

The Second Journey – Mecca to Karbala’

At the same time as Yazid sent Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad as his governor to Kufa to kill Hazrat Muslim and establish a reign of terror there, he sent his agents to Mecca to murder Imam Husayn during the Hajj season in such a way that no one would suspect him of having got the Imam killed.

As the pilgrimage season grew nearer Hazrat Abdullah ibn Ja’far Tayyar came to Mecca with his two sons, Aun and Muhammad. Imam had by this time received the message sent by Hazrat Muslim with Qais ibn Musheer, and made up his mind to go to Kufa after performing pilgrimage. Hazrat Abdullah tried to persuade Imam not to go to Kufa as he felt that Yazid would never let Imam settle there. Imam responded that as the people of Kufa had invited him to go to them as their Imam it was his duty to go.

When Hazrat Abdullah saw that the Imam was adamant, he gave the hands of his two sons into the hand of Imam saying, “Accept my sons in your service. One will serve you as Zainab’s representative and the other as mine.”

Thousands of people from everywhere poured into Mecca for Hajj. Amongst them were the assassins sent by Yazid. Imam Husayn came to learn about Yazid’s plot. He did not wish the House of Allah to be turned into a battlefield. Imam decided to leave Mecca without performing pilgrimage.

On the eighth of Dhul-Hajj, the very day on which Hazrat Muslim was murdered in Kufa, Imam Husayn’s caravan left Mecca. Our Imam’s heart was filled with mixed feelings. He was sad at being forced to leave Kaaba without performing Hajj. At the same time Hazrat Muslim had favourably reported on the situation in Kufa. So at least there would be a sanctuary for Imam there.

So began the second journey of tears. The hero of this journey was Hazrat Abbas and the heroine was Bibi Sakina.

Let us look at this caravan as it travels towards Iraq. At the head of the caravan is Hazrat Abbas carrying the ‘alam. Next is Imam Husayn surrounded by all his companions. In this group we find Qais ibn Musheer. He is accompanying Imam to his home town. How proud he would feel entering Kufa with the grand-son of the Holy Prophet! He smiles at the thought. Then come the camels carrying the mehmils (palanquins or litters) in which all the ladies are. Behind the mehmils, forming, the a rear guard, are

Hazrat Ali Akbar, Hazrat Qasim, Aun, Muhammad and the other young men of Banu Hashim.

Hazrat Abbas can be seen riding up and down the caravan to make sure that every one is comfortable. He often stops by the Mehmil carrying Bibi Sakina to make sure that she had enough water and food. He inquires of her how Asghar is. If there is anything anyone wants, Hazrat Abbas rushes to fetch it. Bibi Sakina is so very proud of her uncle Abbas. Every one knew that Bibi Sakina was the apple of the eye of Hazrat Abbas. When any child in the caravan needed anything he or she would tell Bibi Sakina. Bibi Sakina would speak to Hazrat Abbas and the wish of that child would be fulfilled immediately. There were about fifty children in the caravan and the four year old Bibi Sakina was an important link between them and Hazrat Abbas.

The caravan came to a small oasis called al-Thalabiya. It was decided to stop there for the night. This was the sixth stop of the journey. Qais ibn Musheer was no longer with Imam Husayn as he had already left for Kufa carrying Imam's letter announcing his imminent arrival.

Tents were pitched. Imam led maghrib prayers. As the evening meal was being prepared, he heard that two travellers from Kufa were in the settlement. He invited them over. He questioned them about the conditions in Kufa. The travellers described how the city had been placed under a total blockade. Imam asked his two guests about Hazrat Muslim.

The travellers remained quiet, their faces reflecting their sadness. Imam asked them again. With tears flowing down their beards the travellers reported of the death of Hazrat Muslim and the brutal way he had been killed. Imam summoned Hazrat Abbas and asked him to look after the guests. Slowly he made his way to Bibi Zainab's camp. Putting his hand on her shoulder, he said, "Dear sister, your mission has begun. Go and console our sister Ruqayya. She is now a widow! But first send Muslim's daughter to me."

Young Ruqayya binti Muslim entered the tent. She was accompanied by Bibi Sakina. Imam took the orphan girl into his arms. Kissed her on her cheeks, Then he put his hand on her head and kissed her again. The young girl looked at Imam Husayn fearfully and said, "Uncle you are treating me as an orphan should be treated in Islam. Tell me, what has happened. Is my father well?" Imam could not speak. Tears rolled down his eyes. Bibi Sakina stepped forward. Yes, Bibi Sakina! The heroine of this journey! She stepped forward and embraced her cousin and lovingly offered her condolences!!!

Qais Ibn Musheer

Qais ibn Musheer was a leading member of the Shiah community in Kufa. He had been sent by the people of Kufa to persuade Imam Husayn to accept the invitation to go to Kufa as their Imam. It was upon his arrival in Mecca that Imam began to seriously consider going to Kufa and sent Hazrat Muslim as his envoy to study the situation there and report to Imam. He rode to Kufa with Hazrat Muslim and brought back to the Imam Hazrat Muslim's message of the sincerity of the people of Kufa.

Qais ibn Musheer decided to stay on with Imam so that he could proudly ride into Kufa with the grand son of the Holy Prophet. Imam Husayn was, however, forced to leave Mecca before he could perform Hajj. The caravan left Mecca on the eighth Dhul Hajj. When they reached the fourth stop of the journey, a settlement called al-Haajir, Imam Husayn decided to send a letter to the people of Kufa telling them of his departure from Mecca and that he would shortly arrive in Kufa. He gave this letter to Qais and asked him to take it to Kufa. This was before Imam had heard of the death of Hazrat Muslim.

Qais was proud to be Imam's messenger. Indeed he is known in history as **Safeeratul Husayn Ibn Ali**, the ambassador of Imam Husayn. He galloped towards Kufa. When he reached al-Qadassiya, on the outskirts of Kufa he was astonished to see a large garrison of soldiers guarding the borders of the city. He suspected some thing was wrong. He hid behind the bushes. At night he visited some bedouins who were camping around. From them he learnt of the arrival of Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad as the new Governor, and of the efforts being made by him to capture Hazrat Muslim.

Qais was in a dilemma. Should he rush back to Imam Husayn to advise him of the danger or should he try to get into Kufa and help Hazrat Muslim? He spent the night trying to gather more information from the bedouins. Qais learnt of how ibn Ziyad had spread terror in the city and how he had isolated Hazrat Muslim. He also learnt that the blockade was being strictly enforced and it was virtually impossible to get into Kufa without being caught. Qais was anxious to learn of how Hazrat Muslim was but the bedouins did not know much about him. In fact it was on that very morning that Hazrat Muslim had been killed.

Thinking that he might be some help to Hazrat Muslim, Qais decided to get into Kufa. He waited until sunset. Carefully, hiding himself from the soldiers posted to guard the borders, Qais tried to make his way into Kufa. He was spotted by some soldiers. Qais fought them bravely. Soon, however, ibn al-Numayr, the commander of al-Qadassiya came to the scene with a large number of soldiers. Qais was captured and chained. In the morning he was taken before ibn Ziyad.

Ibn Ziyad promised Qais to spare his life if he would mount the minbar and curse Imam Husayn. Qais mounted the minbar and in a loud voice said: "O people of Kufa I am the messenger of Imam Husayn ibn Ali. I declare before you that Husayn, the grand-son of our Holy Prophet is the best man alive today."

Saying this Qais looked at ibn Ziyad defiantly. He then called for the curse of Allah upon ibn Ziyad and Yazid, and called for Allah's blessings upon Hazrat Ali and Imam Husayn. Ibn Ziyad was beside himself with anger. He ordered Qais to be taken to the roof of the palace and thrown to the ground. As he mounted the steps, there was a smile on the lips of Qais. As he was being pushed off the roof Qais cried out: "My salaams to you O my master Husayn ibn Ali!"

Tiflaan al-Muslim

Hazrat Muslim had taken with him his two sons Muhammad and Ibraheem. After Hazrat Muslim was

killed, Muhammad and Ibraheem were also arrested and put into a dungeon. It is said that Muhammad was just eight years old and Ibraheem was ten years old.

On the 20th of Dhul-Hajj in 60 Hijrah, when the jailer came to give the children their evening meal, he saw them saying their prayers. The jailer waited. When the boys had finished their prayers, he asked them who they were. When the jailer learnt that they were the sons of Muslim Ibn Aqeel and the grandsons of Hazrat Ali, he let them escape. The children came out of the prison.

It was a dark night. Their first thought was to go to Imam Husayn and warn him not to go to Kufa. Everywhere they went, they found the roads blocked by Ibn Ziyad soldiers. It was impossible to get out of Kufa. Now it was almost day-break. Where could these two young boys go?

They found themselves by the side of the river Euphrates. They drank some water from the river and then went up a tree to hide for the day. Just then a woman came to the river to get water. She saw the two young boys and asked them who they were. Ibraheem said, "We are two orphans, could you please leave us alone and not tell any one that you have seen us?" The woman asked them to accompany her to her mistress who would help them.

The woman's mistress was a kind lady. After talking to the boys for a while she realized who they were. She gave them food and said to them, "You can spend the day here and I will try to help you. Unfortunately my husband Harith is working for Ibn Ziyad. He is out at the moment. You can rest in the spare room but make no noise otherwise when he comes back, he will find out you are here."

The children said their prayers and went to sleep. In the evening Muhammad woke up and started crying. Ibraheem asked him why he was crying. Muhammad said "I saw our father in a dream.

He was calling out for us." Ibraheem said, "Brother, be patient. I also saw our father in a dream beckoning us to him." They both started weeping. Harith, who had come back heard the children crying. He opened the door and asked the children who they were. On learning they were the sons of Muslim Ibn Aqeel, he tied both the boys to a pillar. Harith's wife tried to stop him, but he beat her up. Harith wanted to collect the reward which Ibn Ziyad had offered to anyone capturing the children.

The children spent the whole night tied to the pillar. In the morning Harith dragged them to the river-bank. He took out his sword. Ibraheem asked him, "Harith, are you going to kill us?" Harith said "Yes!" Ibraheem said, "In that case give us time to finish our morning prayers." The two boys said their prayers. They raised their hands and cried out "Inna Lillaah wa Inna Ilay-hi Rajeeoon! O Allah we are coming to you. Give our mother courage when she hears of our death and judge between us and our killers!!" The sword came down! There were splashes in the water. Two young bodies were seen floating away in the waters of the river Furaat.

Hazrat Hurr

Hazrat Hurr bin Yazid at-Tamimi al-Yarbu'i was a career officer in the Kufa army. When Husayn bin Numayr, the commander at al-Qadisiya, learnt that Imam Husayn and his entourage were getting very close to Kufa he dispatched Hurr with a detachment of 1,000 men to intercept Imam.

Hurr believed that Imam was being prevented from entering Kufa because his presence might jeopardize the stability of the city. As a professional soldier he did not very much concern himself with what he considered to be political issues. His duty, he felt, was to execute the order of his superiors. However, lurking somewhere in that stout military heart was an Islamic conscience.

Hazrat Hurr and his soldiers met Imam Husayn and his companions at a place a few miles outside Kufa.

It was midday when the two parties met.

Hurr and his people had been travelling since morning and were very thirsty. He requested Imam Husayn for water for his army. Imam Husayn asked Hazrat Abbas, Hazrat Ali Akbar, Hazrat Qasim and the others to give Hurr and his men water and also to give water to their horses. This must have been a poignant scene. Water bottles being brought out of the saddle bags and the youths pouring water for Yazid's army to quench their thirst.

Zuhr prayers were led by Imam and Hurr and his soldiers joined in. After the prayers Hurr told Imam Husayn that his orders were to stop Imam Husayn from going to Kufa unless he agreed to give "Bai'at" – swear allegiance – to Yazid. Imam Husayn said that he would never give Bai'at to Yazid. Yazid was an unjust ruler who wanted to destroy Islam. In any case he was going to Kufa because he had been invited by the people there.

Imam produced two sacks of letters and petitions from the people of Kufa begging him to go there. Hurr said that as his orders were not to let Imam go to Kufa there was nothing that he could do save carry out his orders.

Imam Husayn could have fought Hurr and his soldiers and forced his way into Kufa, but he did not wish to start any battle.

He told Hurr that he would take another route and go away from Kufa. Hurr said that his orders were to follow Imam Husayn. And so, followed by Hurr and his 1000 soldiers, Imam Husayn and his companion rode in the direction away from Kufa.

On the 2nd Muharram, they reached Karbala'. Imam Husayn bought land there and put up his tents. Hurr and his men pitched their camps some distance away.

The following day, Umar bin Sa'ad came to Karbala' with 4000 soldiers. Umar Sa'ad was the commander

of the Yazid's Army. He had several meetings with Imam Husayn and was so impressed by Imam that he began to join Imam for prayers.

When Ibn Ziyad heard this, he was furious. He sent Shimr with 10,000 men and wrote a letter to Umar bin Sa'ad, ordering him to get "Bai'at" from Imam Husayn or kill him. Umar bin Sa'ad immediately changed his attitude towards Imam Husayn. Following his instructions he imposed restrictions on Imam Husayn and his followers from getting water from "Furaat", and from 7th Muharram, no one from Imam Husayn's camp was allowed near the river.

On the night of Ashura, Hurr was very restless. He could hear the children in Imam Husayn's camp cry because of thirst. He began to think "What have I done? Why did I put the son of Fatimah in this position? Will Allah ever forgive me?" He could not sleep the whole night. Within him there was a struggle between his duty as a soldier and his Islamic conscience. Just before dawn he made up his mind.

Hurr, his son and his slave rode over to Imam Husayn's camp. Hurr threw himself at Imam Husayn's feet, pleading for his forgiveness. Imam Husayn took Hurr in his arms and said, "Hurr, I forgive you. I assure you that my grandfather, the Holy Prophet also forgives you."

Hurr then asked Imam Husayn for permission to go and fight the enemies of Islam. Imam Husayn said "Hurr, you are my guest. How can I let you die for me?" Hurr insisted. Hurr went to the battlefield, and after a valiant fight, he fell and was killed. His son and the slave were also killed.

Hurr's example moved nearly thirty other soldiers to defect to Imam Husayn, where the only reward to be had was certain death, but where Allah's pleasure lay.

The story of Hurr is the story of a struggle between right and wrong within the human mind and victory of the Islamic conscience.

When he got to the body of Hurr Imam prayed to Allah: "Oh Allah! I Commend to you this brave man who has given his life for Islam."

Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsaja

Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa was a 'Sahaabi', a companion, of Hazrat Ali. He was greatly respected by Hazrat Ali, Imam Hassan and Imam Husayn. He was a leading citizen of Kufa and was among those who had written letters to Imam Husayn inviting him to go to Kufa. He was an old man, nearly eighty years old.

When Ibn Ziyad wanted to find out where Hazrat Muslim Ibn Aqeel was hiding in Kufa, he sent his spy to Muslim Bin Awsaja. The spy pretended to be a devout shiah and Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa believed him and took him to Hazrat Muslim. Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa never forgave himself for having

accepted the story of the spy so easily.

After the murder of Hazrat Muslim Ibn Aqeel, Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa slipped out of Kufa. He left Kufa by foot and travelled towards Mecca in the hope of meeting Imam Husayn on the way. Some historians record that he met and joined Imam at the place called 'Zuballah' on the same day as Imam Husayn got there. From him Imam learnt details about how Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel and Hazrat Hani bin Urwah had been murdered. Imam Husayn was grief stricken.

Muslim Bin Awsajaa said to Imam Husayn, "Mawla, I beg you to accept me in your party." Imam Husayn replied "O Muslim Bin Awsajaa, whenever I see you, I am reminded of my father. You know that these people will not let me live. You are an old man. Go back to your family and give your children and grandchildren the honour of burying you when you die. Your age excuses you from jihad." When Muslim bin Awsaja insisted, Imam let him join his entourage.

On the day of Ashura, early in the morning, Muslim Bin Awsajaa went to Hazrat Habeeb Ibn Mazahir, removed his turban and asked Habeeb Ibn Mazahir to tie the cloth of the turban tightly around his waist and abdomen saying, "Habeeb, I do not want those dogs of Yazid to see me stooping with old age." Habeeb Ibn Mazahir said, "But Muslim, you will not then have a turban on your head."

Muslim replied, "When they kill me, and when I meet our Holy Prophet I want these my white hair to be my witness when I complain to our Prophet against Yazid and his people."

When Muslim Bin Awsajaa rode out to fight, a soldier from Yazid's army teased him, "O old man! Go back to your bed and lie there!" Hazrat Muslim replied, "O dog! My bed is now the sword of Yazid. Let me show you the spirit of Islam." Saying so he attacked the soldier and killed him with one stroke.

Umar bin Sa'ad sent twenty strong warriors to fight Muslim Bin Awsajaa. Six were killed and 14 ran away. At last, thirsty and exhausted, Muslim Bin Awsajaa stopped his horse, looked at the sky and appeared to be saying a prayer. Just then they fell upon him like hounds. Muslim Bin Awsajaa fell to the ground with countless wounds on his frail body.

Habeeb Ibn Mazahir and Imam Husayn rushed to him. When they reached Muslim bin Awsajaa, he looked at Imam Husayn and asked, "Mawla, How did I fight?" Imam Husayn replied "You fought like a true follower of Ali Murtaza." Hazrat Muslim took Imam Husayn's hand in his hand, brought it near his lips, and as he kissed Imam's hand he breathed his last. There was a smile on his lips and pride on his face.

[Habeeb Ibn Mazahir](#)

Habeeb Ibn Mazahir was about the same age as Imam Husayn. They were childhood friends. When Hazrat Ali moved the capital to Kufa, Habeeb also moved to Kufa. He stayed on in Kufa and became a prominent citizen. He was a devout Shiah. The first letter which Imam Husayn received inviting him to

Kufa was signed by Habeeb Ibn Mazahir. After Hazrat Muslim and Hazrat Hani Bin Urwah were killed by Ibn Ziyaad, Kufa was sealed off. No one could get in or out of the city without the Governor's permission.

Ibn Ziyaad also started spreading the rumour that Imam Husayn had gone to Madina and that he was living there happily under the protection of Yazid. Even Imam Husayn's messenger Qais Bin Musheer who tried to take a letter to the citizens of Kufa was arrested outside Kufa. He was tied and gagged, and thrown from the roof of the palace to the ground three times. Ibn Ziyaad succeeded in spreading terror in Kufa and silencing the people.

Habeeb Ibn Mazahir was heart-broken because he could not join Imam Husayn. He did not even know where Imam Husayn was. There were all sorts of rumours but no one knew anything for certain.

Imam Husayn had reached Karbala'. Everyday Bibi Zainab saw soldiers coming to join the camp of Umar al-Sa'ad, the Commander of Yazid's Army. On 4th Muharram she came to Imam Husayn and said "Ya Akhee, why are all these soldiers coming?" Imam replied "My dear sister, they are gathering to kill me." Bibi Zainab said, "Brother, you have hardly seventy-two men with you, while they are in thousands." Bibi Zainab had tears in her eyes as she added, "Do you not have anyone ready to come to your help?" Imam Husayn said "Falsehood can buy you many supporters, truth has few friends."

That very day Imam Husayn wrote a letter to Habeeb Ibn Mazahir, his childhood friend, telling him how Yazid's vultures were gathering to kill him. The letter was carried by a messenger who entered Kufa in the dark by climbing over the city walls. The messenger reached Habeeb's house as Habeeb, his wife and his young son were sitting down for breakfast. Habeeb read the letter, kissed it and tears began to flow down his cheeks. His wife asked him what was wrong. Habeeb said "Who would ever have thought that people would be so thirsty for the blood of the grandson of the Holy Prophet, whose name they utter in every Adhaan and in every Salaah?"

Habeeb instructed his servant to take his horse to a farm outside the city and wait for him there. If anyone should ask, the servant should say that he was taking the horse for grazing.

At Asr, when most people were in the mosque Habeeb slipped out of Kufa. He mounted his horse and galloped towards Karbala'. Habeeb Ibn Mazahir reached Karbala' late in the evening. Imam Husayn greeted Habeeb with great affection. When Bibi Zainab heard that Habeeb had come she asked Janaab al-Fizza to convey her greetings to Habeeb. When Habeeb received the message he began to sob saying, "How fortunate are the companions of Imam Husayn that the daughter of Fatimah Zahra should honour them with greetings."

On the fateful day of Ashura, between zuhr and asr, Habeeb Ibn Mazahir rode into the battlefield. He fought bravely. Finally he was over-powered, He fell to the ground. Imam Husayn rushed to him. Habeeb looked at Imam and said "O the grand-son of the Holy Prophet, please forgive this humble servant for not being able to give more than his unworthy life for you and Islam." Imam took Habeeb in his arms and cried, "O my friend! O my friend!" Habeeb died resting his head on Imam's shoulder.

Wahab Bin Abdullah Qalbi

This is the story of a young bride and a young bridegroom who were at Karbala'. They had been married only two months. The bridegroom was his mother's only child.

After his marriage the mother decided to go for Hajj and take the son and his bride. They left Kufa for Mecca in the month of Shawwaal.

On their way back, they found Kufa sealed off. At the border the mother asked why Kufa had been placed under such a strict blockade. She was told that a rebel group was camped at Karbala' and that Kufa was sealed off to protect the city and its inhabitants from an attack by the rebels. She asked who the rebels were. She was told the leader was Husayn Ibn Ali Ibn Abu Taalib.

On hearing the name, the lady almost fainted. This lady was the widow Abdullah Qalbi and her son, the newly wed bridegroom, was Wahab Bin Abdullah Qalbi. His father was a companion of Hazrat Ali. In 40 Hijrah when Abdullah Qalbi's wife was pregnant she became very ill. Abdullah Qalbi went to Hazrat Ali and said "My wife and I have been childless for so long. Now that she is expecting a baby she is so ill that I may lose her. Please Mawla, pray for her." Hazrat Ali prayed, and Abdullah Qalbi's wife recovered. Same year Hazrat Ali was martyred. A few months later Wahab was born. Two years later his father died. The widow had brought up her son with great love.

Now she heard the son of Ali being accused of wanting to attack Kufa and kill the people there. She refused to believe it. She said to her son, "Wahab, I must go and find out what is happening." Wahab said, "Mother, I too would like to come." The three arrived in Karbala' on the 7th Muharram.

On learning the true situation Wahab decided to stay on with Imam Husayn and fight for him. When he told his mother of his decision, she said "I am the proudest mother in Iraq."

On the day of Ashura, Wahab fought for Imam Husayn. When he was killed the mother and the bride were standing at the gate of the camp. Their faces were radiant with pride. Umar Sa'ad ordered Wahab's head to be cut off from the body. He threw the head at Wahab's mother. She picked it up, kissed it and threw it back at Umar Sa'ad saying, "What we have sacrificed for our Imam and for Islam we do not take back. I am sorry I have one son only. If I had twenty, they all would have fought Yazid today." Then she went into the camp, and took the young bride in her arms. Just then, the tent's curtain lifted and Bibi Zainab came in. She embraced them both and offered her condolences saying: "May Allah grant you patience to bear Wahab's loss!!"

John bin Huwai

Among those who were martyred at Karbala' were sixteen slaves or freed slaves. Most of them were from Abyssinia, the present day Ethiopia. Some of them belonged to Imam Husayn's family and others to

the companions of Imam who remained with him.

On the night before Ashura Imam and the companions freed all their slaves and urged them to go away and seek their safety, but these sixteen would not leave. Amongst them was an Abyssinian called John bin Huwai.

Hazrat Ali had given John to Abu Dharr Ghiffari, Abu Dharr freed him, but John stayed on with Abu Dharr as a companion. When Abu Dharr was exiled from Madina John went back to Hazrat Ali who invited him to stay on as his companion. In the company of Hazrat Ali he learnt the tafseer of Quraan and the traditions of the Holy Prophet. He also knew the Holy Quraan by heart. When Hazrat Ali was martyred John stayed with Imam Hassan and after Imam Hassan he moved in with Imam Husayn. When Imam Husayn left Madina John insisted on accompanying him.

At Karbala' John could always be seen at the side of Imam Husayn. He was an old man, dark with grey curly hair. Because of his profound knowledge and pleasant manners he was greatly respected by all.

John spent the whole night of Ashura sharpening his sword. On the following day he helped in repelling the first two attacks from Yazid's army. At mid-day, after the Zuhr prayers, John came to the Imam, and stood silently with his arms folded. It was his habit never to speak in the presence of Imam until spoken to.

Imam Husayn looked at John and said, "John, I know you have come for my permission to go to the battle-field. You have been a good and trusted friend. I will not deny you martyrdom for Islam. Go, Allah be with you!" John smiled happily. He faced the enemy and recited a poem which said "I am a soul willing to die for Allah and have a sword thirsty of the blood of the enemies of Allah. Before I die I shall fight the enemies of Allah with my sword and my tongue, and thus shall I serve the grand-son of the Holy Prophet."

John fought courageously, all the time reciting the poem. He received several mortal blows but his recitation of the poem continued. John fell from his horse, he still continued to fight with his tongue by reciting the poem. And then a few horse men moved to where he lay. John, the Abyssinian, was silenced.

Zuhair Ibn Qain & Saeed Ibn Abdullah

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah Ta'ala has time and again emphasized the requirement of every muslim to say his prayers. In Sura al-Ma'oon Allah says "Woe unto those who do not say their prayers regularly, and pray only to be seen by others!"

Let us see how Zuhr prayers were said in Karbala'. When the time for Zuhr prayers came most of the companions of Imam Husayn lay dead. They had been killed in the three battles which had taken place since sunrise. Now there were only about fifteen companions left in addition to the members of the

family who numbered about eighteen. These 33 stood up to say Zuhr prayers and Imam Husayn stood in front of them to lead the prayers.

Just then the enemy began to shoot arrows. This made it very difficult for Imam Husayn to lead prayers. Imam told his companions that he would lead “Namaaz al-Khauf”, which meant that some would join in the prayers and half way they would read salaam and terminate their prayers, and then others would come in. This would give everyone a chance to say prayers in jama'at. behind the Imam. The problem, however, was how to protect the Imam from the arrows. Two companions stepped forward and begged Imam to let them stand in front of him and act as a shield. They insisted upon this and the Imam finally agreed.

These two brave men were Zuhair Ibn Qain and Saeed Ibn Abdullah. They performed their prayers first and then when Imam began Jama'at prayers they stood up in front of him. Every time an arrow was shot at Imam they put forward their own bodies and this way stopped the arrows from hitting Imam.

Let us imagine the scene. Imam Husayn is leading the prayers, Zuhair and Saeed are standing in front of him. The natural human instinct is that when a man sees anything flying towards him, he ducks to avoid it. Here are two men who not only do not duck but actually put forward their bodies to intercept the arrows. By the time the prayers had finished, 38 arrows had hit Zuhair Ibn Qain and 52 arrows had hit Saeed Ibn Abdullah. It was by sheer will to serve their Imam and Islam they kept themselves alive. When the Imam recited the last salaam “Assalaamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahu wa Barakaatuh”, these two great heroes of Karbala' fell.

When Imam Husayn went up to them and said “My friends, you have given your lives for something most beloved to Allah, the salaah!” Imam then raised his hands and prayed, “O Allah! I am proud to commend to You the souls of my two companions who gave their lives for salaah. Please, Allah, grant them Your Rahmah.” Every one present called out “Aameen!”, and it is said that “Aameen” could be heard from the angels in the sky.

[Aun and Muhammad](#)

Aun and Muhammad were the sons of Bibi Zainab. They had not accompanied Bibi Zainab when she left Madina with Imam Husayn (A.S.) Just before Imam Husayn started his journey from Mecca, Hazrat Abdullah ibn Ja'far brought his two sons to Mecca and handing them over to Imam Husayn said, “Ya Imam, since you have decided to go and will not allow me to come with you, please take my two sons with you. Aun will represent his maternal grandfather Hazrat Ali (A.S.) and the other will represent his paternal grandfather Hazrat Ja'far al-Tayyaar.”

Aun and Muhammad were quite young. It is reported that Aun was about thirteen and Muhammad was a year or two younger. They had learnt the art of fencing from their uncle, Hazrat Abbas.

On the night before Ashura Bibi Zainab said to them, “My sons, tomorrow there will be a battle. I can not ask you to fight because you are young. But if anything happens to Imam Husayn, while you are still alive, I will be filled with shame.” Both the boys stood up and said “Mother, we have the blood of Ali and Ja’far in our veins. Our grand fathers were warriors whose fame will always be remembered.

Do you think we can possibly shame them? More over we are the pupils of Uncle Abbas. Mother, unless you forbid us and stop us from fighting, we shall go to the battlefield and show the enemies of Islam how bravely the children of Islam can fight. All we want from you is a promise that you will never weep for us. Or souls will never rest in peace if you grieve for us after we are gone.”

Tears of joy and pride flowed down Bibi Zainab's eyes as she embraced her two boys. In the morning during the general attacks from the enemy, Aun and Muhammad fought side by side with Hazrat Ali Akbar, Hazrat Qasim and Hazrat Abbas. Every time either of them succeeded in felling an enemy, he would look proudly at Hazrat Abbas who would smile and nod his approval. Imam Husayn would not, however, give the two boys permission to go for single combat.

They were very disappointed. They came to their mother for help. Bibi Zainab sent someone to request Imam Husayn to come to her tent. When the Imam came Bibi Zainab said, “Husayn, at the battle of Siffeen Hazrat Abbas was only eight years old. When he saw someone trying to attack you, he rushed into the battle field and killed the man. Do you remember how proud our father Ali was? Today I too want to be proud of my sons. I want to see them go out there and defend Islam. Will you not allow me that privilege?” Imam Husayn stood there in silence.

He looked at his sister. He saw the disappointment on her face. He saw tears forming around her eyes. He put his arms around the two boys and led them to their horses. He kissed them and then helped them mount.”Go,” said Imam, “Go, and show the world how those as young as you can fight the injustice and oppression of Yazid!” Then he turned round and lifted the curtain of the tent. The boys raised their hands and said “Fi Amaani–Ilah, mother!” Bibi Zainab replied, “Bismillah my sons. Allah be with you!”

The two boys rode out into the battlefield. They fought bravely. At one point Umar Sa'ad asked, “Who are these two youngsters? They fight like I have seen Ali ibn Abu Taalib fight.” When he was told who they were he ordered his soldiers to give up single combats and surround and kill the boys. Aun and Muhammad were attacked from all sides. Soon they were over-powered and brutally killed. Imam Husayn and Hazrat Abbas carried the two young bodies to a tent and laid them on the floor. Imam walked to Bibi Zainab's tent. He found her in sijdah praying, “Ya Allah, I thank you for accepting my sacrifice. My heart is filled with pride because my two sons have given their lives for your religion.”

Burair Hamdani

After the death of Uthmaan, people prevailed upon Hazrat Ali to accept Khulafah. Uthmaan died on 24th

Muharram in 35 Hijrah and Hazrat Ali became Khalifah in the same month. The first thing he did after becoming the Khalifah was to dismiss all the corrupt governors and other officials. Muawiya, who was the Governor of Syria, did not accept the dismissal and responded by gathering together a Syrian army of fifty thousand soldiers to fight Hazrat Ali. Hazrat Ali marched from Kufa with an army of twenty thousand. The battle took place North of Kufa at a place called Siffeen on the banks of the river Furaat. At one time during the battle, Hazrat Ali's army captured Furaat.

Muawiya and his army were cut off from water. When Hazrat Ali heard that Muawiya soldiers were suffering from thirst, he ordered his army to let Muawiya army come to the river saying, "Every living being is entitled to water." Immediately Hazrat Ali's army made a way for Muawiya and his soldiers to come to the river and take as much water as they needed, and also to water their horses and camels.

From Asr until sunset Muawiya soldiers were at the river bank drinking water, watering their animals and filling their mashks. When Hazrat Ali's officers complained to him, Hazrat Ali replied, "To deprive any human or animal of water is a sin Allah will never forgive."

Yazid was at Siffeen, so was Imam Husayn. When the Muharram of 60 Hijrah came, Yazid sent a secret order to Ibn Ziyad to force Imam Husayn away from Furaat and then cut off Imam Husayn, his family and his companions from water. Ibn Ziyad gave orders to Umar Sa'ad to do so. On the third of Muharram, Umar Ibn Sa'ad asked Imam Husayn to move his camp away from Furaat. Imam Husayn and his camp were cut off from water, while 25 years earlier, his father had allowed Yazid's father and the army of 50,000 freedom to go to the river and take as much water as they had wanted.

The children in Imam Husayn's camp were soon crying out "Al-atash! al atash!" Burair Hamdani was a companion of Imam Husayn. He was present at Karbala'. On the night before Ashura, he could no longer stand the cries of "Al-atash, Al-atash." In the dark of the night he made his way to the river. He filled his mashk and secured the cap. He too was very thirsty but did not even think of drinking water when he was at the river bank. How could he when the grand-son of the Holy Prophet and his children were thirsty!

On his way back, he was seen by two of the guards posted to make sure that no water reached Imam Husayn's camp. They tried to stop him. He attacked and killed them both. He brought the mashk to Imam Husayn's camp. He called Bibi Fizza and asked her to take the mashk to the children. They were more than fifty children in Imam Husayn's camp. They were all very thirsty. When they heard that water had come, they rushed. They put their cheeks on the mashk to cool themselves. In this rush the cap flew open and the water spilled.

The children looked with pain and disappointment as the water disappeared into the desert sand. Burair was desolate. He raised his hands to the sky and cried, "Oh Allah! I had hoped that this Your humble servant would tonight earn the du'aas of the children of Imam. Oh how very unfortunate Burair the son of Hamdani is!" Imam consoled Burair, "My friend, you have earned the du'aas of Fatimah's son for your

brave effort!”

Hazrat Qasim

Hazrat Qasim was the youngest son of Imam Hassan (A.S.). Hazrat Qasim was born in 47 A.H. three years before his father was martyred. When Imam Husayn prepared to leave Madina in the month of Rajab 60 A.H. Hazrat Qasim mother Umme al-Farwa asked Imam Husayn to take her and Hazrat Qasim with him. Imam Husayn agreed.

Hazrat Qasim, although only 13 years old, had, like his cousins Aun and Muhammad, learnt fencing from Hazrat Abbas and Hazrat Ali Akbar. Hazrat Abbas was very fond of Hazrat Qasim.

On the night before Ashura when Imam Husayn was passing by Umm al-Farwa's tent he heard Hazrat Qasim say to his mother, “Mother, tomorrow Uncle Abbas, Ali Akbar and I will defend Imam Husayn. Mother, if I get killed please do not weep for me.” Umm al-Farwa replied, “My son although I dearly love you, I shall not weep for you. Nothing will make me prouder than to see my son give his life for Islam.” When Imam Husayn heard this conversation he prayed to Allah to bless Hazrat Qasim and Umm al-Farwa.

On Ashura day after Aun and Muhammad had fallen in the battlefield, Hazrat Qasim came to Imam Husayn and begged for permission to go and fight. Twice Imam Husayn refused saying “Qasim you are young and your mother's only son.” Hazrat Qasim was very disappointed. He went to his mother. When she saw her son so disappointed she remembered that just before he died, Imam Hassan had written a letter, given it to Umm al-Farwa saying, “If ever you find Qasim in difficulty, give him this letter.” She gave Hazrat Qasim the letter. In the letter it was written, “My son Qasim, a day will come when my brother Husayn will be facing an enemy army of tens of thousands. That will be the day when Islam will need to be saved by sacrifice. You must represent me on that day.”

Hazrat Qasim read the letter. He smiled. He rushed to Imam and gave him the letter. After reading the letter Imam Husayn said, “O my brother's son, how can I stop you from doing what your father wanted you to do. Bismillah, go. Allah be with you.”

Imam Husayn tied Imam Hassan's turban on the head of Hazrat Qasim and helped him mount his horse. As Hazrat Qasim was riding out, Imam Husayn said “Inna Lilla-hi Wa Inna Ilai-hi Raji'oon.” Hazrat Qasim said “O my uncle – Do not be upset. I do not fear death. Death for Islam will be sweeter for me than honey.” Hazrat Qasim came to the battle field. He was a very handsome boy. When the enemy saw him, they began to murmur, “How can we kill someone whose face is shining like moon?”

In a loud and a clear voice Hazrat Qasim introduced himself and cried out a challenge for single combat. He killed several famous warriors who came forward.

Every time he felled an enemy Hazrat Qasim would stand on his stirrups, look behind and wave to

Hazrat Abbas, just as a pupil would seek approval of his teacher on any assignment, Hazrat Abbas would proudly wave back. When the enemy saw his bravery and realized that they could not possibly overpower him in single combats, they came from behind and one of them hit Hazrat Qasim on the head with a sword.

Hazrat Qasim tried to go on fighting but alas he was so young and he was so very thirsty! He fell from his horse crying out, **“ya ammaho, accept my last salaams.”** Imam Husayn and Hazrat Abbas rode out. The soldiers tried to stop them, when finally they came to where Hazrat Qasim had fallen they saw a dreadful sight!! Hazrat Qasim's body had been trampled by the horses of the soldiers who had tried to stop Imam Husayn and Hazrat Abbas. Hazrat Abbas was so angry when he saw this that he began to shake with fury. He took out his sword and wanted to attack the enemy. Imam Husayn restrained him saying “Abbas, have patience, dear brother. Do not give them an excuse for saying that we attacked them first.”

Was Hazrat Qasim's body carried to the camp to his mother? This is not very clear. It is reported, however, that Imam Husayn took off his abaa, spread it on to the ground, and gathered the pieces from the ground as one gathers flowers from a garden!

Hazrat Abbas

Hazrat Ali married Fatimah Binti Huzaam Ibn Khalid in 24 Hijrah. Fatimah gave birth to Hazrat Abbas on the 4th Shabaan, 26th Hijrah. In 27th Hijrah Ja'far was born and in 29th Hijrah Uthmaan was born. Abdullah was born in 32nd Hijrah. Because she had four sons Fatima Binti Huzaam was known as Ummul Baneen.

Ummul Baneen, from the very first day she entered Hazrat Ali's house, treated the children of Bibi Fatimah with utmost respect. She brought up her own sons to look upon Imam Hassan, Imam Husayn, Bibi Zainab and Bibi Kulthoom, not as brothers and sisters but as masters and mistresses.

Imam Husayn was very attached to Hazrat Abbas. When Hazrat Abbas was born, Hazrat Ali asked Imam Husayn to recite the adhaan and the iqamah in the ears of the child. When he was on the arms of Imam Husayn, the infant smiled and raised his arms. There were tears in Imam Husayn's eyes. Was it because he knew that the child was trying to say: “O Mawla I have come and will happily give these my arms and my life for you and Islam?”

In early childhood Hazrat Abbas would follow Imam Husayn like a shadow. If Imam Husayn looked thirsty, Hazrat Abbas would rush to bring him water. If Imam Husayn seemed hot, Hazrat Abbas would fan him with the hem of his cloak. At the battle of Siffeen in the 34th Hijrah, Hazrat Abbas was only eight years old. Imam Husayn was fighting in the battle field.

When Hazrat Abbas saw an enemy soldier approaching Imam Husayn from behind, he took a sword and

rushed into the battle field and killed the enemy, at the same time crying out in a loud voice, “How can any one dare attack my Mawla while I am alive.” He continued to fight maintaining his position behind Imam Husayn. Muawiya saw this and asked, “Who is that boy?” When he was told he was Abbas ibn Ali, he said, “By God! No one can fight like that at that age except a son of Ali!”

Hazrat Abbas grew up to be a tall and handsome man. He was so tall, that when he sat on a horse his feet touched the ground. He was so handsome that he was known as Qamar al-Bani Hashim, the Moon of the family of Hashim.

Hazrat Abbas was also a valiant warrior. It was said that Muawiya did not dare invade Madina because of five men who were with Imam Husayn and could, together with their Imam, conquer a whole army. These were Muhammad Hanafia, a brother of Imam Husayn, Hazrat Muslim ibn Aqeel, Abdullah Ibn Ja'far, Hazrat Abbas and Hazrat Ali ibn al-Husayn, our fourth Imam, Zainul 'Abideen.

When Imam Husayn decided to leave Madina in the month of Rajab 60 Hijrah, he did not encourage Muhammad Hanafia and Abdullah Ibn Ja'far to accompany him. He wanted to make sure that no one at the time or in the future would suggest that Husayn wanted to fight for the khilafah.

Just before Imam Husayn left Madina, Ummul Baneen summoned all her four sons and said to them, “My sons you must remember that while I love you, Imam Husayn is your Master. If Imam or his sisters or his children get injured or hurt while you are still alive, I will never forgive you.” There were tears in Hazrat Abbas's eyes as he promised his mother that he and his brothers would lay down their lives for Imam Husayn and his children.

The caravan reached Karbala' on 2nd Muharram. From the day the sad news of Hazrat Muslim's murder had reached the caravan of Imam Husayn, Hazrat Abbas and his brothers increased their vigilance to protect Imam and the others.

Hazrat Abbas was very popular with the children of Imam Husayn especially Bibi Sakina who was only four years old. Whenever the children wanted anything they would cry out “Ya Abbas!” or “Ya Ammahu!”, and Hazrat Abbas would go running. But from the seventh of Muharram Abbas was unable to respond to their cries for water.

Then came the day of Ashura, after Zuhr prayers one by one the brave companions of Imam Husayn fell in the battle field. At last only Imam Husayn, Hazrat Ali Akbar and Hazrat Abbas were left. Imam Zainul 'Abideen lay sick in his tent.

Several times Hazrat Abbas asked Imam Husayn for permission to go and fight. Each time Imam Husayn would reply “Abbas, you are the captain of my army, you are my 'alamdaar – the standard bearer.” Hazrat Abbas would never argue with Imam Husayn. His three brothers were killed in the battle fought after Zuhr. Imam Husayn could see the anger in Hazrat Abbas's eyes, especially when Hazrat Qasim's body was trampled upon by the enemy. Imam Husayn knew that if he let Hazrat Abbas go and

fight, there would be a massacre in the enemy rank. Imam Husayn's object was to re-awaken Islam and not to score a victory on the battle field.

Just then Bibi Sakina came out holding a dried up mask. She walked up to Hazrat Abbas and said “**al atash, ya ammahu!** I am thirsty O my uncle Abbas!” Hazrat Abbas went to Imam Husayn and requested for permission to go and get water for Bibi Sakina. Imam Husayn gave his permission. Hazrat Abbas put Bibi Sakina's mashk on the 'alam, mounted his horse and rode up to Imam Husayn. He said “I have come to say goodbye.”

Imam Husayn said “My brother, come and embrace me.” Hazrat Abbas dismounted his horse. There were tears in Imam's eyes. As Hazrat Abbas prepared to mount his horse, Imam Husayn said, “My brother, I want a gift from you. I want your sword.” Hazrat Abbas, without uttering a word, gave Imam Husayn his sword and rode into the battlefield, armed only with a spear and holding the 'alam.

There were 30,000 enemy soldiers in the battlefield. They had all heard of the valour of Hazrat Abbas. A cry arose, “Abbas is coming!” Yazid's soldiers started hiding behind one another. A few brave ones dared go near Hazrat Abbas but were soon put to death by the spear or by a kick.

Hazrat Abbas reached the river Furaat. He filled the mashk with water. He himself was very thirsty. He took the water in his palms, looked at it and threw it away saying, “O water of Furaat, my lips can welcome you only after Bibi Sakina has quenched her thirst!?” He placed the mashk on his 'alam and started to ride back.

Umar Sa'ad cried out, “Do not let that water reach Husayn's camp, otherwise we shall all be doomed!”

A soldier climbed a tree and as Hazrat Abbas was riding past the tree he struck his sword on the right shoulder. The spear and the arm fell on to the ground. Just then someone crept behind Hazrat Abbas and struck him on the left shoulder. The 'alam fell. Hazrat Abbas gripped the mashk with his teeth. His one object was to get the water to Bibi Sakina. Fighting with his feet he urged the horse to get him to Imam's camp as quickly as possible.

Alas! an arrow was shot. It went flying across the desert and hit the mashk. The water began to pour out and with the water all the hopes of Hazrat Abbas poured on to the sands of Karbala' to be buried forever in the thirsty desert. Hazrat Abbas now did not want to go back and face Bibi Sakina. With his feet, he signalled the horse to turn back. The enemy surrounded him from all sides. Hazrat Abbas fell from the horse!! As he fell, he cried out “My salaams to you Ya Mawla!”

Imam Husayn seemed to lose all his strength when he heard the voice of his dear brother Abbas. When Hazrat Abbas left to go to fetch water, Imam stood at the gate of the camp watching the 'alam. Bibi Sakina was standing next to Imam Husayn, also with her eyes fixed on the 'alam. When Hazrat Abbas reached the river bank and bent down to fill the mashk, the 'alam disappeared from sight.

Bibi Sakina was frightened and looked at her father. Imam said, 'Sakina, your uncle Hazrat Abbas is at

the river bank.' Bibi Sakina smiled and said, 'Alhamdulillah!' and called out all the children to welcome Hazrat Abbas. When Hazrat Abbas lost both arms, the 'alam fell onto the ground. Bibi Sakina could see it no longer! She looked at Imam Husayn, but he turned his face away. Bibi Sakina began to tremble with fear and her eyes filled with tears. She raised her hands and prayed, 'Ya Allah! Do not let them kill my uncle Abbas! I will never ask for water again!' and ran inside to her mother.

Imam Husayn reached where Hazrat Abbas was lying. It was a tragic sight. Hazrat Abbas was lying on the ground. Both arms had been severed! There was an arrow in the right eye and blood blocked the left eye. As soon as Hazrat Abbas sensed the presence of Imam Husayn he said "Mawla, why did you take the trouble to come over? Please go back and look after Sakina." Imam Husayn said, "My dear brother, all your life you have served me and my children. Is there anything I can do for you at this last moment of your life?"

Hazrat Abbas replied, "Aqaa, please, clean the blood from my eye so that I can see your beloved face before I die!" Imam cleaned the blood. Hazrat Abbas fixed his gaze on Imam. Then he said, "Mawla please do not carry my body to the camp. I do not wish Sakina to see me in this state!" Imam Husayn took Hazrat Abbas in his arms, and kissed his forehead. Just then our Mawla, our Mushkil Kushaa, Hazrat Abbas ibn Ali breathed his last. Imam Husayn placed Bibi Sakina's mashk on the 'alam and carried the 'alam to the camp. He went to Bibi Zainab's tent. Imam Husayn could not say a word. He gave the 'alam to Bibi Zainab and sat down on the floor! The brother sister performed aza al-Abbas.

Hazrat Ali Akbar

Hazrat Ali Akbar was the son of Imam Husayn. He was a handsome young man of eighteen. His mother's name was Umm al-Laila. He was also a brave soldier. He had been taught fencing and archery by Hazrat Abbas. He so much resembled the Holy Prophet that Imam Husayn was often heard to say: "whenever I remember the Holy Prophet I look at Akbar".

Hazrat Ali Akbar had a loud beautiful voice. It was he who always recited adhaan. On the morning of Ashura day Hazrat Ali Akbar recited adhaan. Every one knew that it was the last time they would hear Hazrat Ali Akbar's adhaan. Imam Husayn began to weep when Hazrat Ali Akbar began his Adhaan. The ladies could also be heard crying in their tents.

After Zuhr prayers Hazrat Ali Akbar stood in front of Imam Husayn. He said, "Father I request for permission to go and fight the enemies of Islam." Imam looked at his son lovingly. He said, "Akbar, you have my permission. May Allah be with you! But Akbar, you know how much your mother, sisters and aunts love you. Go and say farewell to them." Ali Akbar went into the tent of his mother. Every time he wanted to come out of the tent the mother, aunts and sisters would pull his cloak and say, "O Akbar, How can we live without you!" Finally Imam Husayn had to go in and plead with all to let Hazrat Ali Akbar go.

Imam helped his youthful son to mount the horse. As Akbar began to ride towards the battlefield, he heard foot steps behind. He looked back and saw his father. He said, "Father, we have said good-bye. Why are you walking behind him." Husayn replied, "My son, had you been a father you would surely have understood!!"

Hazrat Ali Akbar fought very bravely. No one dared come close to him in single combat after he had killed many well known warriors. Umar Sa'ad ordered his soldiers to finish off the young man saying, "When he dies, Husayn will not want to live! Ali Akbar is the life of Husayn." While a few soldiers attacked Hazrat Ali Akbar another slowly crept up to him and threw a spear at his chest with such ferocity that it penetrated Akbar's chest and he felt faint. As he was falling from his horse, he cried out. "O Father, my last salaams to you!" As he hit the ground the spear broke but the blade remained lodged in Akbar's chest.

When our Imam heard Akbar's salaam he looked at Furaat where Hazrat Abbas lay and said, 'Abbas! Now that this brother of yours needs you most, where have you gone?' With all his strength sapped by the anguish in Akbar's voice, Husayn began to walk towards the battle-field.

Let us pause briefly to remind ourselves of an incident in the seventh Hijrah. The Jews of Khaibar had revolted against the Holy Prophet. The Prophet and the Muslims of Madina laid a siege on Khaibar. They surrounded the fortress in which the Jews had taken shelter. The Muslims could not get victory unless they entered the fortress. There was a moat surrounding the fortress. Hazrat Ali had been unable to accompany the Muslims due to his illness. Three days passed and the Muslims could not find any solution. Even if they got across the moat they would face the famous gates of the fortress. These were made of steel, and it is said that at least twenty men were needed to push open or close each gate.

On the third day, after the morning prayers, the Prophet summoned Ali. Hazrat Ali immediately responded. He jumped his horse over the moat and with one hand swung open both the gates of the fortress with such force that they broke off their hinges. He carried them and put them across the moat to form a bridge. The Muslims rode into the fortress and conquered Khaibar.

Now let us go back to Karbala'. When Imam Husayn got to where Akbar lay he took him in his arms. Akbar had his right hand on the chest. He placed his left arm over the shoulder of his father. Husayn said "Akbar, why do you embrace me with one arm only?" Akbar would not reply. Husayn tried to move Akbar's hand. Akbar resisted. Imam gently moved the hand. Then he saw it! He saw the blade of the spear. Imam Husayn laid Hazrat Ali Akbar on the ground and sitting on his knees he put both his hands on the blade of the spear. He then looked at Najaf, and cried out, "Father, I too have come to my Khaibar!" He pulled out the blade. Jibraeel cried out "Marhaba! Marhaba!" Akbar took a deep sigh and then lay still.

Hazrat Ali Asghar

Hazrat Ali Asghar was the youngest child of Imam Husayn. He was born only a few weeks before Imam left Madina. His mother's name was Rubaab daughter of Imra'u'l Qais who was the chief of the tribe of Kinda.

Rubaab had two children, Bibi Sakina and Ali Asghar. She and her two children accompanied Imam to Karbala'. The fact that Imam took with him a newly born baby further demonstrates the his intention was never to engage in any armed rebellion.

At Karbala' Asghar was only six months old. From the seventh Muharram there was no water in Imam's camp. Asghar was in great pain because of thirst.

On Ashura day, after Hazrat Ali Akbar had been killed, Imam Husayn was standing outside the camp. He was left all alone and he was preparing to go into the battlefield. Just then he heard a child cry. It was Ali Asghar, tormented by the pangs of hunger and thirst.

Imam walked into Bibi Rubaab's tent. He lifted the child from the cradle."Rubaab," he said, "I will take him to Yazid's army. Surely they can not possibly deny this little infant a few drops of water?" Rubaab changed Ali Asghar's clothes. She even tied a small turban on his head. Like any other mother she wanted her son to look at his best in front of strangers.

Imam Husayn carried the child to the battle field. Walking up to Yazid's soldiers Imam Husayn said, "This child has done you no harm. He is dying of thirst. I am begging for a few drops of water for him."There was no response. Imam said, "If you are afraid that when you bring Asghar any water I will drink it, look, I will put him on the ground and you can come yourself and give him water."

He put the child on the sands of Karbala' and moved a couple of steps back. You can imagine how hot the desert sand was. Asghar lay there not even wincing. He turned towards the enemy and stared at them. A murmur arose among the soldiers but no one came forward to give water to the baby. Imam took Asghar in his arms and in a clear voice said, "Asghar, my son, show them how thirsty you are!" Asghar turned his head towards the soldiers. He smiled sweetly, opened his mouth, brought out his dry tongue and moved it over his lips. The ultimate sword had been unsheathed!

The soldiers were so moved by this that they could be heard sobbing. Still, they were very afraid of Yazid and none dared come forward to give water to Ali Asghar.

Umar Sa'ad was worried. It seemed that Asghar was emerging victorious in this confrontation against the might of Yazid. He looked at Hurmala, a famous archer, and said, "Silence Husayn!"

Then a terrible thing happened. Hurmala lifted his bow. He aimed an arrow at the child. The arrow flew across the hot desert. There was a hissing sound. Asghar smiled. He lifted his head and arched his

neck!! No civilized mind can even imagine what happened next. The hissing sound stopped and Asghar lay still on his father's arms.

Imam Husayn looked down at Asghar's neck, he saw the arrow, he saw the neck, he saw the smile and then he could see no more!!!

Our Imam began to feel faint. For a moment everything went dark. He could not see! There was a total silence over Karbala', broken only by the sound of the gentle waves of Furaat. Even the enemy appeared stunned.

Slowly Husayn turned round and now looked at the baby in his arms.

The arrow had passed through the tender neck and lodged in Imam Husayn's chest. There was no way Imam Husayn could dislodge the arrow. His two arms were supporting the still child. He looked at the sky, and prayed "Ya Allah, give me courage in this most difficult moment of my life. No Prophet ever was subjected to a test as severe as this."

It is said that the Imam was so shaken up by what had happened to the infant child that all of a sudden his beard went all grey and he looked an old man. With his teeth he pulled his abaa over Asghar to shield the body from the scorching sun. Then he took a few deep breaths, and began to walk towards his camp.

As he got near he saw Rubaab standing at the entrance to her tent. He saw the anxiety, the hope, the fear and the restlessness in her eyes. Our Imam seemed to lose all strength. He could not walk forward towards Bibi Rubaab. He took seven steps back saying "**inna lil-Lahi wa inna ilay-hi raja'uun.**"

He stopped and thought that he must take the child to his mother. He again took seven steps forwards saying "**inna lil-Lahi wa inna ilay-hi raja'uun.**" Once again his eyes met with those of Bibi Rubaab's. Again our Imam seemed to lose his courage and walked backwards repeating "**inna lil-Lahi wa inna ilay-hi raja'uun.**" Imam Husayn did this seven times. Forward and backward. All the time Bibi Rubaab's eyes remained transfixed on the child. Each time Imam reciting "**inna lil-Lahi wa inna ilay-hi raja'uun.**"

Finally, somehow, he got the arrow dislodged. He now took the dead infant to Bibi Rubaab. He said, "Rubaab! This is a test from Allah which no mother has ever been asked to go through. Come with me" Bibi Rubaab followed. With their own hands they dug a small grave! The father and the mother together buried Ali Asghar!!

[Imam Husayn](#)

Our Imam is all alone! He looks around him. There lie Habeeb ibn Mazahir, Muslim ibn Awsaja, Zuhair ibn Qain and all his friends and companions. There lie Awn and Muhammad. He looks at Hazrat Qasim's

trampled remains. He looks at Hazrat Ali Akbar, his beloved son, with that dreadful wound on his chest. He looks towards Furaat. Gently he whispers, 'Abbas, Abbas, I am alone! So very alone!'

Slowly Imam Husayn moves towards the tent of Imam Zain ul 'Abideen. Zain ul 'Abideen is lying unconscious on his bed. Lovingly Imam shakes his son by the shoulder. The sick Imam opens his eyes, 'Father, Father, why are you alone? Where is my uncle Abbas? Where is Ali Akbar? Where is Qasim? Where are all your companions?' Imam Husayn says, 'Son, no man, save you and I, is left alive. All of them have died for Islam.'

Imam Zain ul 'Abideen tries to get up. 'Where are you going, my son?' asks Imam Husayn. 'To fight Yazid's army!' replies the young man. 'No, my son, you are too sick for Jihad. I have come to say good-bye. Look after the ladies and the children. And, my son, when you get to Madina, give my love to Soghra. Tell her that I always remembered her and that in these last moments of my life, I wish I could give her a hug before I get killed. . And also, my son, give salaams to our friends and tell them to think of me when they drink water!'

Imam Husayn then stands in the centre of the camp and cries out, "O Zainab, O Kulthoom, O Sakina, O Ruqayya, O Rubaab, O Fizza my greetings to you! Farewell to you all!" The ladies and children weep and wail as they say farewell to Imam.

Imam walks towards his horse. There is no one to help him mount. Bibi Zainab steps forward. She holds the reins as Imam mounts the horse. The horse moves a few steps and then it stops. Imam Husayn urges the horse to move, but it stands still looking towards its hind legs. Imam turns his head. He sees Bibi Sakina clinging to the horse's leg, pleading, 'O horse, do not take my father away from me. Do not let them make me yateemah!'

Imam dismounts. He says, 'Sakina, you are the great grand daughter of the Holy Prophet! I love you so much that if you tell me not to go, I will not. But then Islam will be destroyed. How will you or I be able to face the Holy Prophet on the Day of Judgement?' Fighting back her tears the four year old Bibi Sakina can only manage to say, 'Bismillah, father!' The four year old holds the reins as her father mounts for a certain death!!

Husayn rides on. He stands on a hill and cries out, "Who is there who will come to my help?"

Of course our Imam is not expecting any of the enemy soldiers to come to his help! To whom is he addressing this plea for help? Our Imam is addressing the plea to all the Muslims, in every age and everywhere, young and old, men and women, grown ups and children urging us all to always fight Yazidism and refuse to disobey the commands of Allah. Every little effort we make to preserve and act according to our Islamic conscience is a response to our Imam's call with **Labbaik! Labbaik!**

Imam rides towards the enemy. There is a shower of arrows! Imam ignores the arrows and rides on. He wants to make one last effort to preach true Islam to the enemies of Islam. He stops and turns towards

the enemy and begins to speak: “O those of you who do not know me, know that I am the grandson of the Holy Prophet. I am on the path of truth. Yazid personifies falsehood and corruption. He wants to lead you away from Islam.

Do not follow him. Do not kill the grandson of Allah's messenger. Allah will never forgive you! Remember that when you see a ruler who does what has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, who indulges in sins, who oppresses the people he rules, and you do nothing to stop such a ruler, before Allah you are as guilty as he is. You know my ancestry. My parents did not raise me to submit myself to an evil tyrant. I am your Imam. You have surrendered the freedom of your mind to the evil ways of Yazid.

If you do not care for Islam, do, at least, care for the freedom of your spirit!.”

Umar Sa'ad cries out, “Do not fall victims to Husayn's oratory! Kill him!”

From all directions the soldiers advance towards Imam Husayn with their naked swords! Imam says: “You are determined to fight me Then fight you I shall! I do not fear death. Death to me is sweeter than dishonour. Now I shall let you witness the valour of the son of Ali ibn Abu Taalib!”

Imam Husayn takes out his sword and begins to fight. Thirsty, tired, wounded, grieving, our Imam fights as no one had ever seen any one fight! Where ever he turns to, the soldiers flee as rabbits do at the sight of a lion! Umar Sa'ad sends all his best warriors against Imam. They all perish. No one dares come near our Imam! Imam stands on his stirrups. Casts his eyes to where Hazrat Abbas lies, and murmurs, “Abbas did you see the battle of your brother, the thirsty, the broken hearted brother?”

And then Jibra'eel appears and says, 'O Husayn, Allah is pleased with your bravery. The moment has now arrived for you to save Islam with your life!” Husayn looks at the sky! Yes, it is the time of Asr! Husayn returns the sword into the sheath. Lowers himself on the horse-back. Whispers to the horse “Take me to where my mother Fatimah is waiting for me! But, O my faithful horse, go past where my Akbar is lying so that I may see my beloved son just one more time before I die.”

Seeing that Imam has sheathed his sword the enemy come from all sides. Some throw stones at him, some hit him with swords. Arrows are shot at him! Suddenly the horse stops! “My son, my son!” cries out the soul of Fatimah Zahra. Imam Husayn falls from the horse! But his body does not touch the ground. It is resting on the blades of the arrows. He performs his Asr prayers lying on this musallah of arrows! Now he goes in to his last sijdah and says: “O Allah! All praise is to You and You alone!”

Someone is moving towards where our Imam is in sijdah on the arrows. He is holding a dagger in his hand. The earth trembles! The sun goes into eclipse! Jibraeel cries out “**oh Husayn has been killed, Husayn has been killed!!!!**”

Bibi Sakina falls on to the ground unconscious! Bibi Zainab runs to the tent of our fourth Imam. 'Oh Son! What has happened?” Imam Zain ul 'Abideen staggers towards the curtain of his tent. Lifts it up, and pointing his finger at a head mounted on a lance. He cries out in a trembling voice: “Assalaamu 'alaika,

Ya 'aba 'Abdillah!!!”

Shaam al-Gareeba

It was after 'asr on the day of Ashura. Imam Husayn lay dead. The earth had trembled! Furaat had broken its banks! From the camp of the family of the Holy Prophet such lamentation arose as had never been heard before!

Yazid's army had brutally murdered our Imam, his sons, his brothers, his nephews, his companions. No one was spared. Amongst the male adults there remained only our fourth Imam, Imam Zain ul 'Abideen, who lay unconscious in his tent with his young son Muhammad hovering around him, weeping.

One would think that even the devil would halt himself in exhaustion after so much evil. But that was not to be!

Umar Sa'ad received a letter from ibn Ziyad. The governor of Kufa instructed that they should not be satisfied with the death of Husayn. His body must be subjected to the ultimate insult of being trampled by the hooves of horses. And this was done to the grandson of the Holy Prophet!!

As the sun was setting in the horizon, the soldiers rushed to Imam Husayn's camp in search of booty. They looted every tent. Every lady, and every girl was stripped of her veil. Fatimah's daughters were left bare-headed. Bibi Sakina's ear-rings were pulled off her ears, splitting her ear lobes. When the little girl pleaded for her veil to be left untouched, she was slapped.

Surely they would stop now? But they did not. They set fire to all the tents. Humayd Ibn Muslim describes how he saw a little girl with her dress on fire, her ears bleeding, running from the scene of carnage. He says: “I ran after her. I took her by hand. Put out the fire in her dress. I wiped the blood off her ears. She looked at me and said, “You seem like a kind person, are you a Muslim?” I told her I was. She thought a while and then said, “Can you please show me the way to Najaf?” I asked, “Why do you want to go to Najaf at this hour and in this state?” She said, “I want to go and complain to my grandfather Ali ibn Abi Talib about how they killed my father.” Realizing that she was Husayn's daughter, I took her back to her aunt Zainab.”

As the night descended, Bibi Zainab gathered all the ladies and children, in to one small space in between the gutted tents. Imam Zain-ul 'Abideen lay on the ground surrounded by these widows and orphans. There was no fire, no light. Only the moon cast its dull light.

Umar Sa'ad asked Hurr's widow to take some food and water to the ladies and the children. As she neared to where they were resting, Bibi Zainab recognized her. She stood up, went towards Hurr's widow and offered her condolences for the death of Hurr. This gesture on the part of Bibi Zainab, who had suffered so much, lost so many, and carrying so much grief in her heart, is a lesson in Islamic akhlaq which the world should never be allowed to forget.

Bibi Zainab took the jug of water. She went to Bibi Sakina who had fallen into a fretful sleep.

Gently she stroked the girl's dishevelled hair. Bibi Sakina opened her eyes. Bibi Zainab said, "Here is some water, Bibi Sakina. Please drink a little. You have been thirsty for so long!" On hearing the word 'water' Bibi Sakina cried out hopefully, "Has my uncle Abbas come back?" When she was told that Hurr's widow had brought the water, she got up, went to Hurr's widow, thanked her and then asked Bibi Zainab: "Have you all drunk water?"

Bibi Zainab shook her head. Bibi Sakina asked, "Why then do you ask me to drink water?" Bibi Zainab said, "Because, my dear, you are the youngest." Bibi Sakina replied, "No! no! Asghar is the youngest!" Bibi Sakina took the jug of water, ran towards where Asghar lay buried, crying "Wa Asghara! Wa Asghara!"

This was how the homeless spent their night in Karbala'. This was Shaam al-Gareeba, the night of the homeless. They had lost everything. Their men had died. Their children had been killed. In this desolate desert our fourth Imam, the women and the remaining children are huddled where only a few hours before had stood their camp. Hazrat Abbas, Hazrat Qasim and Hazrat Ali Akbar had taken turns to guard the camp. Now Bibi Zainab and Bibi Kulthoom lay awake to make sure that Imam Zain ul 'Abideen and the children were not attacked.

Suddenly, Bibi Zainab notices that Bibi Sakina has disappeared. She is alarmed. She looks around but Husayn's darling daughter is not to be seen. Bibi Zainab slowly walks to the battle field. She comes to where Hazrat Abbas lay."Abbas! Abbas! My dear brother, have you seen Sakina?" There is silence! She makes her way to where Husayn's headless body lay. There, hugging her father, she finds Bibi Sakina, deep in sleep!!

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