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## Part 3: The Revolution's Outcome

What place does Imam al-Husayn's revolution occupy in Islamic history? Those who are not familiar with its motives "innocently" or ignorantly inquire about its results, outcomes, fruits, achievements, etc. Others have even questioned its wisdom, arguing that to challenge a mighty force like that of the Umayyads of the time was fatal, suicidal, futile.

The revolution's motives have already been discussed; therefore, a brief review of the changes brought about in its aftermath throughout the Muslim world is appropriate at this stage.

Murdering Imam al-Husayn (ع), grandson of the Messenger of Allah (ع), produced great shock waves throughout the Islamic world due to its horrible nature, to the unprecedented cruelty with which he and his family members and companions were treated, to the fact that he and his family were forbidden from having access to water while dogs and pigs were drinking of it, to the fact that he and his family were recognized as the most prestigious people on the face of earth, securing the highest esteem and regard of the Muslims who still remembered some of the statements made by their Prophet (ص) in honour of al-Hassan and al-Husayn (ع) in particular and of Ahl al-Bayt (ع) in general. Muslims, as a result, loathed to associate themselves with his murderers or with anyone who had a hand in that massacre, in effect performing an act of civil disobedience of their rulers.

Many of them openly cursed his murderers, for who can call himself a Muslim and who does not curse the murderer of his Prophet's family? Thus, the revolution achieved the task of unveiling the Umayyad's un-Islamic character to the general public, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind about what kind of barbarians those Umayyads were.

The concepts which the Umayyads were promoting were now being questioned by everyone; they were for the first time being recognized for what they really were: a distortion of everything Islam stands for. This isolated the Umayyads and changed the public's attitude towards them and towards anything they said or did.

Imam al-Husayn's revolution set a living example as to what every Muslim should do in such situations.

It had deeply penetrated people's hearts, producing a great pain and feeling of guilt at thus abandoning al-Husayn (ع) and leaving him to be slaughtered at the hands of Allah's worst creatures without assisting him.

Such feeling of shame grew greater and greater, transforming itself into sincere repentance and translating into open and massive popular revolutions against the Umayyads' regime of terror and, in the end, succeeding in putting an end to Yazid's authority and to that of his likes.

Thus, al-Husayn's revolution prompted the public to shake the dust of neo-jahiliyya brought about by the Umayyads and to stir, in a dynamic movement, to action to demolish all its edifices and altars.

Now let us review some of these massive popular uprisings. Among the references the reader can review for more information are: at-Tabari's *Tarikh*, al-Mas'udi's *Muraj at-Thahab*, and Ibn Katheer's *Tarikh*.

The first of those revolutions took place in Mecca after the news of the barbaric way wherein Imam al-Husayn (ع) and his small band of supporters were butchered had reached the Meccans who started discussing them. It was led by Abdullah bin az-Zubair and is known in history books as the Harra incident which, according to p. 374, Vol. 4, of the Arabic text of at-Tabari's *Tarikh* (the issue consulted by the writer is dated 1409 A.H./1989 A.D. and is published by al-A'lami Establishment for Publications, P.O. Box 7120, Beirut, Lebanon), broke out on a Wednesday, Thul-Hijja 28, 63 A.H./August 31, 683 A.D.

## The Harra Incident

This incident started on a Wednesday, Thul-Hijja 28, 63 A.H./August 31, 683 A.D. and was led by Abdullah ibn az-Zubair. Let us stop here to introduce the reader to this man although he is too well known to any average student of Islamic history.

His full name is Abdullah ibn az-Zubair ibn al-Awwam. His mother was Asma', the oldest daughter of caliph Abu Bakr and sister of Aisha, the youngest wife of Prophet Muhammad (ص). He was born in 1 A.H. and died in 73 A.H. (622 – 692 A.D.) and participated in the Muslim invasions of Persia, Egypt and North Africa and sided with his maternal aunt, Aisha, during the Battle of the Camel against Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). He lived most of his life in Medina and rebelled against the government of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah and against Umayyad rulers of Hijaz, declaring himself caliph. He extended his influence to Iraq after the Battle of Marj Rahit till al-Hajjaj ibn Yousuf at-Thaqafi<sup>1</sup> succeeded in putting an end to his reign, executing him in the most ruthless way by nailing him to the Kaba..

Abdullah ibn az-Zubair delivered a sermon once wherein he strongly condemned those responsible for killing Imam al-Husayn (ع), his family and friends, describing Yazid as a shameless drunkard, a man who preferred to listen to songs rather than to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, who preferred wine

drinking over fasting and the company of his hunting party to any majlis where the Qur'an is explained. Amr ibn Sa'd ibn al-as was then governor of Mecca, and he was quite ruthless in dealing with Abdullah ibn az-Zubair, keeping him under constant surveillance, sending spies to his meeting places and constantly harassing him.

When Yazid heard about Ibn az-Zubair's denunciations, he pledged to have him chained, so he dispatched some of his men with a silver chain, ordering them to tie Ibn az-Zubair with it. His deputies passed by Medina on their way to Mecca and met with Marwan ibn al-Hakam who joined them in their effort to arrest Ibn az-Zubair, but the party failed in carrying out its mission, and more and more people pledged to assist Ibn az-Zubair against Yazid.

Having come to know of such failure, Yazid called to his presence ten men from among the most prominent supporters of his bloody regime, and there are always those who support bloody regimes in every time and clime. He ordered these ten men to meet with Ibn az-Zubair to dissuade him from rebelling. But they, too, failed in their attempt due to the public support Ibn az-Zubair was enjoying. Yazid now resorted to deposing Mecca's governor Amr ibn Sa'd and appointing al-Walid ibn Utbah in his place, prompting Ibn az-Zubair to write Yazid to describe his newly appointed governor as an idiot who never listened to advice nor enjoyed any wisdom. Yazid deposed al-Walid ibn Utbah and replaced him with Othman ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Sufyan, a young man who knew absolutely nothing about politics or diplomacy.

The first action the new governor undertook was dispatching a fact finding committee to Damascus to ascertain all the rumours about Yazid being a corrupt bastard, a man unfit to rule. Among the members of the mission were: Abdullah ibn Hanzalah al-Ansari<sup>2</sup>, Abdullah ibn Abu Amr al-Makhzami, al-Munthir ibn az-Zubair, and a good number of the most prominent men of Hijaz. Yazid received them with open arms and showered them with money and presents, but when they returned, they cursed Yazid for his blasphemy and un-Islamic conduct and encouraged people to revolt against him, using the money they had received from him to finance the rebellion against him. While passing by Medina, the residents heard the report of the members of this committee. They, therefore, deposed their governor, Othman ibn Muhammad, and elected Abdullah ibn Hanzalah as their new governor.

When the Umayyads saw how the public turned against them, they sought refuge at the house of Marwan ibn al-Hakam, cousin of Othman ibn Affan, where they were besieged. The siege was not lifted till those Umayyads solemnly swore not to take any measure against those who laid the siege against them and not to help Yazid in any way, a pledge which they did not keep, for Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiyah and Yazid were their mentors, and these men never honoured a pledge.

When the rebellion reached such a point, Yazid realized that he had lost control over the people of Hijaz, and that only an army sent against them from Damascus would do the job. He, therefore, appointed a ruffian named Muslim ibn Uqbah al-Murri who was, at the time, quite advanced in age, to undertake such a task.

Despite his age, Muslim agreed to shoulder the responsibility of quelling the rebellion. An army, hence, of twenty thousand strong set out from Damascus to quell the rebellion in Hijaz with clear orders from Yazid to "... invite the people to renounce their rebellion and to renew their pledge of loyalty [to Yazid]. Give them three days to consider doing so. If they persist in their defiance, let the soldiers have a free hand in the city for three days: Any money or weapons or food they lay their hands on is theirs. Once the three days are over, leave the people alone, and spare Ali son of al-Husayn (ع), and admonish everyone to be good to him and show respect to him, for he did not join the rebellion," as at-Tabari tells us.

Yazid's troops first attacked Medina then Mecca. In Medina, according to al-Mas'udi and al-Daynari, they demolished homes, raped women, girls and even children, plundered anything and everything they found in their way, committing untold atrocities justified only by those who follow Yazid and who do not curse or condemn him, hence they shall receive their share of the Almighty's condemnation on the Day of Judgment and shall be lodged in hell in the company of Yazid and his likes.

In his renown Tarikh, Ibn Katheer tells us that as many as seven hundred men who knew the text of the Holy Qur'an by heart, including three close sahabis of the Prophet (ص), were killed in that incident which is referred to in the books of history as the Incident of the Harra, a reference to "Harrat Waqim" where Yazid's army first attacked.

This place is named after a man belonging to the Amaliqa ("the giants") and is one of two Medina suburbs bearing the same name: the eastern Harra, this same "Harrat Waqim," located on the eastern side of Medina, and the western Harra, as we are told by Imam Shihabud-Deen Abu Abdullah Yaqaat ibn Abdullah al-Hamawi ar-Rami al-Baghdadi, famous as Yaqaat al-Hamawi, who describes several places each one of which is called "Harra," then he details Harrat Waqim and comments saying the following on pp. 287-288, Vol. 2, of his voluminous work *Mu'jam al-Buldan*:

It was at this Harra that the famous "Harra Incident" took place during the lifetime of Yazid son of Mu'awiyah in the year 63 A.H./683 A.D. The commander of the army, who had been appointed by Yazid, was Muslim ibn Uqbah al-Murri who, on account of his ugly action, was called "al-musrif" (the one who went to extremes in committing evil). He [Muslim] came to Harrat Waqim and the people of Medina went out to fight him.

He vanquished them, killing three thousand and five hundred men from among the mawali, one thousand and four hundred from among the Ansar, but some say one thousand and seven hundred, and one thousand and three hundred men from among Quraish. His hosts entered Medina. They confiscated wealth, arrested some people and raped women. Eight hundred women became pregnant and gave birth, and the offspring were called "the offspring of the Harra." Then he brought prominent personalities to swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah and to declare that they were slaves of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. Anyone who refused was killed.

The people of Medina had re-dug the moat (khandaq) which had been dug during the Battle of the Moat, preparations for which started at the beginning of the month of Shawwal, 5 A.H. (the end of February, 627 A.D.), according to the orders of the Prophet (ﷺ) and in response to a suggestion presented to him by the great *sahabi* Salman al-Farisi as they stood to defend themselves against a huge army raised by Abu Sufyan to fight them. They also tried to fortify their city with a bulwark.

Yazid's army succeeded in putting an end to the rebellion at a very high cost, but Abdullah ibn az-Zubair survived unscathed. A number of the *sahaba* and *tabieen* were branded like animals as an additional insult.

## What Happened in Mecca?

Having finished with the people of Medina, Muslim, the aging commander of Yazid's handpicked troops, marched to Mecca. On the way, he camped at a place called al-Mushallal. There, he felt that death was approaching him, so he called to his presence al-Haseen ibn Nameer as-Sukuni and said to him, "O son of the donkey's saddle! By Allah, had I not felt that death was approaching me, I would never have given you command of this army. But the commander of the faithful (meaning Yazid) had put you second in command, and none can override his orders. Listen, therefore, carefully to my will, and do not listen to any man from Quraish at all. Do not stop the Syrians from slaughtering their foes, and do not stay for more than three days before putting an end to the reprobate Ibn az-Zubair."

This is stated by at-Tabari on p. 381, Vol. 4, of the Arabic text of his famous voluminous *Tarikh* where he provides details of this incident. Muslim died and was buried there. Once the Syrian army left al-Mushallal, people dug up his grave, took his corpse out and hanged it on a palm tree. When the army came to know about this incident, a detachment was sent to investigate and to kill those suspected of hanging the corpse which was buried again and soldiers were assigned to guard it at all times. These details and many more are stated on p. 251, Vol. 2, of al-Ya'qubi's *Tarikh*.

Catapults were installed around Mecca and in the vicinity of the Ka'ba, the holiest of holies in Islam. Fireballs were hurled and the Ka'ba was soon in flames... Its walls collapsed and were burnt, and its ceiling crumbled... According to pp. 71-72, Vol. 3, of al-Mas'udi's voluminous book *Muraj at-Thahab*, a thunderbolt hit the Syrian army on a Saturday, Rab'i I 27, 61 A.H./December 28, 680 A.D., only eleven days before Yazid's death, burning eleven of the attackers.

Pleas to spare the Ka'ba went unheeded, and the fighting went beyond the three days' deadline put by Muslim. The fighting took place during the last days of the month of Muharram and continued through the entire month of Safar. When the news that Yazid had died reached Mecca, Ibn az-Zubair addressed the Syrians thus: "Your tyrant has just died; so, whoever among you wishes to join the people (in their rebellion) may do so or he may return to Syria."

But the Syrians attacked him. The people of Mecca saw the extent of savagery of the Syrian army, so

they collectively shielded Ibn az-Zubair and forced the army to retreat and to confine itself to its camp. Slowly the Syrians slipped out of their camp and joined the Umayyads in Mecca who sheltered them and transported them back to Syria in small groups, as we are told by at-Tabari who details these events on pp. 16-17, Vol. 7, of his *Tarikh*.

Abdullah ibn az-Zubair declared himself as caliph and appointed a new governor for Mecca, and the people of Hijaz enjoyed a measure of self-rule till the year 72 A.H./692 A.D. when al-Hajjaj ibn Yousuf at-Thaqafi was ordered by the Umayyad "caliph" then, namely Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan, to bring the people of Hijaz back under his rule. It was in the month of Thul-Qida 72 A.H./March 692 A.D. that Mecca was attacked again (some of the war equipment used then included five catapults, predecessors of today's field artillery) and burnt again and its governor was deposed. A new governor loyal to the Umayyads was installed in his place, and he was a Syrian named Thulabah who demonstrated utmost disregard and disrespect toward the Islamic tenets and toward the people of Hijaz while still claiming to be a Muslim!

Detailing the events of the year 73 A.H./692-93, at-Tabari, on p. 202, Vol. 7, of his *Tarikh*, narrates saying that when the Ka'ba was burnt, a dark cloud came from the direction of Jiddah roaring with lightning and thunder. It stood above the Ka'ba and poured its water on it and put the fire out. Then it went to the Abu Qubays mountain area where its lightning damaged one of the five catapults, killing four of the soldiers tending to it. Another lightning hit, killing forty other men.

This incident is narrated by several other historians besides at-Tabari. It was not long before al-Hajjaj was able to arrest and behead Ibn az-Zubair whose severed head he sent to Damascus together with those of Abdullah ibn Safwan, Imarah ibn Amr ibn Hazm and others. Those who carried the heads and displayed them on the way in Medina were generously rewarded by Marwan ibn Abdul-Malik.

Not everyone supported the revolt led by Abdullah ibn az-Zubair. The famous *sahabi* and cousin of the Prophet (ص), Ibn Abbas, that is, Abdullah ibn Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib, was among those who did not support Ibn az-Zubair, considering him as an opportunist. When Imam Husayn (ع) was in Mecca immediately after his departure from Medina, and when the Meccans expressed their support for him, Abdullah ibn az-Zubair isolated himself and did not show any support for the Imam (ع), considering him as a competitor for his own bid to power. When the Imam (ع) left Mecca, Abdullah ibn az-Zubair felt relieved.

Ibn Abbas composed poetry depicting such an attitude of Abdullah ibn az-Zubair. The reader is already acquainted with Ibn Abbas in a footnote above. Since Aisha could not get Ibn az-Zubair, son of her sister Asma' daughter of caliph Abu Bakr, to become the caliph following the murder of her cousin, caliph Othman ibn Affan, Ibn az-Zubair now tried on his own to acquire the caliphate for himself, and he met with success though for a short while.

Having come to know that Abdullah ibn Abbas refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Ibn az-Zubair,

Yazid wrote him saying,

It has come to my knowledge that the atheist son of az-Zubair invited you to swear the oath of allegiance to him and to be obedient to him so that you might support him in his wrongdoing and share in his sins, and that you refused and kept your distance from him because Allah made you aware of our rights, we family members of the Prophet; so, may He grant you the rewards due to those who maintain their ties of kinship, those who are true to their promise.

No matter what I forget, I shall never forget how you always remained in contact with us, and how good the reward you have received, the one due to those who obey and who are honoured by being relatives of the Messenger of Allah. Look, then, after your people, and look at those whom the son of az-Zubair enchants with his words and promises and pull them away from him, for they will listen to you more than they will to him; they would hear you more than they would hear that renegade atheist, and peace be with you.

Ibn Abbas wrote Yazid back saying,

"I received your letter wherein you mentioned Ibn az-Zubair's invitation to me to swear the oath of allegiance to him, and that I refused due to recognizing your right. If that is the case [as you claim], I desire nothing but being kind to you. But Allah knows best what I intend to do. And you wrote me urging me to encourage people to rally behind you and to discourage them from supporting Ibn az-Zubair...

Nay! Neither pleasure nor happiness is here for you; may your mouth be filled with stones, for you are the one whose view is weak when you listened to your own whims and desires, and it is you who is at fault and who shall perish! And you wrote me urging me to hurry and to join my ties of kinship. Withhold your own, man, for I shall withhold from you my affection and my support. By my life, you do not give us of what is in your hand except very little while withholding a lot; may your father lose you! Do you think that I will really forget how you killed al-Husayn (ع) and the youths of Banu Abdul-Muttalib, the lanterns that shone in the dark, the stars of guidance, the lamp-posts of piety, and how your horses trampled upon their bodies according to your command, so they were left unburied, drenched in their blood on the desert without any shrouds, nor were they buried, with the wind blowing on them and the wolves invading them, and the heinas assaulting them till Allah sent them people who do not have shirk running through their veins and who shrouded and buried them...? From me and from them come supplications to Allah to torment you! No matter what I forget, I shall never forget how you let loose on them the daiyy and the son of the daiyy, the one begotten by that promiscuous whore, the one whose lineage is distant, whose father and mother are mean, the one because of whose adoption did your father earn shame, sin, humiliation and abasement in the life of this world and in the hereafter. This is so because the Messenger of Allah (ع) said, "The son is begotten by wedlock, whereas for the prostitute there are stones." Your father claims that the son is out of wedlock, and it does not harm the prostitute, and he accepts him as his son just as he does his legitimate offspring! Your father killed the Sunnah with ignorance while deliberately bringing to life all misguidance. And no matter what I forget, I shall never

forget how you chased al-Husayn (ع) out of the sanctuary of the Messenger of Allah [Medana] to that of Allah Almighty [Mecca], and how you dispatched men to kill him there. You kept trying till you caused him to leave Mecca and to go to Kufa pursued by your horsemen, with your soldiers roaring at him like lions, O enemy of Allah, of His Messenger (ع), and of his Ahl al-Bayt (ع)! Then you wrote Marjana's son ordering him to face al-Husayn (ع) with his cavalry and infantry, with spears and swords. And you wrote him ordering him to be swift in attacking him and not to give him time to negotiate any settlement till you killed him and the youths of Banu Abdul-Muttalib who belong to Ahl al-Bayt (ع) with him, those from whom Allah removed all abomination and whom He purified with a perfect purification. Such are we, unlike your own uncouth fathers, the livers of donkeys! You knew fully well that he was most prominent in the past and most cherished in the present, had he only sought refuge in Mecca and permitted bloodshed in its sanctuary. But he sought reconciliation, and he asked you to go back to your senses, yet you went after the few who were in his company and desired to eradicate his Ahl al-Bayt (ع) as if you were killing dynasties from Turkey or from Kabul! How do you conceive me as being friendly to you, and how dare you ask me to support you?! You have killed my own brothers, and your sword is dripping with my blood, and you are the one whom I seek for revenge. So if Allah wills, you shall not be able to shed my blood, nor shall you be faster than me in seeking revenge so you would be more swift in killing us just as the prophets are killed, considering their blood equal to that of others. But the promise is with Allah, and Allah suffices in supporting the wronged, and He seeks revenge for the oppressed. What is truly amazing is your own transporting the daughters of Abdul-Muttalib and their children to Syria. You see yourself as our vanquisher, and that you have the right to humiliate us, although through me and through them did Allah bestow blessings upon you and upon your slave parents. By Allah! You welcome the evening and the day in security indifferent to my wounds; so, let my own tongue wound you instead, and let my tying and untying not provoke you to argue. Allah shall not give you a respite following your killing of the Progeny of the Messenger of Allah (ع) except for a very short while before He takes you like a Mighty One, and He shall not take you out of the life of this world except as an abased and dejected sinner; so, enjoy your days, may you lose your father, as you please, for what you have committed has surely made you abased in the sight of Allah."3

Ibn Abbas never swore the oath of allegiance to the tyrant Yazid till his death.

Following the revolt of Abdullah ibn az-Zubair, other revolts erupted throughout the Islamic lands. One of them was the Revolt of the Tawwabeen (the penitents) which broke out in Kufa in 65 A.H./684-85 A.D., then the revolt in 66 A.H./686 A.D. which was led by al-Mukhtar who killed all those who had participated in killing al-Husayn (ع). The Alawites (Alawids) followed with revolts of their own, including that of the great martyr Zaid ibn Ali and his son Yahya and finally the revolt of the Abbasides who put an end to the Umayyads' rule for good.



## Al-Husayn's Grave

Anyone who is lucky enough to visit Imam Husayn's grave-site stands awe-stricken at the beauty of the magnificent shrine housing his tomb, a shrine which has been renovated time and over again all these centuries. It truly is a masterpiece of architecture, a jewel of art, and a pleasure to the eyes of the beholder. It also houses a grand center for theological studies. Yet many tyrants and fanatics tried to obliterate it and reduce it to rubble, while the Almighty has always been protecting it and getting it rebuilt and renovated.

This is made partially possible through the generous donations of those who love the Imam (ع) and who seek nearness to Allah by visiting the grave-site of one of His true servants, a man of honourable descent who sacrificed his life and family and everything he had for the sake of reawakening the Islamic world and getting it to refine Islam from the distortion introduced into it by the Umayyad tyrants and miscreants.

Let us, therefore, stop here for a minute to review the history of the attempts aiming at obliterating Imam Husayn's grave and identify them, call them and shame them, condemn them and condemn those who do not condemn them. What is truly amazing is that all those who attacked this shrine claim to be Muslims who follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (ص)!

In 236 A.H./850-51 A.D., the Abbaside caliph al-Mutawakkil Billah aimed at demolishing the shrine and all its attachments by razing it to the ground and planting the area where it stands. He hoped to prohibit anyone from visiting it or visiting any places held by Shi'as as sacred, threatening their pilgrims with stiff penalties.

During his reign, which lasted from 232 - 247 A.H. (847 - 861 A.D.), he issued such orders four times. The first time such an attempt was made is dated 232 A.H./846 A.D. He was outraged because one of his singing concubines had gone to perform the pilgrimage to it during the month of Shaban of that year. The second attempt was four years later (in 236 A.H./850 A.D.). The third attempt took place in the next year, 237 A.H./850-51 A.D. The fourth attempt took place in 247 A.H./861 A.D., in the aftermath of which he himself was killed by his son, the later Abbaside caliph al-Muntasir, who was a pious and ascetic and sympathetic towards the family members (Ahl al-Bayt) of the Prophet (ص).

All these attempts were carried out, according to al-Mutawakkil's orders, by a Jew named Ebrahim (Abram) who was nicknamed Deezaj, the dumb donkey. Yet despite all these attempts, the shrine kept standing again and again due to the zeal of those who believed in the message for which Imam Husayn (ع) sacrificed himself and all those who were dear and near to him.

Another demolition attempt was carried out by one Zabbah ibn Muhammad al-Asdi, a highway robber by profession, who, assisted by a number of bedouin tribesmen, committed his foul act in 369 A.H./979-80 A.D. for which he was chased and punished by the Buwayhid ruler Izzud-Dawlah who put the shrine of

Imam Husayn (ع) in Karbala” and that of his father Imam Ali (ع) in Najaf under his protection. This incident took place during the reign of the Abbaside ruler at-Ta’i Lillah.

In 407 A.H./1016 A.D., during the reign of the Abbaside ruler al-Qadir Billah, a mid-night fire engulfed the shrine, damaging the dome and the corridors. Some historians believe that it was not an accident but a deliberate sabotage. The said Abbaside ruler was siding with one Muslim sect against another, sowing the seeds of discord among various Islamic sects.

The most serious damage to the shrine was inflicted by the Wahhabis, followers of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab who invented an odd interpretation of Islam which does not respect the grave-sites of any holy person, including that of the Prophet of Islam (ع). Since the Wahhabis have proven to be the most antagonistic<sup>4</sup> towards the followers of Ahl al-Bayt (ع), it is not out of place here to introduce the reader to their man, Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab, while narrating the mischief he and his bedouin zealots committed against the shrine of Imam Husayn (ع) in Karbala” and that of his father, Imam Ali (ع), in Najaf.

Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab was born in 1115 A.H./1703 A.D. in the small town of Uyayna in Nejd, the southern highland of Arabia’s interior, and died in 1206 A.H./1791-92 A.D. He belonged to the tribe of Tamim. His father was a lawyer and a pious Muslim adhering to the Hanbalite sect founded by Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal who, with the most rigid consistency, had advocated the principle of the exclusive validity of the *hadith* as against the inclination among the older sects to make concessions to reason and commonsense, especially since Islam is the religion of commonsense.

In Baghdad, Muhammad learned the jurisprudence of the Hanbali Sunni sect which remains to be predominant among the people of Nejd and Hijaz: Whabbis constitute no more than 8% of the entire population of today’s Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world named after its ruling clan. The reader has already come to know how much distortion exists in *hadith* and can appreciate the danger of believing in each and every hadith as though it were the inviolable and irrefutable gospel truth. He also studied jurisprudence at Mecca and Medina where his mentors were admirers of Ibn Taymiyyah who, in the 7th Century A.H./the 14th Century A.D., had revived the teachings of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal. The founder of the sect, the last in the series of the four Sunni sects, namely Ahmed ibn Hanbal, was a theologian born in and died in Baghdad; the year of his birth is 164 A.H./780 A.D. and that of his death is 241 A.H./855 A.D.

Since his childhood, Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab was influenced by the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah<sup>5</sup> and, therefore, looked askance at many religious practices of the people of Nejd. Such an influence convinced him that the dominant form of contemporary Islam, particularly among the Turks of his time, was permeated with abuses.

He, therefore, sought to restore the original purity of the doctrine and of life in its restricted milieu. The facts that the Wahhabis are the minority of all Muslim minorities, and that the people of Nejd and Hijaz

are still predominantly Hanbalites who do not subscribe to Wahhabism by choice, prove that he did not achieve his objective and, most likely, such an objective will never be achieved despite all Saudi Arabia's petro-dollars and the abundance of those who solicit such dollars, the ruler-appointed preachers.

Having joined his father, with whom he debated his personal views, Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab caused a seriously violent confrontation to erupt from such an exchange of opposite views, for his father's views were consistent with mainstream Hanbali Muslim thought. He performed the pilgrimage for the first time, visiting Mecca and Medina where he attended lectures on different branches of Islamic learning. His mentors included Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Saif and Hayat as-Sindi, who both were admirers of Ibn Taymiyyah. They both rejected the principle of *taqlid* (imitation) which is commonly accepted by all four Sunni schools of jurisprudence as well as by Shi'a Muslims. These men's teachings had a great impact on Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab who began to take a more aggressive attitude in preaching his views and, hence, he publicly expressed his denunciation of the sanctification of the holy precincts of the Prophet's shrine and of the shrines of any "saint."

Then he went back home and decided to go to Basra, Iraq, on his way to Damascus, Syria. During his stay in Basra, he expressed the same views, whereupon its people kicked him out of the city. He almost died of thirst once, due to exhaustion and to the intensity of the heat in the desert, when he was on his way from Basra to the city of Zubair but was saved by a Zubairi man.

Finding his provisions insufficient to travel to Damascus, Muhammad had to change his travel plan and to go to the (Saudi) al-Ahsa (or al-Hasa) province then to Huraymala, one of the cities of Nejd, to which his father and the entire family had to move because of the public's denunciation of young Muhammad's views, reaching it in 1139 A.H./1726-27 A.D. By then, Muhammad's good and pious father had lost his job as *qadi* (judge) on account of his son's radical preaching. The denunciation continued till his father's death in 1153 A.H./1740 A.D.

His father's death emboldened him to express his thoughts more freely and consolidate his movement. His preaching found an echo among some of the people of his town, and his fame started on the rise, so much so that he was welcomed by the ruler of his home town Uyayna, namely Othman ibn Muammar Al Hamad, who offered him protection and appointed him as his personal assistant.

In order to cement his ties with Othman, Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab married Jawhara, Othman's aunt. Othman ordered his townsmen to observe the Wahhabi teachings, and Muhammad now felt strong enough to demolish the monument erected on the burial site of Zaid ibn al-Khattab. But the new alliance between Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab and Othman ibn Muammar Al Hamad disturbed the scholars of Nejd who complained against the first to the emir (provincial governor) of the al-Ahsa province.

The emir wrote Othman reprimanding and warning him of dire consequences for encouraging Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab to revolt against the established authority and creed. Finding himself in a precarious situation and his job in jeopardy, Othman dismissed Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab from his

service and asked him to leave the town.

In 1160 A.H./1746–47 A.D., having been expelled from Uyayna, Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab sought refuge in Dar'iyya, only six hours away from Uyayna, at the invitation of its ruler, Muhammad ibn Saud<sup>6</sup>, ancestor of the Al Saud dynasty now ruling Saudi Arabia. Muhammad ibn Saud lived in a fortified settlement as chief of the

Unayza clan. Soon, an alliance was forged between both men, each promising the other glory, fame, and riches for his support. The people of that town lived at the time in utter destitution, and something was needed to bring them relief. Muhammad ibn Saud rejected any veneration of the Prophet (ص) or of other men of piety. It was there that Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab stayed for more than two years.

Both men felt that it was time to declare "jihad" against all those who rejected the new Wahhabi dogma, forming a small band of raiders mounted on horseback to invade various towns, kill and loot. The lives and property of all those who did not subscribe to the views of these two men were now in jeopardy for they were considered as guilty of being pagans fighting against whom is justified by the Qur'an until they converted or extirpated. These raids extended far beyond Dar'iyya to include all of Nejd and parts of Yemen, Hijaz, Syria and Iraq. In 1187 A.H./1773 A.D., the principality of Riyadh fell to them, marking a new era in the lucrative career of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab.

During a short period of time, the destitutes of Dar'iyya found themselves wearing sumptuous clothes, carrying weapons decorated with gold and silver, eating meat, and baking wheat bread; in short, they found their dreams come true, going from rags to riches, thanks to those raids which continued till Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab died in 1206 A.H./1791–92 A.D., leaving his band to carry out more and more raids and his form of "Wahhabism" embraced by the Al Saud clansmen who eventually ascended to power, due to the support they received from the British who used them to undermine the last Islamic power, the Ottoman Sultanate. Al Saud became the sole rulers of Nejd and Hijaz, promoting and publicizing for Wahhabism by any and all means, spending in the process funds which belong to the Muslim masses, not to them.

After the death of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab, his band of raiders, under the leadership of the Al Saud dynasty, pursued their campaigns in the pretext of disseminating Wahhabism. In the years that followed Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab's death, the Wahhabis gradually became burdensome to their neighbours. They pursued their northward advance; therefore, the Pasha of Baghdad found himself compelled to take defensive measures against them, having heard about their ruthlessness and disregard for the lives of all non-Wahhabis.

He, therefore, led an army of about seven thousand Turks and twice did his army of mostly Arabs attacked them in their richest and most fertile oasis, that of al-Ahsa, in 1212 A.H./1797 A.D. but did not move on their capital, Dar'iyya, at once, as he should have, laying a siege for a month to the citadel of al-Ahsa.

When Muhammad ibn Saud himself advanced against the Pasha, the latter did not dare to attack him but concluded a six-year peace treaty with him, a treaty for which the Wahhabis later demonstrated their disregard. By then, they had already set their eyes on plundering the shrine of Imam Husayn (ع) and all the valuable relics it contained.

On the anniversary of the historic Ghadir Khumm incident, that is, Thul-Hijja 18, 1216 A.H./April 21, 1801 A.D.7, Prince Saud mobilized an army of twenty thousand strong and invaded the holy city of Karbala". First they laid a siege of the city then entered the city and brutally massacred its defenders, visitors and inhabitants, looting, burning, demolishing and wreaking havoc ... The city [Karbala"] fell into their hands. The magnificent domed building over the grave of Husayn was destroyed and enormous booty dragged off.8

More than five thousand Muslims were slaughtered. Then the Saudi prince turned to the Karbala" shrine itself; he and his men pulled gold slabs out of their places, stole chandeliers and Persian rugs and historical relics, plundering anything of value. This tragedy is immortalized by eulogies composed by poets from Karbala" and elsewhere. And the Wahhabis did not leave Karbala" alone after this massacre; rather, they continued for the next twelve years invading it, killing and looting, taking advantage of the administrative weakness of the aging Ottoman Sultanate responsible for protecting it. During those twelve years, more and more bedouin tribes joined them for a "piece of the action."

In 1218 A.H./1803 A.D., during the time of hajj (pilgrimage), the Wahhabis, led by Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, attacked Mecca, which surrendered to them after putting up a brief resistance. They looted whatever possessions the pilgrims had had. The governor of Mecca, Sharif Ghalib, fled to Jiddah which was shortly thereafter besieged, and the leader of the Syrian pilgrim caravan, Abd-Allah Pasha of Damascus, had to leave Mecca, too. On Rajab 19, 1218 A.H./November 4, 1803, Abdul-Aziz Al Saud paid with his life for what he had committed; he was killed in Dar'iyya. His son, Saud ibn Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, lifted the siege of Jiddah and had Sharif Ghalib sent back to Mecca as his vassal in exchange for Jiddah's customs revenue.

In 1220 A.H./1805 and 1221 A.H./1806 A.D., Mecca and Medina fell to the Wahhabis9 respectively. The Wahhabis unleashed their wrath on both holy cities, committing untold atrocities and razing the cemetery, where many relatives and sahaba (companions) of the Prophet (ص) were buried, to the ground10. Having spread their control over Riyadh, Jiddah, Mecca and Medina, all of today's Saudi Arabia became practically under their control.

The next major invasion of the holy city of Karbala" by the Wahhabis took place on the 9th of the holy month of Ramadan of 1225 A.H., corresponding to October 8, 1810 A.D. It was then that both Karbala" and Najaf (where the magnificent shrine of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) is located) were besieged. Roads were blocked, pilgrims were looted then massacred, and the shrines were attacked and damaged.

The details of this second invasion were recorded by an eyewitness: Sayyid Muhammad Jawad al-Amili,

author of the famous book of jurisprudence titled *Miftah al-Karama* which was completed shortly after midnight on the very first day when the siege was laid. The writer recorded how terrified he and the other residents of Karbala” felt at seeing their city receiving a major attack from the Wahhabis. A large number of pilgrims were killed. Their number varies from one account to another, and the most realistic figure seems to be the one provided by Sayyid Muhammad Jawad al-Amili who puts it at one hundred and fifty.

The Wahhabis no longer attack and demolish Imam Husayn’s shrine, but they have been relentlessly attacking the creed of those who venerate him through a flood of books written and printed world-wide. They fund their writing, publication and circulation. They sometimes distribute them free of charge during the annual pilgrimage season while prohibiting all pilgrims from carrying or distributing any literature at all... During recent years, they have been beheading Shiite scholars wherever they can find them, destroying Shiite shrines, such as the famous 'Askari Shrine in Samarra, Iraq, which was bombed and destroyed in February of 2006 and in June of 2007; it houses the remains of both Imam Ali al-Hadi and Hassan al-'Askari, peace be with them, who descended from the immediate family of the Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings of the Almighty be with him and his progeny.

Many other Shiite mosques and Husayniyyas were bombed by the Wahhabis and are still targets of their mischief, yet these rogues will never be able to destroy Shiite Islam till the Resurrection Day. They have plenty of money, so they send their filthy money to Iraq to get the Muslims to kill each other, the Shiite to kill the Sunni and vice versa, thus making Satan the happiest being on earth, for nothing pleases this damned creature more than seeing Muslims at each other's throats. Such is the desire of all the enemies of Islam and Muslims.

Actually, due to the barbarism of these fundamentalist Wahhabis, more and more Muslims are getting to be curious about Shiite Islam, so they study it and many of them end up eventually switching their sect from Sunni to Shiite Islam.

There is no harm in a Sunni becoming Shiite or in a Shiite becoming Sunni: Islam is one tree stalk having two major branches. After all, religions of the world have sects, and people change the sect they follow according to their personal convictions and satisfaction. It happens every day, and nobody fusses about it. Thus, the Wahhabis' mischief is actually having the opposite result of what these fundamentalist fanatics, who have ruined the reputation of Islam and Muslims world-wide, anticipate.

## **Performing Ziyarat to Husayn’s Shrine**

When you visit a dignitary of a special social or political status, you are expected to follow a protocol of etiquette which you may have to learn from a secretary or a protocol specialist. Muslims believe that the soul never dies; it only travels from one stage of life to another. The Holy Qur’an tells us that we should not consider those who die in defending His cause as dead; they are living though we are not aware of it; here is the Qur’anic proof:

**"And do not reckon those who are slain in the Way of Allah as dead. Nay! They are living with their Lord, receiving their sustenance" (Qur'an, 3: 169).**

So, when you visit Husayn's sacred shrine or greet it from a distance, wherever you may be in Allah's spacious earth, you have to observe certain basic principles of etiquette such as having ablution and wearing clean clothes. There are many statements you can recite, but we have chosen this one which is known as "ziyarat warith," visiting the heir, the one who inherited the message and the knowledge of his pious predecessors. We would like to quote it here for you in its original Arabic text, then I will *Insha-Allah* translate it for you:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى الْأَرْوَاحِ الَّتِي حَلَّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ ، وَأَنَاخَتْ بِرَحْلِكَ ،  
عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي سَلَامُ اللَّهِ أَبَدًا مَا بَقِيَتْ وَبَقِيَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ ، وَلَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ آخِرَ الْعَهْدِ  
مِنِّي لِزِيَارَتِكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ .

السَّلَامُ عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ ، وَعَلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ ، وَعَلَى أَوْلَادِ الْحُسَيْنِ ، وَعَلَى  
أَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَرَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتِهِ . اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا شَفَاعَةَ الْحُسَيْنِ .

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى الْأَرْوَاحِ الَّتِي حَلَّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ ، وَأَنَاخَتْ بِرَحْلِكَ ،  
عَلَيْكُمْ مِنِّي سَلَامُ اللَّهِ أَبَدًا مَا بَقِيَتْ وَبَقِيَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ ، وَلَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ آخِرَ الْعَهْدِ  
مِنِّي لِزِيَارَتِكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ .

Translation:

Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of Adam, the one chosen by Allah (as His vicegerent on earth)! Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of Noah, the prophet of Allah! Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of Abraham, the Friend of Allah! Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of Moses who spoke to Allah! Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of Jesus, the Spirit of Allah! Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of Muhammad, the one loved by Allah! Assalamo Alaikum, O heir of the Commander of the Faithful, peace be with him! Assalamo Alaikum, O son of Muhammad, the chosen one! Assalamo Alaikum, O son of Ali, the one with whom Allah and His Messenger are pleased! Assalamo Alaikum, O son of Fatima az-Zahra! Assalamo Alaikum, O son of Khadija al-Kubra!  
Assalamo Alaikum, O revolutionary for the cause of Allah and the son of a revolutionary for the cause of Allah, the oppressed one who is yet to receive redress and the son of an oppressed one who has not been redressed! I testify that you upheld the prayers, paid the zakat, enjoined what is right, prohibited

what is wrong, and obeyed Allah and His Messenger till death overtook you; so, the curse of Allah be on a people who killed you, and the curse of Allah be on a people who oppressed you, and the curse of Allah be on those who heard about you being oppressed and were pleased thereby! O master! O father of Abdullah! I testify that you were a light in the lofty loins and purified wombs: the jahiliyya never polluted you nor spread its garments over you! And I further testify that you are among the pillars of the creed and the corner-stones of the believers! And I further testify that you are the Imam who is kind, pious, pure, guiding to righteousness and is rightly guided, and I testify that the Imams from among your offspring are the embodiment of piety and the flag-poles of guidance, the strong niche and the argument against the people of the world! And I further implore Allah, His angels, prophets and messenger, to testify that I believe in you, being convinced that you shall return according to the tenets of my faith and the conclusions of my deeds, and that my heart is at ease with whatever pleases you, and my will is subservient to yours! The blessings of Allah be upon you, upon your souls, upon your bodies, upon your being, upon those present from among you and those absent, upon what you reveal and what you conceal.

Having thus saluted the Imam, you should kiss the tomb then say the following:

By my parents (do I swear), O son of the Messenger of Allah, by my parents (do I swear), O father of Abdullah, that the calamity is great and the catastrophe magnanimous, and it has afflicted us and all the residents of the heavens and the earth, so may the curse of Allah be upon a people that gathered their forces to fight you, O master, O father of Abdullah! I have come to your sacred site and desired to be at your shrine, pleading to Allah by the status which you enjoy with Him to bless Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad and to permit me to be with you in the life of this world and in the life hereafter

After that you should perform two prostrations (rek'at) at the Imam's head, and you may recite in them whatever suras you wish. Once you have finished your prayers, you should recite the following:

O Allah! I have performed my prayers, and I have knelt and prostrated to You, and only to You, the One and Only God, there is no partner with You, for the prayers, the kneeling and the prostrating cannot be to anyone but to You, since You are Allah, there is no god but You! O Allah! I plead to You to bless Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad and to convey the best of my Salam to them and the best of salutation and, O Lord, do convey their own greeting to me! O Allah! These two rek'at are a gift from me to my master al-Husayn son of Ali, peace be with both of them! O Allah! Bless Muhammad and bless him, and do accept it from me and reward me for it with the best of what I anticipate, and my hope rests upon You, and upon Your servant, O Master of the believers!

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1. al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf at-Thaqafi's cruelty and disrespect for Islamic tenets are matched only by those demonstrated by Yazid. His date of birth is unknown, but he died in 95 A.H./762 A.D. He was born at Ta'if, not far from Mecca, and was famous for his loyalty to the Umayyads. Marwan ibn al-Hakam, with whom the reader is already familiar, placed him in command of an army he raised to subject Hijaz to the Umayyads' control, rewarding him for his success by appointing him



as governor of Mecca and Medina to which he later added Ta'if and Iraq. He founded the city of Wasit (located in Iraq midway between Basra and Kufa), where he died, and expanded the territory under the Umayyads' control. He also crushed the Kharijites. He was proverbial in his ruthlessness and love for shedding blood. His passion for shedding blood can be understood from the way he was born. Having just been born, he refused to take his mother's breast. It is said that Satan appeared in human form and said that the newborn had to be given the blood of animals to drink and to be fed with insects for four days. His cruelty towards those whom he jailed was unheard of. His prisoners were fed with bread mixed with ashes. At the time of his death, may he be placed in the deepest depths of hell, he and his Umayyad mentors and their supporters, his prisoners numbered 33,000 men and women, 16,000 of whom were completely naked and left to sleep without any blanket or sheet covering whatsoever.

2. Abdullah ibn Hanzalah belonged to the Ansar of the Aws tribe, and he was one of the most famous of the tabieen, a man of legendary courage and fortitude. When the people of Medina rebelled against Yazid, they chose him as their governor. He was killed during the Harra incident.

3. This text is compiled from the contents of p. 250, Vol. 7, of Mujma az-Zawa'id of Abu Bakr al-Haythami, p. 18, Vol. 4 (first edition), of al-Balathiri's book Ansab al-Ashraf, p. 77, Vol. 2, of al-Khawarizmi's great book Maqatal al-Husayn (ع), p. 50, Vol. 4, and of Ibn Katheer's book At-Tarikh al-Kamil, where the events of the year 64 A.H./684 A.D. are detailed, an account which agrees with what is recorded in al-Mas'udi's book Muraj at-Thahab.

4. Such antagonism has proven to be bloody especially in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Wahabbis also justify the killing of other Sunnis who do not subscribe to their beliefs as they have done in Iraq.

5. Ibn Taymiyyah, mentor of Wahhabis and Takfiris, is Ahmed ibn Abdul-Halim ibn Abdul-Salam ibn Abdullah al-Khidr, "Taqiyy ad-Din", "Abul-Abbas," a Hanbali scholar who was born in Harran (ancient Carrhae where Mudar Arabs lived, a town built by Harran brother of prophet Abraham [ع] from whom it derived its name), Iraq, in 661 A.H./1263 A.D. and died inside a Damascus, Syria, prison in 728 A.H./1328 A.D. He had his own radical and un-orthodox way of interpreting hadith which was different from everyone else's, distinguishing him from all other scholars of jurisprudence. Those who adopt his views are called "Salafis," followers of the "salaf," the "pious" predecessors. He is on the record as the first person to disbelieve in intercession (shafaa). For more details, refer to the 463-page book titled Ibn Taymiyyah by Sa'ib Abdul-Hamid, published in Arabic in Qum, Islamic Republic of Iran, by the Ghadir Center for Islamic Studies. There are many fanatical groups in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan that adopt this "Salafi" ideology disseminated by government-sponsored Saudi missionary activities and funded by petro-dollars.

6. The correct pronunciation of "Saud" is Sa'ood," but we will stick to the commonly used spelling of this word.

7. Other references consulted for this book indicate that the said attack was carried out on Thul-Hijja 14, 1215 A.H./April 28, 1801 A.D., but we are of the view that the above date is more accurate.

8. Carl Brockelmann, ed., History of the Islamic Peoples (London, 1980), p. 354.

9. Ibid.

10. The Wahhabis have carried out their campaigns against the burial grounds of the Prophet's family and companions well into the next century. For example, in 1343 A.H./1924 A.D., they demolished the grave-sites of many family members and companions (sahaba) of the Prophet (ص) against the wish and despite the denunciation of the adherents of all other Muslim sects world-wide. And in 1413 A.H./1993, they also demolished the house of Khadija, wife of Prophet Muhammad (ص), as well as the house where the Prophet (ص) had been born, which stood approximately 50 meters northward from Khadija's house, turning both of them into public bathrooms...

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