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The Looting

O father of al-Hasan! The one best to protect his neighbour,
To you do I complain with overflowing tears,
Let alone a great shame that overspread
Wherein tears are part of my address.
Should you overlook as you today see
How Umayyah's offspring sought and achieved
All their mischievous revenge?
How many for you at the *Taff*, where
A mourner bitterly mourned,
Were wailing like pigeons in their necks
Iron collars they had to wear?
And how many a child did they scare?
Mourning one who never knew but kindness.
And how many a child decorated with gold
Did they shackle and did they scold?
And with arrows was he shot.
How many a free lady with hair
Uncovered came out of the tent
Having nothing to veil her except her hands?
Should you have witnessed how she
With a heavy heart sighed as her heart burned.
It would have been hard for the Commander of the Faithful
That she should thus come out at all,
In a condition that grieved everyone with a heart.
Who then should tell al-Zahra' about Zainab
Being taken into captivity
And being driven among the foes to Damascus?
She has none from the foe to protect
Except one in the robes heavily tied up,

For those who came to Karbala'
All fell on its ground, one glorious martyr after another.
They spent and the greatness of their glory covered their faces
And died in dignity without kneeling before a tyrant.
No excuse shall be for my heart if I say so,
Should my eyes with tears forever overflow. 1

When Abu 'Abdullah al-Husayn ('a), was killed, people fell upon his luggage and belongings looting everything they could find in his tents,² then they set the tents ablaze. People raced to rob the ladies of the Messenger of Allah (S). The daughters of Fatima al-Zahra' ('a) tearfully ran away, their hair uncovered.³

Scarves were snatched, rings were pulled out of fingers, earrings were taken out, and so were ankle-rings.⁴ A man took both earrings belonging to Umm Kulthum, riddling her ears in the process.⁵ Another approached Fatima daughter of al-Husayn ('a) and took her ankle-rings out. He was crying.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked him. "How can I help crying," he answered, "since I am looting the daughter of the Messenger of Allah?" She asked him to leave her alone. He said, "I am afraid if I do not take it, someone else will."⁶

Another man was seen driving the women with the butt of his spear, after having robbed them of their coverings and jewelry as they sought refuge with one another. He was seen by the same Fatima. Having realized that she had seen him, he went towards her, and she fled away. He threw his spear at her.

She fell headlong and fainted. When she recovered, she saw her aunt Umm Kulthum, sitting at her head crying.⁷

She was from her sleep disturbed
Like doves startled after their slumber
Deploring the protection she now lost
By losing the best a woman could lose.
She lost the best pillar,
So she invoked the "manliness" of Banu 'Amr.
For moons she mourned and cried
For the one whose spilled blood she sighed.
And through whom everything with light shone,
Now they are slaughtered and their corpses strewn.
Some had their parts scattered and some lost their arms
One after another on the plain they did fall

Did one with his feet to a lion's den walk?

They shattered the pitched darkness,

Now on the ground they lie motionless.⁸

A woman from the clan of Bakr Ibn Wa'il, who was accompanied by her husband, saw the daughters of the Messenger of Allah (S) in such a condition, so she cried out, "O offspring of Bakr Ibn Wa'il! Do you permit the daughters of the Messenger of Allah (S) to be thus robbed? There is no judgment except Allah's!

O how the Messenger of Allah (S) should be avenged!" Her husband brought her back to his conveyance.⁹

The rogues reached 'Ali son of al-Husayn ('a) who was sick on his bed unable to stand up.¹⁰ Some were saying, "Do not let any of them, young or old, remain alive."

Others were saying, "Do not be rash in your judgment till we consult the governor 'Amr Ibn Sa'd."¹¹ Al-Shimr unsheathed his sword with the intention to kill 'Ali.

Hamid Ibn Muslim said to him, "Glory to Allah! Do you really kill children?! He is only a sick lad!"¹² He said, "Ibn Ziyad ordered all al-Husayn's sons killed." Ibn Sa'd went to extremes to stop him¹³ especially after having heard the wise lady Zainab daughter of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) saying, "You will not kill him before killing me first;" so, they left him alone.¹⁴

His remedy from them was their whips as they

Hit them then did they say, "May you stay!"

They dragged him and prepared for him the leather mat

After having filled his body with thistles and with thorns.

Ibn Sa'd himself came to the ladies who burst in tears upon seeing him. He ordered the men to stay away from them.

Those men had already taken all the ornaments those ladies had had and never returned any of them back.¹⁵ He assigned to a group of men the task of protecting them, then he returned to his tent.

Perplexed the ladies were

From their sleep deprived,

Startled when their chambers were assaulted.

In pavilions they lived and thrived.

They camped in honour, from hardship exempt,

From awe almost none comes near them except

The angels that were there to serve,
Now people's hands from mischief do not swerve,
Now the people's hands are free to steal, to plunder
For none is there to stop them, none to hinder.
Yes, she bent her body to chide
Her people, and fire filled her inside.
She rebuked them for fighting over what she had to wear,
For what the foe's snatched, but who will hear or care?¹⁶

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1. Excerpted from a poem by the 'Allama the authority Shaikh Abd al-Mun'im al-Fartusi.
 2. Ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil, Vol. 4, p. 32.
 3. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 260.
 4. Ibn Nama, Muthir al-Ahzan, p. 40.
 5. Muhammad Jawad Shubbar, Al-Dam'a al-Sakiba, p. 348.
 6. as-Saduq, Amali, p. 99, majlis 31. al-Thahabi, Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', Vol. 3, p. 204.
 7. Riyad al-Masa'ib, p. 341. al-Qazwini, Tazallum al-Zahra', p. 130.
 8. Excerpted from a poem by the authority critic Shaikh 'Abd al-Husayn al-Hilli, may Allah have mercy on his soul, from a poem on the birth anniversary of al-Husayn ('a).
 9. Ibn Tawus, Al-Luhuf, p. 74. Ibn Nama, Muthir al-Ahzan, p. 41.
 10. Reference to the sickness of al-Sajjad ('a) is documented by al-Tabari on p. 260, Vol. 6, of his Tarikh. It is also mentioned by Ibn al-Athir on p. 33, Vol. 4, of his book Al-Kamil, by Ibn Kathir on p. 188, Vol. 8, of his book Al-Bidaya, by al-Yafi'i on p. 133, Vol. 1, of his book Mir'at al-Jinan, by Shaikh al-Mufid in his book Al-Irshad, by Ibn Shahr Ashub on p. 225, Vol. 2, of his book Manaqib, by al-Tabarsi on p. 148 of his book l'lam al-Wara, by Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn 'Ali al-Naishapuri on p. 162 of his book Rawdat al-Wa'izin, and by al-Mas'udi on p. 140 of his book Ithbat al-Wasiyya.
 11. al-Qazwini, Tazallum al-Zahra', p. 132.
 12. al-Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 6, p. 260.
 13. Shaikh 'Abbas al-Qummi, Nafs al-Mahmum.
 14. al-Qarmani, Tarikh, p. 108.
 15. Ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil, Vol. 4, p. 32. Mis'ab al-Zubayri says something quite strange: On p. 58 of Nasab Quraish, he says that some of those in the army took 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn ('a) and hid him from people. He was very kind and generous to him. But when he heard a caller saying that whoever brought 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn ('a) would have three hundred dirhams, he tied his hands to his neck then brought him to Ibn Ziyad and took his reward. Ibn Ziyad, he goes on, wanted to kill him had it not been for the lad's aunt, Zainab, who threw herself on him saying to Ibn Ziyad, "Kill me before you kill him!"
- This is the end of his statement. But if you know that despite his sickness, 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn was the only sponsor and protector of the women of the Messenger of Allah (S); so, Allah would not permit any of His servants to overpower him thus and to keep him away from the family. Such was the condition of the bereaved women. How could it have been had their protector been kept away from them? None of the historians, as a matter of fact, mentioned something like that even by way of conjecture. But al-Zubayri simply wished to besmear his record of deeds with lies.
16. These verses were composed by Sayyid Hayder al-Hilli, may Allah fill his mausoleum with light.