so very sad for a parent and child to part!

Days passed into months. Soghra would spend her days in the mosque or visiting Ummul Baneen, Hazrat Abbas's mother.

Ramadhan passed. Eid was a difficult day for Soghra. She kept on thinking of Asghar, and Akbar and her darling sister Bibi Sakina. Then came Muharram. For some reason Soghra's restlessness increased. One night she got up. She felt a little thirsty. She filled a cup with water. As she brought the cup to her lips, Soghra stared at the water, and screamed. The cup fell out of her hands. Umme Salmah came running."What is it, Soghra?" Soghra was shaking with fear. She ran into the arms of Umme Salmah."O grand-mother!" she cried, pointing at the cup, "As I lifted the cup to my mouth, I saw Ali Asghar's reflection in the water. I saw him spread out his little arms towards me. And then I heard him speak. He was saying, 'Al atash, Ya Ukhti Fatimah.'" (I am thirsty, O my sister Fatimaah!!) This was the night of 9th Muharram, Shab al-Ashura!!

Hazrat Muslim

Imam Husayn's caravan left Madina on 28th Rajab, 60 A.H. and reached Mecca on the fourth of Shabaan. Imam had not yet made up his mind on where to go. For the time being he decided to stay in Mecca at least until the month of Dhul-Hajj and perform the pilgrimage.

The people of Kufa in Iraq heard of what had happened in Madina. Kufa was an important Shiah centre. The Shiahs there had long suffered under Muawiya. They feared even greater sufferings under Yazid. They felt that slowly Islam would be totally destroyed by the greed for power and glory of these two men. They were anxious to preserve the teachings of the Holy Prophet. They needed an Imam who would teach the tafseer of the Holy quraan and relate to them the true sayings, ahaadees, of the Holy Prophet. They held a meeting in the house of Sulayman bin Surad and decided to write a letter to Imam Husayn inviting him. In this letter they wrote: "We invite you to come to Kufa as we have no Imam to guide us. Through you Allah will unite us on the path of truth."

A messenger took the letter to Mecca and gave it to Imam Husayn. A few days later the people of Kufa sent an emissary, a special messenger, to Imam to persuade him to go to Kufa. His name was Qais ibn Musheer as-Saydawi.

There followed hundreds of other letters and many special emissaries from the people of Kufa to Imam Husayn. The Governor in Kufa was a man called Nu'amaan bin Basheer. Although he was a follower of Muawiya and Yazid, he was not by nature a cruel man. The people of Kufa believed that Imam would be safe in Kufa.

When Imam Husayn received so many petitions and messages from Kufa he decided to send Hazrat Muslim as his emissary to Kufa to study the situation there and report to Imam. Imam would go only if there would be no danger to the people of Kufa or to Imam or any of his companions or family.

He wrote a letter to the people of Kufa and gave it to Hazrat Muslim. In this letter Imam said, "I am sending my cousin and one of the most trusted ones from my family, Muslim ibn Aqeel, to report to me about your affairs. If his report agrees with what you have written I will soon be with you. You must be clear of the fact that the Imam is only one who follows the book of Allah, and serves Allah in all matters and affairs with justice, honesty and truth."

Who was Muslim ibn Aqeel? He was the son of Aqeel ibn Abu Taalib. He was a famous warrior. He married Ruqayya binti Ali, Imam's sister through another mother. We know of his four children. Abdullah aged about 15 years, Muhammad who was about ten years old, Ibraheem who was eight and young Ruqayya who was just five or six. All these children had travelled with their parents and were in Mecca.

As Hazrat Muslim was preparing for the journey, Imam Husayn went to him and said: "Muslim, the whole world knows that you are one of the bravest warriors. It is just possible that seeing you in Kufa some

people may think that our intention is to fight Yazid. Take your two sons Muhammad and Ibraheem with you. When they see you with such young children, they will know that our intentions are peaceful.”

Hazrat Muslim and his two sons said good-bye to all and left Mecca. Their journey through the desert in the heat of summer was very difficult.

They arrived in Kufa towards the end of Dhul Qaad. They were received extremely well by the people of Kufa. Very soon more than eighteen thousand people appeared before Hazrat Muslim and pledged their allegiance to Imam Husayn as their Imam.

Hazrat Muslim reported to Imam Husayn that most of the people in Kufa were ready to receive him as their Imam and advised that Imam should proceed to Kufa. Amongst the people of Kufa there were many spies employed by Yazid to report to him direct. When Yazid heard from them of the invitations to Imam Husayn and the arrival in Kufa of Hazrat Muslim he was filled with fury. He sent a message to his Governor in Basrah, Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, to go to Kufa and take over the position of Nu'amaan ibn Basheer. Ibn Ziyad was also told to arrest Muslim and kill him and do all that was necessary to suppress the Shiah in Kufa.

Ibn Ziyad was a cruel and unjust man. He arrived in Kufa on the evening of 2nd Dhul Hajj. On the following day he went to the mosque and addressed the people of Kufa. He first announced his appointment as Yazid's governor. He then threatened any one who was engaged in any activity against the government with immediate death, and ordered them to surrender Hazrat Muslim to him.

Ibn Ziyad sealed Kufa in such a way that no one could go in or out of the city without the governor's permission.

At this time Hazrat Muslim was staying with Al Mukhtar. At the invitation of Hani bin Urwah, another leading member of the Shiah community, he moved to Hani's house. This was done secretly and except for a few people no one knew where Hazrat Muslim was. Through a spy who pretended to be a Shiah, Ibn Ziyad found out where Hazrat Muslim was. Hani was arrested and thrown into prison. Not wishing to endanger the lives of his friends, Hazrat Muslim and his two sons left Hani's house. He left the children with Qadhi Shurayb, a judge, and went into the desert to try and get back to Imam Husayn to warn him not to go to Kufa. This was the seventh of Dhul Hajj. That whole day and the following day Hazrat Muslim tried to get out of the city. He found all the exits sealed and guarded by Ibn Ziyad Soldiers.

On the eighth, late in the evening, tired, hungry and exhausted, Hazrat Muslim knocked at the door of a house on the outskirts of the city. A lady opened the door. Hazrat Muslim requested for a little water to quench his thirst. The lady gave him water. When she learnt who he was, she invited him in and offered him shelter for the night. This lady was called Tau'aa. She gave Hazrat Muslim some food and water and took him to a room where he might spend the night.

Late that night Tau'aa's son came home. When he learnt that the man Ibn Ziyad was looking for was in

his mother's house, he felt that he would be rewarded by the governor if he got Hazrat Muslim arrested. Unknown to his mother he slipped out in the darkness of the night and gave the information to a captain in Ibn Ziyad's army. Early the next morning, five hundred soldiers surrounded the house of Tau'aa and demanded Hazrat Muslim's surrender. Hazrat Muslim came out holding his sword. Three times he drove the enemy away. Twice Ibn Ziyad had to send in reinforcements.

While Hazrat Muslim was fighting, some soldiers went up the rooftops and began throwing stones and lighting torches at him. Others dug a trench in the path of Hazrat Muslim and covered it with grass. Although badly wounded and totally exhausted, Hazrat Muslim kept on fighting. Then he fell into the trench. More than fifty soldiers pounced upon him and chained him. He was dragged to the court of Ibn Ziyad.

Ibn Ziyad told Hazrat Muslim that he would be killed and asked him if he had any last wishes. Hazrat Muslim said: "I owe a debt which should be discharged by selling off my sword and armour. Secondly I want my body to be given a proper burial. Thirdly I want a message sent to Imam Husayn advising him not to come to Kufa." Ibn Ziyad agreed to the first request but refused to do anything about the second and third requests. He then ordered Hazrat Muslim to be taken to the roof of the palace to be executed and his body thrown to the ground.

Hazrat Muslim was calm and composed as he was dragged up the steps. He was reciting "Allahu Akbar" until the last moment. Then there was an absolute silence followed by a thud as Hazrat Muslim's body fell to the ground.

This was on 9th Dhul Hajj. Immediately after Hazrat Muslim was killed, Hani bin Urwah was dragged to the roof top and executed.

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/journey-tears/first-journey-madina-mecca#comment-0>