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Campaign of the Family of Abu Talib

When 'Abdullah Ibn Muslim was killed, the family of Abu Talib undertook a collective campaign. Al-Husayn ('a), called out to them saying, "*Be patient, O cousins! By Allah! After today you shall not meet any hardship at all.*"[1]

The assailants were comprised of 'Awn Ibn 'Abdullah, son of Ja'far at-Tayyar and the wise lady Zainab, his brother Muhammad son of al-Khawsa, 'Abdul-Rahman Ibn 'Aqil Ibn Abu Talib,[2] his brother Ja'far son of 'Aqil, and Muhammad son of Muslim Ibn 'Aqil.[3]

As many as eighteen wounds were received by al-Hasan II son of Imam al-Hasan, [older] grandson of the Prophet (S), and his right hand was cut off, but he was not martyred yet.

Abu Bakr son of the Commander of the Faithful ('a),[4] whose first name was Muhammad,[5] came out and was killed by Zahr Ibn Badr al-Nakh'i.[6]

'Abdullah Ibn 'Aqil now came out and kept fighting till his wounds overwhelmed him, so he fell. 'Uthman Ibn Khalid al-Tamimi took advantage of the situation, walked to him and killed him.

Arabs are not only names for glory
The sons of 'Amr are only offspring,
For there is for Prophethood a crown
And for the Imamate a necklace worn.
Two ornaments none but they can wear
How can you a wearer with a bare one compare?
From Shaybat al-Hamd descended youths who
Happily marched to support the creed
Neither arrogantly nor for a show.
They smile as the heroes frown

Showing pearls their front ones.
Like ships they sailed to the war
And ships are only their vanguards.
Had happiness not been their goal
I would not have left any of their foes at all.
They do not mind as the swords clamour
With warriors covering the plain like an armour.
And the lances collide and sound
And the arrows vary in their round,
And heads get severed from their shoulders
And chests are arranged in their insolence.[7]

Al-Qasim and His Brother

Abu Bakr, son of Imam al-Hasan son of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), came out. His first name was ‘Abdullah al-Akbar [‘Abdullah senior] and his mother was an “*umm walad*”[8] named Ramla.[9] He fought till he was killed.[10]

After the latter, his full-blooded brother, al-Qasim, came out.[11] He was a lad who had not yet come of age. When al-Husayn (‘a), looked at him, he hugged him and wept.[12]
Then he permitted him to fight, so he came out with a face looking like a full moon[13] bearing a sword and wearing a shirt and a mantle. On his feet he wore sandals. He had to fight on foot.

The sandal's string on his left foot was cut off,[14] so he, the son of the great Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, hated to walk bare-footed on the battlefield.

He, therefore, stopped for a moment to tie his sandal,[15] regarding those enemies as no more valuable than his own sandal, paying no heed to their multitude, feeling unconcerned about their thousands.

He leaned to mend his shoe
As the war near him drew
Their war, they knew,
Was no more precious than his shoe,
Carrying his sword, by its sheath shaded,
Do not worry about what he did,
For a branch is rendered to its root.
After the clouds comes the rain
And a cub is but a lions' son.[16]

As he was thus engaged, ‘Amr Ibn Sa’d Ibn Nafil al-Azdi attacked him. Hamid Ibn Muslim asked him, “What do you want to do to this lad? Are you not satisfied to see all the crowd that surrounds him?” He said, “By Allah I shall attack him!” He hit al-Qasim with his sword. The lad fell face forward crying out, “O uncle!”.

Al-Husayn (‘a) came out to his help like an angry lion and struck ‘Amr with his sword. ‘Amr tried to avoid it with his arm, so the Imam cut it off from the elbow, causing him to let out a very loud scream which was heard by the entire army. The cavalry of Ibn Sa’d charged in order to rescue him. ‘Amr met them face-to-face, causing their horses to trample upon him and to eventually kill him.

After some time the cloud of dust dissipated, so al-Husayn (‘a) was now seen standing at the head of the young boy, examining his feet. Al-Husayn (‘a) said, “Away with people who have killed you while their opponent on the Day of Judgment will be your grandfather (S)!”

Then he said, “Hard it is, by Allah, that you call upon your uncle to help you and he cannot answer your call, or that he does answer it but cannot do much for you. It is a lone voice whose enemies are numerous and whose supporters are few.”

Then he carried him away. Al-Qasim was on al-Husayn's chest; his legs were dragging on the ground. Al-Husayn (‘a) put the corpse beside that of ‘Ali al-Akbar and of those of his family who had been killed.[17]

Then he raised his eyes to the heavens and supplicated thus:

“*O Allah! Count their numbers, and do not leave any of them alone, and do not forgive a single one of them! Be patient, O cousins! Be patient, O my Ahl al-Bayt! You shall never meet any hardship after today at all.*”[18]

Never can I tell you enough about al-Qasim
Son of the chosen one al-Hasan,
Engaged in the war paying no heed
To what in it went on,
As if its swords to him spoke,
As if they were beauties with him flirting,
As if their lances were cups
Served to him by their waiter to drink.
Had he minded any danger or had he
Feared death, he would not have mended a shoe
In its midst before him stood his foe,

As many as the sands in count.
From beneath comes the assault and from high
He would not have worn on his head a shield.
So with his white sword he was painted red,
Except when you did see him being distracted
From the struggle, and souls do slacken,
And that was only a lion's slumber,
One who paid no heed to the number
Of his foes, of what their sword could do,
So he fell down and for help cried,
And the Prophet's grandson did to him respond,
And it was what it was from its *da'i.*
The falcon took him and with his peers joined.
Their first were killed and so was their last.
Oppressed was he, yet the sun's heads were ripe,
And only his sharp sword was the harvester,
Till became fed–up was the sword,
And from the sword the valley overflowed.
The dark clouds by the steeds raised
Were uncovered showing their riders
And what was hidden was revealed.
He was seen hugging on his chest a moon
Decorated by the blood on his forehead.
He took him carrying him to the camp
And his eyes were reddened by their tears.
On the page of the ground did his feet leave marks
Dotted by his tears, followed by his heart.
O what a shining moon that removed
With his eclipse how he wiped it out!

Brothers of al–'Abbas

When al–'Abbas (‘a), saw how such a large number of his family members were being killed, he said to his brothers ‘Abdullah, ‘Uthman, and Ja'far, “Advance, O brothers, so that I may see you supporting the cause of Allah and His Messenger (S).”

Then he turned to ‘Abdullah, their oldest, and said, “Advance, O brother, so that I may see you receiving the honour of martyrdom.”.[19]

They fought in front of Abul-Fadl, al-'Abbas, till they were all killed.

How good the Lord's many sacrifices
Offered on the banks of the Euphrates!
The best of guidance is that
Sacrifices come from those who guide,
After having said their prayers
Spent to be for the prayers sacrifices.[20]

Martrydom of al-'Abbas

Al-'Abbas could no longer bear life after having seen how his companions and the members of his family killed and how the Hujjah of his time was suffering from the great number of the enemies surrounding him after his supply route had been cut off and after hearing the women wailing and the children crying of thirst.

He, therefore, sought permission from his brother. Since al-'Abbas ('a) was the most precious asset to the grandson of the Prophet (S), who is soon to be martyred, especially since the foes always dreaded having to fight him and feared his advance, and how the ladies felt a sense of security upon seeing the standard raised high, the sacred soul of the Father of the Oppressed did not accept to part with him.

The Imam ('a) said to him, "*O brother! You are my standard-bearer*!"[21] Al-'Abbas ('a) said, "I am fed-up with these hypocrites, and I want to seek revenge against them."

Al-Husayn ('a) ordered him to bring water for the children, so al-'Abbas went to those people and admonished them, warning them of the Wrath of the Omnipotent, but all of that fell on deaf ears.

He then shouted: "*O 'Umar Ibn Sa'd! Here is al-Husayn son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah! You have killed his companions and family, and here are his children suffering from thirst! Give them some water, for thirst has burnt their hearts!*"

As he kept repeating his pleas, he also kept saying to them, "*Let me go to Rome or to India, and I shall leave Hijaz and Iraq for you all.*"

There were some people among the enemy ranks who were genuinely moved by those pleas, so they wept, but al-Shimr shouted as loudly as he could, "O son of Abu Turab! Had the face of earth been entirely covered with water, and had it been in our hands, we would still have not given you a drop of it to drink unless you swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid!"

Al–’Abbas went back to his brother to tell him of the outcome of his negotiations with those ruffians. Al–’Abbas heard the children crying of thirst,[22] so he could not tolerate the situation any longer. He was fired up with his Hashemi zeal.

The one whose light enables all to see
At Karbla’ is killed and none to bury,
O Grandson of the Prophet! May He
Reward you with goodness for us and for me,
May your balance of Good Deeds never fall short.
To me you were a mountain where I seek resort.
To be kind to kinsfolk you used to always exhort.
Who now shall to the orphans and the destitute import
And to whom shall the helpless go when in need?
By Allah! Never shall I fall short of my every deed
By trading you for anyone else's worth
Till I am buried between the sands and the earth

Then he rode his horse and took the water bag. As many as four thousand archers soon surrounded him and shot him with their arrows, yet their large number did not impede his attempt. He kept chasing those throngs alone as his standard kept fluttering above.

Those people could not tell whether that was al–’Abbas who was thus slaughtering their heroes or the *wasi* roaring on the battlefield. Their men could not maintain their grounds before him, and he succeeded in getting into the Euphrates river heedless of the huge crowd around him.

The mighty lions mourn their youths
And their saviours when calamity overwhelms,
Mourning them with blood. So tell the burning heart
How the red sigh does ascend;
It yearns, but its yearning is crying,
It mourns, but its mourning is only by sign.[23]

The moment he took one handful of water to drink he remembered how thirsty al–Husayn (‘a) and those with him were, so he spilled it then said:[24]

O soul! After al–Husayn nobody does count!
After him, you should to nothing amount,

Here is al–Husayn nearing his end
While you drink of cool water?!
By Allah! Such is not a deed
At all enjoined by my creed![25]

Then he filled the water bag, rode his horse, and went in the direction of the camp. His path was blocked, so he kept killing those who blocked it till he was able to make his way through them as he was saying:

I do not fear death when it calls upon me,
Till among the swords you bury me.
My soul protects the one
Who is the Prophet's grandson,
Al–'Abbas am I, the water bag do I bear
When I meet evil, I know no fear!

Zayd Ibn al–Ruqad al–Jahni ambushed him from behind a palm tree assisted by Hakim Ibn al–Tufayl al–Sanbasi, dealing a sword blow to his right arm, completely severing it. He (‘a), said,

By Allah! If you cut off my right hand,
I shall not cease defending my creed,
And an Imam true to his conviction do I defend,
A son of the trustworthy Prophet whom Allah did send.

He did not pay attention to the fact that his right hand had been cut off because he was only concerned about getting the water to the children and the family of al–Husayn (‘a), but Hakim Ibn al–Tufayl was still hiding behind another palm tree when he passed by.

Hakim struck him with his sword on his left hand, amputating it, too,[26] and soon a large number of men were surrounding him. Arrows fell on him like rain, piercing the water bag and boring a hole in it through which its water was completely spilled. An arrow pierced his chest.[27] A man hit him with a pole on his head, severely injuring him.

Beside al–'Alqami he fell, how I wish to witness
Those who subdued him drinking of bitterness.

He fell on the ground shouting, “Peace unto you from me, O father of ‘Abdullah!” Al–Husayn (‘a) rushed to him.[28] How I wish to know in what condition he went to him, with a soul imperiled by this great loss, or

by the brotherhood that pulls a brother to his beloved brother...

Yes; al-Husayn (‘a) reached him and witnessed how sacrifice is being offered to the Holy One on a plain covered with blood and crowned with arrows. Al-’Abbas had no might nor speech nor anything whereby he could keep his foes away. He could not even see anything; his head was on the ground bleeding.

Is it accurate to say that al-Husayn (‘a) saw all of these calamities and still had any strength whereby he could stand on his feet? Only al-Husayn remained after the martyrdom of Abul-Fadl. He remained a figure staring in the sky, stripped of all the necessities of life.

He, Allah's peace be upon him, described his condition best when he said, “Now my spine has been split and my endeavour is further weakened.”29

Disappointment marked his forehead,
So the mountains crumbled for his pain.
Why not since it was the beauty of his face
And on his forehead the pleasure of his heart?
O supporter of his family, waterer of his children,
Bearer of the standard with all his determination!30

He left him where he had fell and did not move him anywhere due to a hidden reason which time later unveiled:

He was to be buried where he had fallen separately from the other martyrs so that he would have a mausoleum of his own visited by those who seek his intercession with the Almighty to grant them the fulfillment of their wishes, and so that his gravesite would be a place for the *ziyarat* of the people who seek nearness to the Almighty, Praise to Him, under its dome that stands lofty in the sky, glowing.

It is there that dazzling miracles manifest themselves and the nation thereby comes to know his lofty status and station with Allah Almighty. It then carries out its obligation of loving him which is renewed by continuous visits.

Greeting him will establish a link between them and Allah, the most Exalted. It was the desire of the Hujjah of his time, the father of ‘Abdullah (‘a), and of the Omnipotent, Praise to Him, that the apparent status enjoyed by Abul-Fadl al-’Abbas should be similar to the one preserved for him in the hereafter, and so it was.

Al-Husayn (‘a) went back to the camp feeling extremely depressed, tearful. He kept wiping his tears with his cuffs as men raced with one another to assault his camp.

He called out: “*Is there anyone who helps us?! Is there anyone who grants us security?! Is there anyone who seeks justice, so he supports us?! Is there anyone who fears the Fire, so he defends us?!*”[31]

Sukayna, his daughter, came to him and asked him about her uncle al–’Abbas. He told her of his being killed. Zainab heard him revealing this sad news, so she cried out, “*O brother! O ‘Abbas! O our loss after you!*” Women wept, and al–Husayn (‘a) wept, too, and said, “O our loss after you!”

He called, filling the valleys with his cries
Even solid stones from their horrors are in pain
O Brother! Who after you shall guard Muhammad's daughters
When they seek mercy from the merciless?
My hands after you are paralyzed,
My eyes blinded, and split is my spine,
For others, cheeks are beaten,
But these white deer before my eyes
Are now beating their cheeks.
Between your terrible death and my own
Is like I call you before and you are pleased,
Here is your sword: Who after you
Shall with it subdue the foes?
And here is your standard: Who shall with it advance?
O son of my father! You have dwarfed in my eyes
The death of all my offspring,
And the wound is healed only by
What is more painful, so
He knelt over and his tears
Painted the ground like gold,
He wished to kiss his lips but he found
No place spared from a weapon's kiss.[32]

1. This statement appears on p. 256, Vol. 6, of Ibn Jarir al–Tabari's Tarikh, whereas the call for perseverance is recorded on p. 78, Vol. 2, of al–Khawarizmi's Maqtal al–Husayn and on p. 64 of Al–Luhuf of Ibn Tawus.
2. On p. 57 of his book Al–Mujir, Ibn Habib, the genealogist, says, “Khadija daughter of ‘Ali, was the wife of ‘Abdul–Raman Ibn ‘Aqil.” On p. 89 of Ibn Qutaybah's book Al–Ma’arif, where the biography of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is discussed, the author says that she gave birth to [‘Abdul–Rahman's] son Sa’id. On p. 57 of Ibn Habib's book Al–Mujir, [after the death of her husband] she was married to Abul–Sanabil, namely ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Amir Ibn Kariz.
3. According to p. 217, Vol. 3, of al–Thahabi's book Siyar A’lam al–Nubala’, ‘Abdullah and ‘Abdul–Rahman, sons of Muslim Ibn ‘Aqil Ibn Abu Talib, were both killed with al–Husayn (‘a).
4. According to p. 118 of Ibn Hazm's book Jamharat Ansab al–’Arab, p. 119, Vol. 1, of Ibn al–Jawzi's boon Safwat al–

Safwah, and p. 98, Vol. 2, of al-Khawarizmi's book Maqtal al-Husayn, Abu Bakr son of Layla daughter of Mas'ud was killed with al-Husayn (‘a).

5. Both Al-Irshad and I'lam al-Wara count him among the sons of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a). On p. 28, Vol. 2, of al-Khawarizmi's book Maqtal al-Husayn, his name appears as ‘Abdullah. On p. 119, Vol. 1, of Safwat al-Safwah, he is named Muhammad Asghar [Junior] son of "umm walad." He was killed with al-Husayn (‘a).

6. Ibn Shahr Ashub, Al-Manaqib, Vol. 221, p. 2. According to al-Khawarizmi's Maqtal al-Husayn, his name was Zahr Ibn Qays al-Nakh'i. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, in his book Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, states that his corpse was found in a canal; nobody knew who had killed him.

7. These verses were composed by the authority Shaikh ‘Abd al-Husayn Sadiq al-'Amili, may Allah sanctify his soul.

8. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 269. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, p. 34.

9. According to Al-Hada'iq al-Wardiyyah, his mother and the mother of al-Qasim was Ramla. On p. 103 of Tathkirat al-Khawass, where the author, namely Ibn al-Jawzi, the grandson, relies on Ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat, Nufayla was the mother of al-Qasim, Abu Bakr, and ‘Abdullah, whereas Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, in his book Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, says that she was "umm walad" whose genealogy was not known. On p. 50 of the same reference, where the author traces Mis'ab Ibn al-Zubayr's genealogy to Quraish, it is stated that al-Qasim and Abu Bakr were both killed at the Battle of al-Taff, leaving no offspring.

10. According to p. 127 of al-Tabarsi's book I'lam al-Wara and to Al-Mujdi fil Nasab of Abul-Hasan al-'Amri, as well as in Is'af al-Raghibin in a footnote referring to p. 202 of Nur al-Absar, he is said to have married Sukayna daughter of al-Husayn (‘a). On p. 64 of his book Al-Mutaradifat, al-Mada'ini, in the first group of rare manuscripts he categorizes, says that ‘Abdullah Ibn al-Hasan was her first husband.

11. All references to the alleged wedding of al-Qasim are not true. Al-Qasim had not yet come of age, and no authentic historical record supports such an allegation. Shaikh Fakhr ad-Din al-Turayhi is a greatly knowledgeable man. Nobody can fairly attribute to him such a myth. Its existence is his book is a deliberate and unauthorized addition, and al-Turayhi shall question [on the Judgement Day] whoever incorporated it in his book. I do not know where his eminence Sayyid ‘Ali Muhammad of Lucknow, who is titled the "crown of scholars", got his information from so he wrote a dissertation about that wedding which he named "al-Qasimiyya" as we are told on p. 4, Vol. 17, of al-Tehrani's voluminous work Al-Thari'ah.

12. al-Khawarizmi, Maqtal al-Husayn, Vol. 2, p. 27. al-Khawarizmi says that al-Husayn (‘a) was reluctant to permit him to go, but the chap kept begging him, kissing his hands and feet, till he consented. I say that this claim is contradicted by what is stated in the discussion of the events during the night that preceded ‘Ashura, when al-Husayn (‘a) informed his companions and family members that they would all be killed, including al-Qasim and his own infant son. Like the tale of al-Qasim's wedding, this is a groundless claim.

13. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 256. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil al-Talibyyin. I'lam al-Wara, p. 146. al-Khawarizmi, Maqtal al-Husayn, Vol. 2, p. 27.

14. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 256. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil al-Talibiyyin. al-Mufid, Al-Irshad. al-Khawarizmi, Maqtal al-Husayn, Vol. 2, p. 27. Authors of both Al-Irshad and I'lam al-Wara say "One of his shoe laces was cut off."

15. Thakhirat al-Darayn, p. 152. Ibsar al-'Ayan, p. 37. I say that it does not surprise me to see how this descendant of the Chosen Prophet (S) thus heedless of the odds on the battlefield. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, on p. 144, Vol. 11, of his book Al-Aghani, says, "Ja'far Ibn ‘Alyah Ibn Rab'i Ibn ‘Abd Yaghuth of Banu al-Harith Ibn Ka'b was once captured and his shoe string was cut off. He stopped to mend it. A man asked him, ‘Does not the trouble in which you are distract your mind from doing that?' Ja'far answered by composing a line of poetry meaning: ‘More hard for me than shoe-string mending is my foe seeing me to troubles succumbing.'"

16. These verses were composed by the authority Sayyid Mir ‘Ali Abu Tibikh, may Allah have mercy on him.

17. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 257. Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, Vol. 8, p. 186. al-Mufid, Al-Irshad.

18. al-Khawarizmi, Maqtal al-Husayn, Vol. 2, p. 28.

19. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, pp. 32-33.

20. These verses were composed by Thiqatul-Islam Shaikh Muhammad Tahir from the family of the faqih Shaikh Radi, may Allah sanctify him.

21. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 10, p. 251. ‘Abdullah Nur-Allah al-Bahrani, Maqtal al-'Awalim, p. 94.

22. al-Qazwini, Tazallum al-Zahra', p. 118.

23. Excerpted from a poem by Kashif al-Ghi□a', may Allah sanctify him.

24. al-Turayhi, Al-Muntakhab, p. 311 (third edition), majlis 9, night 10. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 10, p. 201. 'Abdullah Nur-Allah al-Bahrani, Maqtal al-'Awalim, p. 95. al-Qazwini, Tazallum al-Zahra', p. 119. Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi al-Musawi, Riyad al-Masa'ib, p. 313.

25. Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi al-Musawi, Riyad al-Masa'ib, p. 313.

26. Ibn Shahr Ashub, Al-Manaqib, Vol. 1, p. 221.

27. Riyad al-Masaib, p. 315.

28. al-Turayhi, Al-Muntakhab, p. 312 (Hayderi Press, 369 A.H.). Riyad al-Masa'ib, p. 315. According to p. 222, Vol. 2, of Ibn Shahr Ashub's book Al-Manaqib, Hakim Ibn al-Tufayl hit him with an iron bar on his head.

29. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 10, p. 251. al-Qazwini, Tazallum al-Zahra', p. 120.

30. Excerpted from a rajaz poem by the authority Ayatullah Shaikh Muhammad Husayn al-Isfahani, may Allah sanctify him.

31. Al-Muntakhab, p. 312.

32. These verses were composed by Sayyid Ja'far al-Hilli. They are published in their entirety in Muthir al-Ahzan by the 'Allama Shaikh Sharif al-Jawahiri.

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