

Towards Karbala

'Uqba Ibn Sim'an reported:

We set out at once with him and he became drowsy while he was on his horse's back. He woke up, saying, *"We belong to God and to Him we will return. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds."*

He did that twice or three times, then his son, "Ali Ibn al Husayn approached him and asked: *"Why are you praising God and repeating the verse of returning to Him?"* "My son," he answered, *"I nodded off and a horseman appeared to me, riding a horse and he said: 'Men are travelling and the fates travel towards them.' Then I knew it was our own souls announcing our deaths to us."*

"Father," asked (the youth), *"does God regard you as evil? Are we not in the right?"* *"Indeed (we are),"* he answered, *"by Him to Whom all His servants must return."*

"Father," said (the youth), *"then we need have no concern, if we are going to die righteously."*

"May God give you the best reward a son can get for (his behaviour towards) his father," answered al Husayn, peace be on him.

In the morning, he stopped and prayed the morning prayer. Then he hurried to remount and to continue the journey with his followers, veering to the left with the intention of separating from (al-Hurr's men). However al-Hurr Ibn Yazid came towards him and stopped him and his followers (from going in that direction) and he began to (exert pressure to) turn them towards Kufa, but they resisted him. So they stopped (doing that) but they still accompanied them in the same way until they reached Ninawa, (which was) the place where al Husayn, peace be on him, stopped. Suddenly there appeared a rider on a fast mount, bearing weapons and carrying a bow on his shoulder, coming from Kufa. They all stopped and watched him. When he reached them, he greeted al-Hurr and his followers and did not greet al-Husayn and his followers. He handed a letter from Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad to al-Hurr. In it (was the following):

When this letter reaches you and my messenger comes to you, make al Husayn come to a halt. But only let him stop in an open place without vegetation. I have ordered my messenger to stay with you and not to leave you until he brings me (news of) your carrying out my instructions.

Greetings.

When al-Hurr had read the letter, he told them, *“This is a letter from the governor Ubayd Allah. He has ordered me to bring you to a halt at a place which his letter suggests. This is his messenger and he has ordered him not to leave me until I carry out the order with regard to you.”*

Yazid (Ibn Ziyad) Ibn al-Muhajir al-Kindi who was with al Husayn, peace be on him, looked at the messenger of Ibn Ziyad and he recognized him, *“May your mother be deprived of you,”* he exclaimed, *“what a business you have come to!”* *“I have obeyed my Imam and remained faithful to my pledge of allegiance,”* (the other man) answered.

“You have been disobedient to your Lord and have obeyed your Imam in bringing about the destruction of your soul,” responded Ibn al-Muhajir. *“You have acquired (eternal) shame (for yourself) and (the punishment of) Hell-fire. What a wicked Imam your Imam is! Indeed God has said:*

We have made them Imams who summon (people) to Hellfire and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped. (28: 41)

Your Imam is one of those.”

Al-Hurr Ibn Yazid began to make the people stop in a place that was without water and where there was no village.

“Shame upon you, let us stop at this village or that one,” said al- Husayn, peace be on him. He meant by this, Ninawa and al- Ghadiriyya, and by that, Shufayya.

“By God, I cannot do that,” replied (al-Hurr), *“for this man has been sent to me as a spy.”*

“Son of the Apostle of God,” said Zuhayr Ibn al-Qayn, *“I can only think that after what you have seen, the situation will get worse than what you have seen. Fighting these people, now, will be easier for us than fighting those who will come against us after them. For by my life, after them will come against us such (a number) as we will not have the power (to fight) against.”*

“I will not begin to fight against them,” answered al Husayn.

That was Thursday, 2nd of (the month of) Muharram in the year 61 A.H.(680). On the next day, Umar Ibn Sad Ibn Abi Waqqas, set out from Kufa with four thousand horsemen. He stopped at Ninawa and sent for 'Urwa Ibn Qays al-Ahmasi and told him, *“Go to him (al- Husayn) and ask him: What brought you, and what do you want?”* Urwa was one of those who had written to al Husayn, peace be on him, and he was ashamed to do that. The same was the case with all the leaders who had written to him, and all of them refused and were unwilling to do that. Kathir Ibn Abd Allah al-Shabi stood up – he was a brave knight who never turned his face away from anything – and said, *“I will go to him. By God, if you wish, I will rush on him.”*

"I don't want you to attack him," said 'Umar, "but go to him and ask him what has brought him."

As Kathir was approaching him, Abu Thumama al-Saidi saw him and said to al Husayn, *"May God benefit you, Abu Abd Allah, the wickedest man in the land, the one who has shed the most blood and the boldest of them all in attack, is coming towards you."*

Then (Abu Thumama) stood facing him and said, *"Put down your sword."*

"No, by God," he replied, "I am only a messenger. If you will listen to me, I will tell you (the message) which I have been sent to bring to you. If you refuse, I will go away."

"I will take the hilt of your sword," answered (Abu Thumama), "and you can say what you need to."

"No, by God, you will not touch it," he retorted.

"Then tell me what you have brought and I will inform him for you. But I will not let you go near him, for you are a charlatan."

They both (stood there and) cursed each other. Then (Kathir) went back to Umar Ibn Sad and told him the news (of what had happened).

Umar summoned Qurra Ibn Qays al-Hanzali and said to him, *"Shame upon you Qurra, go and meet al Husayn and ask him what brought him and what he wants."*

Qurra began to approach him. When al Husayn, peace be on him, saw him approaching, he asked, *"Do you know that man?"* *"Yes," replied Habib Ibn Muzahir, "he is from the Hanzala clan of Tamim. He is the son of our sister. I used to know him as a man of sound judgement. I would not have thought that he would be present at this scene."*

He came and greeted al Husayn, peace be on him. Then he informed him of 'Umar Ibn Sa'd's message.

"The people of this town of yours wrote to me that I should come," answered al Husayn, peace be on him. "However, if now you have come to dislike me, then I will leave you."

"Shame upon you, Qurra," Habib Ibn Muzahir said to him, "will you return to those unjust men? Help this man through whose fathers God will grant you (great) favour."

"I will (first) return to my leader with the answer to his message," replied Qurra, "and then I will reflect on my views."

He went back to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd and gave him his report.

"I hope that God will spare me from making war on him and fighting against him," said 'Umar and then he wrote to 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. I am (writing this from) where I have positioned myself, near al Husayn, and I have asked him what brought him and what he wants. He answered: 'The people of this land wrote to me and their messengers came to me asking me to come and I have done so. However if (now) they have some to dislike me and (the position) now appears different to them from what their messengers brought to me, I will go away from them.'

Hassan Ibn Qa'id al-'Absi reported:

I was with 'Ubayd Allah when this letter came to him, he read it and then he recited, "Now when our claws cling to him, he hopes for escape but he will be prevented (now) from (getting) any refuge."

He wrote to 'Umar Ibn Sa'd:

Your letter has reached me and I have understood what you mentioned. Offer al Husayn (the opportunity) of him and all his followers pledging allegiance to Yazid. If he does that, we will then see what our judgement will be.

When the answer reached Umar Ibn Sa'd, he said, *"I fear that 'Ubayd Allah will not accept that I should be spared (fighting al- Husayn)."*

(Almost immediately) after it, there came (another) letter from Ibn Ziyad (in which he said), *"Prevent al Husayn and his followers from (getting) water. Do not let them taste a drop of it just as was done with 'Uthman Ibn Affan."*

At once Umar Ibn Said sent Amr bin al-Hajjaj with five hundred horsemen to occupy the path to the water and prevent al Husayn and his followers from (getting) water in order that they should (not) drink a drop of it. That was three days before the battle against al- Husayn, peace be on him.

Abd Allah Ibn al Husayn al-Azdi, who was numbered among Bajila, called out at the top of his voice, *"Husayn, don't you see that the water is as if in the middle of heaven. By God, you will not taste a drop of it until you die of thirst."*

"O God, make him die of thirst and never forgive him," cried al- Husayn, peace be on him.

– Kitab al Irshad

Shaykh al Mufid

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– Tahrike Tarsile Quran

Paper back – ISBN 0-940368-11-0

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/tragedy-karbala/towards-karbala#comment-0>