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Muslim bin Aqeel's departure from Makkah in mid-Ramazan according to the discourse by Mas'oodi

(Irshad) As quoted by Mas'oodi, Muslim bin Aqeel (a.s.) reached Madina and offered Prayers at the Masjide Nabawi and bade farewell to his household. He took along with him two people from Bani Qays as guides to direct the way and left. They took a wrong road and hence lost the way. They became thirsty and could no longer walk further. The two men who had escorted Muslim died due to severe thirst, but they directed him to the way before dying.

Muslim advanced further and stopped at a renowned halting place called Mazeeq and dispatched Qays bin Mus-hir Saydawi with a letter to Imam Husayn (a.s.) which read as follows: "Now then! I left Madina accompanied by two escorts as guides, but we lost the way and became intense thirsty and the two associates died because of it. We proceeded further until we found water and hence saved ourselves and this place called Mazeeq in Batne Jannat. I consider this to be an ill omen, if you deem fit please relieve me and dispatch someone else to pursue this task. Salutations."

Imam Husayn (a.s.) replied to him:

"Now then! I fear regarding your excuse to relieve you from the task for which I sent you is due to fright. Therefore proceed further towards what I sent you. Salutations."

When Muslim read the letter, he said that he did not fear anything for himself and proceeded further. He reached a water place, which was of Bani Tayy and dismounted there and then proceeded further. Suddenly Muslim saw a hunter shoot an arrow towards a Gazelle, who came into his sight and killed it. Thus Muslim said, "Allah willing, we too shall kill our enemies thus", and then proceeded further.

As is written in Murujuz Zahab, that he (Muslim) entered Kufa on the fifth of the month of Shawwal. According to the narration of Tabari, he resided at the house of Mukhtar bin Abi Ubaydah and the Shi'ah came to visit him. Then when a group of people gathered, he read the letter of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to them, hearing which they started weeping. Then Abis bin Abi Shabeeb Shakiri arose and after Praising and Glorifying Allah said, "Now then! I do not speak for the people, nor am I aware as to what is concealed in their hearts, and thus I do not want to deceive you. By Allah! I only say that which is in my heart. By Allah! I shall respond to you whenever you call out, and shall fight your enemies by your side. And in your presence I shall strike them with the sword until I meet Allah, and I do not intend anything except Allah's favor (in lieu of all this)."

Then Habib bin Mazahir Faq'asi stood up and said, "May Allah's blessings be upon you! You have revealed concisely whatever you had in your mind. I swear by Allah, besides Whom there is no other Deity, that I too am of the same belief as of this man (referring to Abis who preceded him)", and then he repeated what Abis had said.

Hajjaj bin Ali says that I asked Muhammad bin Bashr that, "Did you not reply to him (Muslim)"? He replied, "I desired that Allah would grant success and esteem to my friends, but I did not appreciate being killed nor did I like to utter a lie."

(Irshad) Eighteen thousand men swore the oath of allegiance to Muslim and hence he wrote to Imam Husayn (a.s.) informing him about their oath, and invited him to come to Kufa. This letter was written by Muslim some twenty seven days before his martyrdom. The Shi'ah visited Muslim quite frequently and the place of his whereabouts became known.

Nu'man bin Basheer issues warning to the people of Kufa

This news reached Nu'man bin Basheer, who was made the governor of Kufa by Mu'awiyah and Yazid too had let him remain in his place. He ascended the pulpit and after Praising and Glorifying Allah said,

"Now then! O slaves of Allah! Fear Allah and do not make haste in spreading mischief and discord, for it will result in the murder of men, bloodshed and confiscation of wealth. I do not fight the one who does not confront me, nor do I advance towards the one who does not advance towards me. I do not vilify you nor do I call for account anyone by mere suspicion or accusation. But if you turn your face away from me and break the oath of allegiance or try to oppose your Imam, then by Allah, besides Whom there is no other Deity, I shall then strike you with my sword until it's hilt remains in my hand even if there does not remain my supporter among you. Yet I hope that those among you who know the truth are numerous than those whom falsehood will (ultimately) destroy."

Abdullah bin Muslim bin Rabi'ah Hazrami, who was an ally of the Bani Umayyah stood up and said,

"This mischief which you now see will not cease except by the use of force, and this attitude which you

have towards the enemies is that of the timid ones."

Nu'man replied,

"If I remain timid while obeying Allah, then I cherish it than remaining mighty while disobeying Him",

saying this he alighted from the pulpit and left. Abdullah bin Muslim came out and then wrote a letter to Yazid bin Mu'awiyah saying,

"Muslim bin Aqeel has come to Kufa and the Shi'ah have pledged the oath of allegiance to him on behalf of Husayn bin Ali. Then if you desire that Kufa should remain under your domain, dispatch a powerful man who would implement your orders and act according to your command. For Nu'man bin Basheer is a feeble man or is deliberately showing as weak."

Ammarah bin Uqbah and Umar bin Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas too wrote similar letters to Yazid. When these letters reached Yazid he called for Sarjoon, the slave of Mu'awiyah and said,

"Husayn has sent Muslim bin Aqeel to Kufa and people have started pledging their oath of allegiance to him, while Nu'man is a feeble man and there are other bad reports regarding him. According to your opinion whom should I nominate as the governor of Kufa in his stead"?

During that period Yazid was annoyed with Ubaydullah bin Ziyad. Sarjoon replied,

"If today Mu'awiyah becomes alive would you listen to his counsel"?

Yazid replied in the affirmative. Sarjoon produced a letter of Mu'awiyah appointing Ubaydullah bin Ziyad as the governor of Kufa, and then said,

"This is the advice of Mu'awiyah, for when he was about to die, he intended bestowing the governorship of Kufa and Basra both to Ubaydullah."

Yazid agreed and sent a message to Ubaydullah. Then he called for Muslim bin 'Amr Bahilee, the father of Qutaybah, and handed over a letter in the name of Ubaydullah whose contents were as follows:

"Now then! My followers in Kufa have written to me that the son of Aqeel is gathering troops to spread rebellion among the Muslims. Then when you read my letter, hasten towards Kufa and search for the son of Aqeel as if you were looking for a bead, until you find him. Then bind him (in chains), either kill him or banish him from the city. Salutations."

Yazid also gave him the authority for the Governorship of Kufa. Muslim bin 'Amr proceeded until he reached Ubaydullah at Basra. As soon as Ubaydullah received the command and authority, he ordered to prepare for the journey scheduled for the next day.

An account of the personality of Nu’man bin Basheer

It is appropriate that here we discuss in brief about Nu’man bin Basheer. He name is Nu’man bin Basheer bin Sa’ad bin Nasr bin Sa’labah Khazraji Ansari. His mother is Umrah bint Ruwahah, the sister of Abdullah bin Ruwahah Ansari who was martyred along with Ja’far bin Abu Talib (a.s.) in the battle of Mutah. It is said that Nu’man was the first child among the Ansar (helpers of Madina) to be born after the Prophet entered Madina, just as Abdullah bin Zubayr was the first child to be born among the emigrants after the Prophet’s entry into Madina.

His father Basheer bin Sa’ad was the first person to swear the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr in Saqifa, and like wise the other Ansar followed suit. Basheer was killed in the battle of Aynut Tamar[1] along with Khalid bin Waleed.

Nu’man was from the family of poets and being a follower of Caliph Usman, hated the Kufans because of their love for Imam Ali (a.s.). He was the only Ansar who had accompanied Mu’awiyah in the battle of Siffin. He was considered respectful and of high regard in the eyes of Mu’awiyah, thus Yazid too liked him.

Nu’man remained alive till the Caliphate of Marwan bin Hakam and was the governor of Hamas. When people started swearing the oath of allegiance to Marwan, he invited people towards Abdullah bin Zubayr and opposed Marwan. And this incident occurred when Zahhak bin Qays was killed in Marje Rahit.[2] But the people of Hamas did not pay attention to his call and thus he fled from there, they pursued him until they found him and ultimately killed him. This happened in the year 65 A.H.

As regards Yazid calling him a feeble man and a slanderer, it has been quoted by Ibn Qutaybah Deenawari in his book Al Imamah was Siyasah that, it was so because Nu’man bin Basheer had said that, “The grandson of the Prophet is more dear to me than the grandson of Bahdul.” The grandson of Bahdul was none other than Yazid bin Mu’awiyah whose mother Maysoon was the daughter of Bahdul Kalbiyyah. Ibn Qutaybah is Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Muslim bin Qutaybah bin Muslim bin ‘Amr Bahili, and this Muslim bin ‘Amr is the same person who was sent by Yazid to Ubaydullah nominating him as the governor of Kufa.

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1. Aynut Tamar – A campaign carried out during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, in a view to expand his dominion.
2. Marje Rahit – A battle fought between the followers of Abdullah bin Zubayr and Marwan bin Hakam, Marwan won the battle and thus his caliphate was secured.

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