

Karbala'

His arrival at Karbala' took place on Muharram 2, 61 A.H/October 5, 680 A.D.¹ He gathered his children, sisters, and other family members. He cast a look at them then burst in tears. He supplicated saying,

“O Allah! We are the progeny of Your Prophet Muhammad! We have been expelled and estranged from our grandfather's sanctuary, and Banu Umayyah oppressed us. O Allah! Seek revenge on them on our behalf, and grant us victory over the oppressing people.”

He approached his companions saying, *“People are the worshippers of this life, giving religion their lip-service; they uphold it as long as their livelihood is profitable. Once they are afflicted with a trial, few, indeed, will be those who uphold religion.”*²

Then he praised Allah and glorified Him, blessing Muhammad and his Progeny, adding,

“Our affair has reached the point which you can see. Life has changed and turned against us. Its goodness has abandoned us, leaving nothing but a trickle like a pot dripping and a life of hardship like an afflicted pasture.

Do you not see how righteousness is not upheld and how falsehood is not shunned? Let every believer desire the meeting with Allah I see death as nothing but a source of happiness while living with the oppressors as sure displeasure”.³

Zuhayr stood up and said, “We have heard your statement, O son of the Messenger of Allah! Had life been secured for us forever, we would still have preferred to rise with you rather than remain therein.”

Burayr stood up and said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah! Allah has blessed us with your company so that we may fight defending you till our parts are cut off for your sake, then your grandfather will intercede on our behalf on the Day of Judgment.”⁴

Nafi' Ibn Hilal said, "You know that your grandfather the Messenger of Allah (S), could not instill his love in the heart of people nor make them obey him and do what he liked them to do, and there were many hypocrites among them who promised to support him while hiding their treacherous intentions against him.

They would meet him and speak to him words sweeter than honey then depart from him with those more bitter than colocynth till Allah took his soul away. Your father 'Ali underwent the same.

There were folks who were unanimous in supporting and fighting with him against those who broke their promises, who regarded themselves as more fair than him, and who abandoned the creed altogether, till he met his fate.

He went to a mercy from Allah and pleasure. Today, you are with us in the same situation: there are those who reneged from their promise of support and who abandoned their oath of loyalty. These shall not harm except their own selves, and Allah shall suffice you for them; so, march with us, being rightly guided and in good health, be it to the east of the earth or to the west.

By Allah, we are not too scared to meet Allah's destiny, nor do we hate to meet our Lord. We are determined to befriend whoever befriends you and be the enemy of whoever antagonizes you."⁵

With my father's life do I sacrifice
Those who, with their own demise,
Opted to meet and support al-Husayn.
They stood to thwart the lances,
And the arrows, like solid statues.
With white necks did they shield him against the swords,
With their glorious faces they kept arrows from him.
A band, they were, that
In a night battle, their lances would sparkle
And if the swords sing, and the cups of death go round,
And everyone sober is elated with joy,
They distanced themselves from the swords,
They separated the foes' souls from their bodies.
Their greatest feast was when they joined al-Husayn
So they became his sacrifice at the *Taff*.
Never shall I forget, though distant from them,
How lofty their glory was though their foe
Numbered as much as the valley's water flow.
Defending the Prophet's creed he was
With a spark that removes the darkness of *shirk*.

So hearts would fly away in terror at his sight,
Whenever he mounted his steed as though on wings;
Then when thirst, and the sun, and the bleeding,
When his arms weighed heavily on him,
He stood for a short respite; it was then when
Fate shot him with an easy arrow,
And the throne fell on the ground,
And with the ashes of the calamity
All was covered with the dark.
My heart was on fire for Zainab when she
Saw how in the dust, heavy with wounds, was his body.
Stole her tongue away was the calamity,
So she addressed him with her tears that were
More eloquent than words could ever be:
O one who shatters misguidance, who brightens the night,
O shade from the heat, O bright light of the day!
You were for me a fortified haven, a cool shade,
When life was still within you,
Can you see how the people
Whenever we pass by you, prohibit us
From mourning you, from weeping, from wailing?
If my humiliation rests easily with you,
If my estrangement with the foes, if my exile,
And if my being a captive in the hands of the foes
Riding on bare she-camels,
Is against my wish to see you
Lingering among dark lances and white swords,
Your corpse on the sands, your head raised on lance's tips.
How I lament those who drank of the pool of death,
How they were kept away from accessible Euphrates...
How I lament those who wore reddened attires
Decorated by wanton winds...6

Al-Husayn ('a) bought the lots where his grave now stands from the residents of Ninawa and al-Ghadiriyya for sixty thousand dirhams. He then turned and gave it back to them as charity on one condition: they lead people to his gravesite and host whoever visited it for three days. Al-Husayn's sanctuary, which he bought, was four miles long by four miles wide.

It is lawful for his offspring and those loyal to him and is prohibited from those who oppose them. It is full

of bliss. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) has said that those people did not fulfill that condition.⁷

When al-Husayn ('a) camped at Karbala', he wrote Ibn al-Hanafiyya and a group from Banu Hashim saying, "It is as if this life has never been, and as if the hereafter has always been, and peace be with you."⁸

1. This date is provided by al-Tabari on p. 233, Vol. 6, of his Tarikh, by Ibn al-Athir on p. 20, Vol. 4, of his book Al-Kamil, and by al-Mufid in his book Al-Irshad.

2. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 10, p. 198. Al-Khawarizmi, Maqatal al-Husayn, Vol. 1, p. 237. The reader cannot escape the implication of al-Husayn, peace be upon him, inquiring about the name of that land. All things related to the Master of Martyrs are obscure mysteries. To us, Imamites, an Imam is acquainted with what goes on in the cosmos of events and epics, knowledgeable of the characteristics which Allah, the most Exalted One, decreed to the beings, the Creator of the heavens and earth that He is, Exalted is He.

In this book's Introduction, we provided proofs for this statement. The secret behind his inquiry about the name of the land which they were prohibited from crossing, or about the fact that Allah Almighty caused his horse to halt just as He had caused the she-camel of the Prophet (S) to halt at the Hudaibiya, is to acquaint his companions with that land, the stage of the sacrifice which they had been promised as was the Prophet (S) or his wali, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, were foretold, so that the hearts might feel contented, and so that the men might be tested, so that the determination may remain firm, and so that sacrifice would be for the sake of the truth. It is then that the knowledge of their cause increases; it is then that they prepare themselves to attain their objective, so that there will be no room for anyone to cast any doubt about Karbala', his resting place.

These issues are not haphazard especially since similar ones had already been reported about the Prophet (S) who had asked about the names of both men who once stood to milk his she-camel and about both mountains on his way to Badr. Was not the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, knowledgeable of all of that? Of course he was. He knew, but reasons hidden from us prompted him to raise the questions. We have referred to such questions on p. 90 of our book, Muslim, the Martyr, under the heading "Muslim is not superstitious." Such sort of questioning is labelled by the scholars of oratory "rhetorical."

Consider how the Creator of everything, the One Whose knowledge encompassed everything small and big, asked Moses, "And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?" (Qur'an, 20:17). He also asked Jesus, "Did you tell people to take you and your mother as two gods?" (Qur'an, 5:116). There is a reason why He raised such questions. He, Glory to Him, had also asked His Friend Abraham: "Have you not already believed [that I can bring the dead back to life]?" (Qur'an, 2:260).

The Almighty was fully knowledgeable of Abraham's conviction. An Imam whom He installs in order to safeguard His Shari'a cannot be thus ignorant. Also, the Master of Martyrs ('a) was not superstitious when he sought refuge with Allah against afflictions, trials and tribulations, when he heard the word "Karbala'."

A superstitious person is not knowledgeable of what will happen to him. Rather, he bases his superstition on certain things the Arabs used to regard as ominous. Al-Husayn ('a) was convinced of what would happen to him of Allah's destiny at the Taff land. He had already been informed of the affliction that would befall him, his family and companions. He was foretold of all of that more than once.

3. This text is recorded in Al-Luhuf by Ibn Tawus. Al-al-Tabari, on p. 229, Vol. 6, of his Tarikh, says that al-Husayn ('a) had delivered this speech at Thu Hasm. On p. 312, Vol. 2, of Al-'Iqd al-Farid; on p. 39, Vol. 3, of Hilyat al-Awliya'; on p. 333, Vol. 4, of Ibn 'Asakir's book, all texts agree with what is recorded in Al-Luhuf of Ibn Tawus. It appears from reviewing p. 192, Vol. 9, of Mujma' al-Zawa'id of Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, from p. 149 of Thakhair al-'Uqba, and from p. 312, Vol. 2, of

Al-'Iqd al-Farid (by Sayyid Muhammad Riḍā al-Asterbadi al-Hilli), that he had delivered that speech on 'Ashura. On p. 209, Vol. 3, of al-Thahabi's book *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, it is stated that al-Husayn ('a) made this statement to his companions when 'Umar Ibn Sa'd confronted him.

4. Ibn Tawus, *Al-Luhuf*, p. 44.

5. al-Bahrani, *Maqatal al-'Awalim*, p. 76.

6. This poem was composed by the scholar Sayyid Riḍā son of Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad al-Hindi.

7. Shaikh al-Baha'i, *Kashkool*, Vol. 2, p. 91 (Egyptian edition), quoting *Kitab al-Ziyarat* by Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Dawud al-Qummi. He is quoted by al-Sayyid Ibn Tawus in the latter's book *Misbah al-Za'ir*. It is amazing to read on p. 245 of *Kitab al-Matajir* how the author did not believe that al-Husayn ('a) had bought four miles of land surrounding his sacred grave, claiming he could not verify this incident from whatever he had read of what other scholars have documented.

Actually, the Commander of the Faithful ('a) had bought the area between al-Khawarnaq and al-Hira from one direction, and from there to Kufa from the other, for forty thousand dirhams. He told those who criticized him for doing so that that land was barren. "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S)," said the Imam ('a), "that there are two Kufas: the first will answer the call of the second; seventy thousand shall be gathered from there to enter Paradise without reckoning; so I desired that they would do so from my own property." See also p. 29, Chapter Two, of Ibn Tawus's book *Farhat al-Ghari* (Najaf: The Hayderi Press).

8. Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kamil al-Ziyarat*, p. 75, Chapter 23. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, on p. 151, Vol. 8, of his book *Al-Aghani* (Sasi edition), says that al-Hasan al-Basri wrote 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz about that when the latter became caliph. According to *Muruj al-Thahab*, 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz wrote Abu Hazim al-Madani al-A'raj saying, "Admonish me, and be brief," so he wrote him back stating the above.

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