

Home > Nafasul Mahmum, Relating to the heart rending tragedy of Karbala' > Part 1: On what befell Imam Husayn (a.s.) before Yazid bin Mu'awiyah claimed allegiance from him, until his Martyrdom > The governor of Madina and Imam Husayn (a.s.)

The governor of Madina and Imam Husayn (a.s.)

(Kamil) When Yazid had taken the oath of allegiance for the Caliphate from the people, he wrote a letter to Waleed bin Utba informing him of the death of Mu'awiyah. In a short letter he wrote, "Now then! Ask for the oath of allegiance from Husayn, Abdullah bin Umar and Abdullah bin Zubayr, and do not give them respite until they do so."

When Waleed read about the death of Mu'awiyah, he was alarmed and the news disturbed him, thus reluctantly he summoned Marwan bin Hakam. Marwan was the governor of Madina before Waleed, and hence when Waleed became the governor, he hated and abused him while separating himself from him for a long time until the news of the death of Mu'awiyah and the demand of allegiance from the people reached him. This being difficult for him, he called for Marwan.

When Marwan came, Waleed read the contents of the letter to him. When Marwan heard it he recited "Verily we are Allah's and verily unto Him shall we return", and he prayed for blessings to be bestowed upon Mu'awiyah. When Waleed asked his advice regarding the issue, Marwan replied, "In my opinion, before announcing the death of Mu'awiyah, summon these persons this very moment (and ask them to swear the oath of allegiance for Yazid). If they refuse, cut off their necks before they learn about Mu'awiyah's death. For if they become slightly aware of this, each one of them will go away to different places and start revolting, and shall claim themselves eligible for the Caliphate."

Waleed called for Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Usman, who was just a lad, to summon Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Abdullah bin Zubayr to meet him. It was a time when Waleed usually did not meet anyone. Abdullah bin 'Amr saw them seated in the Mosque and conveyed Waleed's message to meet them. They told him to go back and that they would soon follow him. Abdullah bin Zubayr turned towards Imam Husayn (a.s.) and said, "In your opinion what is the reason for Waleed to call us to meet him at this unusual hour"? Imam replied, "I presume that their leader of rebels has died and he has called us to swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid before the news spreads among other people." Abdullah too consented to it and asked as to what he would do. Imam replied that he would go to meet Waleed accompanied by some

youths. (Irshad)

Then he called for a group from among his relatives and said,

“Lift up your arms, for Waleed has called me at this hour and might force me to do that which I detest. I do not trust him, thus remain with me. When I go inside to meet him, you all sit at the door, and when you hear my voice raised, barge inside to defend me.”

When Imam came to Waleed, he saw Marwan sitting with him. Waleed gave the news of the death of Mu’awiyah to Imam Husayn (a.s.), and he recited: “Verily we are Allah’s and verily unto Him shall we return.” Then Waleed read the letter of Yazid and his order to get the pledge of allegiance for him. Imam replied,

“I understand that you shall not agree if I swear the oath of allegiance in secrecy and privately until and unless I do so publicly so that people may be informed about it.”

Waleed replied in the affirmative. Imam Husayn (a.s.) said,

“In that case wait until dawn.”

Waleed replied, “As you desire. You may go in Allah’s refuge, until you come to me with the people.” Marwan said, “If Husayn goes away from your midst without swearing the oath of allegiance, you will never have the power to ask the allegiance again until much bloodshed between him and you. Hence imprison him till he swears the oath of allegiance, or else cut off his head.” Imam Husayn (a.s.) arose and said,

“O son of Zarqa! Will you dare to kill me? Verily you have lied and have sinned.”

Saying this Imam Husayn (a.s.) came outside and returned back with his men to his house. Then Marwan turned towards Waleed and said, “You disobeyed me? By Allah! You will never be able to lay your hands upon him.” Waleed replied, “Woe be to your soul which is your own enemy O Marwan! You have advised me regarding that which would ruin my religion. By Allah! I do not like to acquire the wealth and dominion over which the sun rises and sets if it involved the killing of Husayn. Glory be to Allah! I should kill Husayn simply because he refused to swear the oath of allegiance? By Allah! I am convinced that whoever is associated with the killing of Husayn, on the day of Qiyamah he (his deeds) will weigh less in scales near Allah.” Marwan said, “If this is what you think, then whatever you did is quite right.” Then he returned back displeased with him.

Ibn Shahr Aashob writes in Manaqib that when Imam Husayn (a.s.) went to meet Waleed and read the contents of the letter, he said that he would not swear the oath of allegiance (bay’ah). Marwan, who was present there said, “Swear the oath of allegiance to the Commander of the faithful (meaning Yazid).” Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied,

“Woe to you! Verily you have attributed falsehood to the believers. Who has made him the Commander of the faithful”?

Hearing this Marwan arose and unsheathed his sword and said, “Call the executioner and tell to behead him before he leaves from here, and the responsibility of his blood will be on my neck.” When voices were raised, nineteen men from among the family of Imam barged in with daggers and Imam Husayn (a.s.) went away with them.

When this news reached Yazid, he deposed Waleed and appointed Marwan as the governor of Madina. After this Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Abdullah bin Zubayr left for Makkah, and Abdul Rahman bin Abu Bakr and Abdullah bin Umar were left untouched.²

As regards Abdullah ibn Zubayr, when he received Waleed’s message he replied that he would soon come, then he went to his house and hid himself. Waleed followed him thereafter and saw that he had gathered his friends and had segregated himself. Waleed pressed him but Abdullah said that he wanted respite to think over. Then Waleed sent his slaves to Abdullah who went and abused him saying, “You will have to come to us or else he will slay you.” Abdullah said, “I am wary because of your compulsion. Give me respite, so that I may dispatch one of my men to the governor to ask what he wants from me.”

Then he sent his brother Ja’far bin Zubayr. Ja’far went to Waleed and said, “May Allah’s mercy be upon you! Lift your hands off Abdullah for you have frightened him. Tomorrow he will come to you Allah willing, hence command your envoys to return back.” Waleed sent someone to call back his messengers who returned back. On the same night Abdullah, accompanied by his brother Ja’far, left for Makkah taking the road of Fara’, and no one else accompanied them.

(Irshad) In the morning when Waleed was informed about his flight, he sent a slave of Bani Umayyah with eighty horsemen, who galloped behind him, but could not trace him hence returned back. And that day they remained busy in the affair of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and dispensed with him until the night approached.

In the morning Imam Husayn (a.s.) came out of his house to hear the reports from the people, when he came across Marwan. Marwan said, “O Aba Abdillah! I desire your goodwill, thus accept what I say until you reach the road of righteousness.” Imam told him to say what he wanted to. Marwan replied, “I say that you swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid, for it will be better for your life of this world and the hereafter.” Imam Husayn replied,

“Verily we are Allah’s and verily unto Him shall we return. Peace upon Islam if the nation gets trapped in the leadership of Yazid, for I have heard my Grandfather say that Caliphate is forbidden upon the children of Abu Sufyan.”

Thus they started talking to each other and their correspondence increased, in the end Marwan was offended and left.

On the same day Waleed sent some people to the presence of Imam Husayn (a.s.) so that he may come to swear the oath of allegiance. Imam replied,

“Let morning dawn and we shall see and you too shall see.”

When they heard this they did not force him and returned back. On the same night he left from Madina, and it was the night of twenty-eighth of the month of Rajab. He left accompanied by his sons, brothers, nephews and his family members except Muhammad ibn Hanafiyah. Muhammad was not aware as to where he would go and hence said,

“O brother! You are most dear and beloved near me and hence you are most worthy for the gift of advice. Keep away from Yazid bin Mu’awiyah and from the renowned cities as far as you can. Scatter your messengers around and invite people towards yourself. If people obey your command and swear fealty to you, offer Praise to the Almighty, and if they leave you and gather around someone else, your intellect and religion will not be lessened. And your valor and mercy will not diminish. I fear lest you go to a renowned town wherein a group of people supports you while the others may rebel and thus you may fall prey to their lances. At that time, the one who is the best person among all the people with regard to himself and his parents, his blood may spill and his family be humiliated.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied,

“O dear brother! Where should I go to”?

Muhammad replied,

“Go to Makkah, and halt there. If you find relief, settle there for that is what you seek. And if the climate does not suit you, go towards Yemen. If you find safety therein, stay or else take refuge in the deserts and mountains. Then go from one place to another until you find out the position of the affairs of the people. At that moment your decision will be the best opinion.”

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied,

“O brother! You have advised rightly and I wish that your advise may be firm and triumphant.”

Then he went to the Mosque and recited the following couplets of Yazid bin Mufarri’:

“Neither will I offend the grazing cattle in the morning, nor shall I be called Yazid. There will never come the day when I will yield submissively, and death watches me to back off.”

1. Amma Ba’ad: A formulary phrase linking introduction and actual subject of a book, letter or speech

2. As regards Marwan the son of Hakam bin As, his animosity towards Prophet Muhammad (S) is quite renowned. The Holy Prophet (S) had banished Hakam bin Aas from Madina due to his rancor against Islam along with his son Marwan (Ref. Tareekh – Abul Fida, Milal wan Nihal – Shahrestani, Ma’arif – Ibn Qutaybah Page 94, Isti’ab – Ibn Abdul Birr Page

118–119, Isabah – Ibn Hajar Vol 1: Page 344, Riyazun Nazarah – Muhibuddin Tabari Vol 2: Page 143).

Thus Marwan was often addressed as “Tareed ibn Tareed” (the exiled and son of the exiled). When Usman bin Affan ascended the Caliphate, he called both of them back, being himself from the Bani Umayyah, and presented them with lavish gifts and went to the extent of marrying one of his daughters to Marwan. Marwan’s hatred towards the Prophet’s Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) came to light when Imam Hasan (a.s.) was martyred and his body was brought to the grave of the Holy Prophet (S) to be buried along side him. It was Marwan, who along with the other Bani Umayyah objected strongly against doing so.

He started reciting: “O Lord! Battle is better than ease. Should Usman be buried in the outskirts of Madina and Hasan be buried along side the Prophet? That will never be while I carry a sword.” After which arrows were shot at the body of Imam Hasan (a.s.) and he had to be buried, in accordance to his will, at Jannatul Baqi’ (Ref. Rawzatus Safa – Muhammad bin Khawind Shah Vol 3: Page 7, Tareekh – Abul Fida Vol 1: Page 183, Rawzatul Manazir – Ibn Shahnah Vol 2: Page 133, Tareekhe Kamil – Ibn Aseer Vol 3: Page 182).

Marwan’s grandmother Zarqa, the daughter of Wahab, was a renowned prostitute (Ref. Kitaban Niza wat Taqasum, Page 20 – Ahmad bin Ali Maqrizi) In the above episode Imam Husayn (a.s.) refers to him saying “O son of Zarqa” thus announcing his ignoble descent.

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/sw/node/20917>