

## Al-Husayn Meets the Kufians

People never ceased expressing their hatred towards having to fight al-Husayn (‘a), the son of the most revered Messenger of Allah (S) and Master of the Youths of Paradise. They had not forgotten all the statements made by the Prophet (S) in his honour and in honour of his father the *wasi* (‘a), as well as in honour of his chosen brother (‘a).

They all realized his status with Allah when Kufa was hit by a drought and by a famine, so they complained to his father (‘a) who took out this same martyr to pray for rain. It was by the blessings of his holy soul and that of his *noor*, which is made of that of Muhammad (S), that Allah Almighty responded, sending rain upon the earth till grass grew after an extended period of drought.

He was also the same person who secured the watering area during the Battle of *Siffin*, thus making water available for the Muslims who had by then been exhausted by acute thirst<sup>1</sup>.

They also came to know how he provided water for al-Hurr and for all the one thousand men and their horses in that desolate desert; that was the incident about which the Kufians were talking everywhere.

How could anyone, hence, meet him face to face and fight him, had it not been for succumbing to inclinations, going to extremes in oppression, and due to the weakness of people when facing temptation? This is why many of those who marched out to meet him deserted and stole their way to safety, so much so that only a small number of them remained by the time they reached Karbala’.

When Ibn Ziyad came to know about the large number of those who deserted, he sent al-Suwayd Ibn ‘Abdul-Rahman al-Minqari in charge of a regiment of cavaliers, ordering him to tour Kufa's alleys and quarters to announce the beginning of the war against al-Husayn (‘a) and to bring him all those who lagged behind.

Among those brought to him was a man from Syria who had gone to Kufa seeking an inheritance belonging to him. Once he was brought to Ibn Ziyad, the latter ordered him to be killed. When people saw how ruthless Ibn Ziyad was, they all went out.<sup>2</sup>

## The Hosts

Al-Shimr marched out<sup>3</sup> with four thousand or more; Yazid Ibn al-Rikab marched out with two thousand; al-Hasin Ibn Namir al-Tamimi marched out with four thousand; Shabth Ibn Rab'i marched out with one thousand; Ka'b Ibn Talhah marched out with three thousand; Hajar Ibn Abjar marched out with one thousand; Mudayir Ibn Rahinah al-Mazini marched out with three thousand, and Nasr Ibn Harshah was in command of two thousand<sup>4</sup>, thus the total number of those who assembled under the command of Ibn Sa'd on the sixth of Muharram totalled twenty thousand strong<sup>5</sup>.

Ibn Ziyad kept sending reinforcements to Ibn Sa'd till the number of the latter's troops swelled to thirty thousand.

Imam Abu 'Abdullah, Ja'far as-Sadiq ('a), has narrated saying, "Al-Husayn ('a) visited his brother al-Hasan ('a) during his sickness that caused his martyrdom. Having seen his condition, he wept. Al-Hasan ('a) asked him, 'O father of 'Abdullah! What grieves you?' 'I am grieved on account of the harm inflicted on you,' he answered.

Al-Hasan, peace be upon him, said, 'What has been administered to me is only a poison to kill me, but there is no day like your own day, O father of 'Abdullah, when thirty thousand strong, all claiming to belong to the nation of our grandfather, Muhammad, alleging adherence to the Islamic faith, will assemble to kill you and shed your blood and violate your sanctity and arrest your offspring and women and plunder your wealth.

It is then that Banu Umayyah will be cursed and the sky will rain ashes and blood, and everything, even the beasts in the jungles and the fish in the seas, will mourn you."<sup>6</sup>

Ibn Ziyad wrote Ibn Sa'd saying, "I have not left you any excuse with regard to providing you with plenty of horses and men; so, you should not receive the evening nor the day thereafter before I hear good news about you." He urged him on the sixth day of Muharram to start the war.<sup>7</sup>

They assembled their hosts against Muhammad's son,

At *Taff*, when they remembered their ancestors...

*Allahu Akbar!* O pillars of this earth! Dissolve!

The son of piety has to face the hosts

Whose banner the son of the blood-shedder tied,

How insolent they were when they met

His forehead with their very swords...!

## The Watering Place

Modesty never wetted their faces  
Even if they had walked through the Safa,  
Even its stones would have felt modest.  
How can such Umayyad faces know modesty,  
Having shed, by sinning pleasures, their modesty?  
They subdued, through their might,  
The offspring of al-Zahra', and they,  
Through their swords, dethroned their princes.  
They overpowered them till they  
Deprived their corpses of being buried.  
The world became too small for it so  
Wherever it went, death was before and behind.  
The back of death they rode, riding dignity even from  
The back of the humiliation they rode.  
The fangs of death were shown to a band  
For which the swords were fates and destiny  
Whose hearts were tested by the Almighty...  
At a stand where patience and endeavour were put to test.  
The might and swords of Muhammad's family used to be  
Against those who cried for help and against the enemy.  
Even death hated to meet them in such a way,  
Yet Allah loved that they should thus meet Him,  
So they leaped with thirsty hearts that  
Found nothing to drink except the taste of death  
Yet I find you, O cloud, spreading your wings  
On people to shade, satisfying those who thirst,  
Though the hearts of the Prophet's sons were cracked  
With thirst in a desolate land, burning their insides.  
The worst cup they drank of all the calamity  
Was the oppressors' unveiling of Muhammad's daughters:  
The veils of Prophethood and the curtains were violated,  
So their insides were further burnt even as  
The hands of the foes vied to grab their garments...  
How Clement Allah is as He did see  
How long they kept their wailing and their cries!  
How Clement Allah is as He did see  
How in agony they sighed and in grief cried:

With one hand each tried to stay alive,  
With the other she tried to shun the foes.  
How painful to Muhammad's heart it must be,  
How heavy with al-Batool the calamity!<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Sa'd posted his horsemen to guard the Euphrates in order to prohibit the Master of Martyrs ('a) from reaching it. Al-Husayn's followers found no access to water. Thirst bit them severely. Al-Husayn ('a) took an axe and walked behind the women's tent nineteen steps in the direction of the Qibla then dug a well of potable water from which they drank, but soon it dried up.

Ibn Ziyad sent a letter to Ibn Sa'd saying, "It has come to my knowledge that al-Husayn is digging a well and reaching water, so he and his company are drinking of it. As soon as this letter reaches you, you must prohibit them, as much as you can, from digging wells. Expose them to the severest of hardships."

He instantly dispatched 'Amr Ibn al-Hajjaj with five hundred horsemen to the watering place<sup>9</sup> three days before al-Husayn's martyrdom.<sup>10</sup>

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1. 'Abdullah Nur-Allah al-Bahrani, *Maqatal al-'Awalim*, p. 15 and p. 45.

2. Al-Dinawari, *Al-Akhbar al-Tiwal*, p. 253.

3. According to p. 10, Vol. 6, of *Al-Bid' wal Tarikh*, his name is written as Bishr Ibn Thul-Jawshan. In '*Ujalat al-Mubtadi' fil Nasab* by the hafiz Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Abu 'Uthman al-Hazimi al-Hamadani (d. 584 A.H./1188 A.D.), his name is Shur Ibn Thul-Jawshan. His father is said to be a narrator of traditions, and Shur quotes him.

4. Ibn Shahr Ashub, Vol. 2, p. 215.

5. Ibn Nama, *Al-Luhuf*.

6. as-Saduq, *Amali*, p. 71 (majlis 30). According to *Matalib al-Sa'ul*, their number was twenty thousand. According to *Hamish Tathkirat al-Khawass*, they were one hundred thousand, whereas Ibn Shadqam, in his book *Tuhfat al-Azhar*, says that they numbered eighty thousand. According to p. 237 of *Asrar al-Shahada* of Sayyid Ka'im al-Ha'iri, they were six thousand horsemen and one thousand footmen. On p. 190, Vol. 2, of his *Tarikh*, Abu al-Fida' refers only to Ibn Sa'd marching with four thousand and to al-Hurr with two thousand. On p. 656, Vol. 7, of '*Umdat al-Qari* by al-'Ayni, in his "*Kitab al-Manaqib*," Ibn Ziyad's army numbered a thousand horsemen headed by al-Hurr and in their vanguard was al-Hasin Ibn Namir.

7. Radiyy ad-Din Ibn Nabi al-Qazwini (d. 1134 A.H./1722 A.D.), *Tazallum al-Zahra'*, p. 101, and also *Maqatal Muhammad Ibn Abu Talib*.

8. These verses are excerpted from a poem by Sayyid Hayder al-Hilli, may Allah be pleased with him.

9. Shaikh 'Abbas al-Qummi, *Nafs al-Mahmum*, p. 116. Al-Khawarizmi, *Maqatal al-Husayn*, Vol. 1, p. 244. 'Abdullah Nur-Allah al-Bahrani, *Maqatal al-'Awalim*, p. 78.

10. al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 6, p. 234. al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad*. al-Khawarizmi, *Maqatal al-Husayn*, Vol. 1. Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil*, Vol. 4, p. 22.

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