

Muslim Starts his Trip

With Muslim Ibn ‘Aqil (‘a), al-Husayn (‘a) sent Qays Ibn Mushir al-Saidawi, ‘Imarah Ibn ‘Abdullah al-Saluli, and ‘Abdul-Rahman Ibn ‘Abdullah al-Azdi. He enjoined Muslim to fear Allah, and to find out what the people of Kufa had collectively decided to do. If he saw them united and trustworthy, he should rush a letter to him. 1

Muslim left Mecca on the fifteenth of the month of Ramadhan² using the Medina highway. He reached Medina and went to the Mosque of the Prophet (S), then he bade his family farewell³ after having hired two road guides from the tribe of Qays.

One night the road guides were lost, and they became extremely thirsty. And it was very hot. They said to Muslim (‘a) once they recognized some road marks, “Take yonder road and follow it, perhaps you will be saved.” He, therefore, left them, following their advice. Both road guides died of thirst.⁴

He could not carry them because they were about to pass away. What those road guides had actually seen was not the road itself but some landmarks leading thereto. The distance between them and water was not known, and they were unable to ride on their own, nor could they ride with someone else. Had Muslim (‘a) stayed with them, he, too, would have perished.

The most urgent matter was to preserve precious lives and to continue the march till water could be reached, hence his decision to abandon them where they were. Muslim and those serving him barely survived till they reached the highway and the water source where they rested for a while.

Muslim sent a letter to al-Husayn (‘a) with a messenger whom he hired from those who settled near that water source. He told him about the death of the road guides, about the hardship he underwent, and that he was staying at a narrow passage at Batn al-Khabt awaiting his instructions.

The messenger met al-Husayn (‘a) at Mecca and delivered the letter to him. Al-Husayn (‘a) wrote him back ordering him to continue his march to Kufa without any delay.

Having read the letter, Muslim immediately resumed his trip and passed by a watering place belonging to the tribe of Tay. He alighted there then departed. He saw a man shooting and killing a deer, so he took it as a sign of good omen: the killing of his foe.⁵

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1. al-Mufid, Al-Irshad.
 2. al-Mas'udi, Muruj al-Thahab, Vol. 2, p. 86.
 3. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 198.
 4. al-Dinawari, Al-Akhbar al-Tiwal, p. 232.
 5. al-Mufid, Al-Irshad.

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