



ASHURAA

THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM HUSAYN

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

**By:
MAZAHIR**

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DEDICATION

ASHURA THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM HUSAYN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This ten-part series commemorates the tragic martyrdom of Imam Husayn and nearly all of Prophet Muhammad's family and places it in its historical perspective going back to the Prophet's persistent cry of "There is no God but Allah" against the same forces of pseudo-religion and tyranny.

This book is therefore dedicated to the Martyrs of Karbala and especially to the Chief of Martyrs, Al-Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) whose sacrifices are unmatched in the entire universe since its inception. This book is also dedicated to his mother, Fatimah Zahra (s.a.), the daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and the chief of the women of the Universe.

May the lives of my father and mother be sacrificed for them.

May the Almighty accept this effort, Ameen.

Mazahir (author)

FOREWORD

Ashura is the tenth day of the first month of the Lunar Islamic Calendar. It is also the climax of the ten-day annual commemoration of the courageous resistance by Prophet Muhammad's family and followers led by his own grandson, Imam Husayn bin Ali, against the illegitimate and pseudo-religious Ummayyad dictatorship of Yazid, son of Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan.

The tragic Martyrdom of Imam Husayn and pearly all of Prophet Muhammad's family, sparked uprising after uprising ending with the overthrow of the Ummayyad dictatorship and inspiring future resistance to the forces of evil and tyranny.

Millions of Muslims all around the World commemorate this tragic event each year, keeping aside all norms of cast, creed and colour. Imam Husayn proved that "surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who is most careful (of his duty)..." (Al-Qur'an, 49:13).

Imam Husayn's resistance to Yazid was not only a proof that RIGHT IS MIGHT no matter however mighty the wrong seem to be. He also proved "And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord" (Al-Qur'an, 3:169).

Despite the centuries that have elapsed, Imam Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) is still remembered across the entire Universe with optimum zeal and fervor, where boundaries and traditions become of no consequence.

Imam Husayn's resistance to tyranny and suppression and movement to enjoin right has created precedence in human history to a level that can never be demolished. Ever since the Imam's martyrdom, no tyrant has even thought of seeking allegiance from a righteous human being for fear of creating another Karbala.

This historical perspective therefore analyses the course of events from the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that culminated in the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

INTRODUCTION TO PROPHET MUHAMMAD (S.A.W.W.)

As promised in the Torah (Taurat) of Moses and the Bible (Injeel) of Jesus, the Savior of Mankind, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) was born in the Hashimite Clan of the Quraish tribe in Hijaz (presently known as Saudi Arabia) in the year 53 B.H. (570 C.E.).

Referring to this promise of the earlier scriptures, the Holy Qur'an says: "*And when Isa son of Mariam said: O children of Israel! Surely I am the apostle of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Taurat and giving the good news of an apostle who will come after me, his name being AHMED;...*" (Al-Qur'an 61:6)

A direct descendant of Abraham, through his son, Ismael, Muhammad (also known as Ahmad), was born an orphan. His father, Abdulla bin Abdulmutalib died, before he was born. He was brought up by his grandfather, Abdulmutalib. Upon attaining the age of 6 years, his mother, Amina binti Wahab, also died. On the death of Abdulmutalib, his grandfather, he was brought up by his uncle, Abutalib, who not only gave him fatherly love, but also sacrificed his own children for him, whenever the need so arose.

Even before the proclamation of his Prophethood, Muhammad was famous for his high moral values, honesty and truthfulness.

He was to be the last of the Prophets as revealed: "*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the last of the Prophets...*" (Qur'an 33:40). The last apostle of Allah was born in an era which did not only degrade and discard women, but also buried their female offsprings alive, it being a cultural taboo in society, and opposition to this injustice became one of the cornerstones of his Divine mission.

In the year 23 B.H. (599 C.E.), a son named Ali was born to Abutalib, in the Kaaba, the house of Almighty Allah, in Makkah. Ali was to become the staunchest defender and disciple of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.).

At the age of 25, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) married a widow called Khadija, who was one of the business magnates of the time. Khadija was impressed by the honesty and truthfulness of the Prophet and proposed the marriage, which he accepted, though she was quite older than him.

From his marriage to Khadija, the Holy Prophet was blessed with his only daughter, Fatimah, born in Makkah in the year 6 B. H. (616 C.E.), who was not only dearly loved by him, but became a symbol of the women's role in Islam.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) taught mankind in those dark ages, the position of women as decreed by the Almighty: *“O you who believe! It is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against (their) will, and do not straiten them in order that you may take part of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifest indecency, and treat them kindly; then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it.”* (Al-Qur'an, 4:19).

The Holy Prophet showed immense respect to his daughter as required by the divine law and also declared that “Fatimah is part of my flesh, whoever pleases her pleases me and whosoever angers her, angers me and whoever displeases me has displeased the Almighty.”

When the Prophet was 40 years of age, in the year 13 B.H. (610 C.E.), the archangel Gabriel, revealed the first message of Almighty Allah to declare his apostleship to the public. At this instruction, the Holy Prophet, called his family to a gathering over a meal, whereat he posed a general question to his guests seeking their firmness of opinion as to his truthfulness and honesty.

Having had a unanimous response to the affirmative, he declared: “Say: There is no God but Allah, and you shall be successful” and also declared his Prophethood to which some of his own very uncles and brethren, except Ali, rejected and mocked him. Undaunted, the Prophet declared the then 11-year old Ali as his vicegerent and publicly launched his Divine mission

MIGRATION AND “THE HOUSEHOLD”

This declaration of “There is no God but Allah” sparked hostility towards the Holy Prophet. It was a call for liberation from the pseudo-religious cultural and mercantile order that has enslaved a large part of mankind. The very same people who had vouched his titles of “The Truthful” and “The Trustworthy”, now started calling him all sorts of names, stoning the Prophet, plotting against him and even ganging up against him after having failed to corrupt him. However, the infidels of Makkah were unable to eliminate him due to the strength and guardianship of his uncle, Abutalib, who challenged everyone who wanted to harm or injure him, physically as well as morally.

Simultaneously, Khadija, the Prophet’s wife, spent each and every penny of her enormous wealth on the mission of Islam. Being the first woman to have embraced Islam, Khadija’s sincerity towards him is unequalled. When all her wealth was spent and finished, this Arabian “magnate” survived on dried leaves with a smile, despite the social boycott from within her family and friends. She always expressed satisfaction, at the acceptance of her sacrifices by the Almighty and her fortune at becoming part and parcel of this grand mission of the Prophet.

Thirteen years after the declaration of the Prophet of Islam, the Makkans had become too hostile towards the Prophet as well as his mission. Having lost both his protector in Abutalib, his uncle and supreme supporter and Khadija, his wife, in the year 1 B.H. (621 C.E.), the Prophet migrated to Madina, whose people and environment were friendlier and more hospitable.

These hostile Makkans, including some of his uncles, and their allies did not rest at this migration, but perpetrated several wars. The Holy Prophet was made to defend at least 59 battles waged against the Muslims by the Makkans in a short span of less than ten years.

In these unending battles, which were one after the other, Ali was the triumphant commander in all Badr, Ohud, Khandaq and Khaibar were

some of the victorious battles of the Prophet. Makkah was conquered peacefully in the year 8 A.H. (630 C.E). Upon this conquest, the Holy Prophet destroyed the 360 idols placed in the Holy Kaaba, the house of the Almighty, and declared Makkah as a sanctuary for all mankind who believed.

In Madina, the Prophet married his daughter Fatimah to Ali bin Abutalib in the year 2 A.H. (624 C.E), in a ceremony of utmost simplicity and worthy of emulation. Of this marriage, four children were born, Hassan in 3 A.H. (625 C.E.), Husayn in 4 A.H. (626 C.E.), Zainab and Ummu Kulthum in 6 A.H. (628 C.E.) and 8 A.H. (630 C.E.) respectively.

After the migration to Madina, there were quite a few other notable events besides the battles. In the year 8 A .H. (630 C.E.), the Prophet was a guest of his daughter and as he rested under a “cloak”, Fatimah, her husband Ali, and her sons Hassan and Husayn also got into the cloak.

At the assembly of the “five”, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) raised his hands and prayed: “O! Allah, these are the people of my Household, and very specially my own and my protectors, they are my flesh and my blood, whoever gives them trouble, gives me trouble too, I am at war with those who are at war with them, I am at peace with those who are at peace with them, I am the enemy of those who are their enemies and I am a friend of those who befriend them.” At this stage Gabriel came with the revelation: “....Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough purification)” (Al-Qur’an, 33:33).

This event came to be known as the “Event of the Cloak”.

Likewise, the Almighty said: “Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives...” (Al-Qur’an 42:23).

On another occasion, upon the revelation of “But whoever disputes with you in this matter alter what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women and our near people(nafs) and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars” (Al-Qur’an 3:61).

The Holy prophet led his delegation with Ali as “his near people”, Fatimah as “his women”, and their sons Hassan and Husayn as “his sons” for the combat known as “MUBAHILA” (the maledictory conflict), which was against the Christians of Najran (Yemen).

These remarkable persons were not so dear to the Prophet just because they were his own “flesh and blood,” but because they were his staunchest and most dedicated disciples as their own lives testify.

The example of my household is like that of Noah’s Arc, whosoever boards it will get salvation (rescued) and the one who opposes the boarding of it, gets drowned
The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.aw.w.)

“The one who pleases a ruler with something which is the cause of Allah’s fury has gone out of Allah’s religion”
Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) (570 - 632 C.E.)

THE PROPHET'S SUCCESSOR

On his way back to Madina after pilgrimage to Makkah in 10 A.H. (632 C.E.), the Prophet received the following revelation: “*O Apostle! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message; and Allah will protect you from the people; Surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people*” (Al-Qur’an 5:67). He gathered all those present with him at the plains known as “Ghadeer” and delivered one of the most important sermon of his entire mission. Among the highlights of that sermon, is his formal investiture of Imam Ali as his successor and the question of leadership after his demise.

“*I am leaving behind with you two precious things: The Book of Allah, and my Progeny, the people of my Household*” and “*To whomever I am a Master, here is Ali (also) his master. O Allah! Befriend whoever befriends him, and take for an enemy whoever opposes him...*” He made this declaration after telling the congregation that it was his last pilgrimage and that he was to leave this world shortly.

Ali's qualities excelled in every field and were known to one and all: knowledge - Nahjul Balagha, his work still stands unchallenged after the Holy Qur'an; Sincerity - his sleeping on the Prophet's bed on the night of Hijra (migration) proves his commitment to the cause of the mission; Bravery and Courage - his combats at the various battles could not have had any other being as superior; Truthful and Trustworthy - his traits were matched by none in piety and humility.

Immediately after the Holy Prophet had declared his successor as per the divine directive, the following was also revealed: “*...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion;...*” (Al-Qur’an 5:3).

However, this declaration did not really please the hypocrites even though they had also publicly congratulated the Prophet and Ali at the time, and sealed their enmity towards the Household of the Prophet in every and all respects.

Despite hearing the Holy Prophet's declaration and also having heard many a traditions in regards to the virtues and traits of Ali bin Abutalib, like "I am the City of Knowledge, and Ali is its Gate" and "Ali is from me and I am from Ali" and "Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses" and "Ali is with the truth and the truth is with Ali" those who did not fully agree with the Prophet's divine objectives among his companions did everything possible to distort these facts and subvert his successor after the Prophet's demise.

The Holy Prophet died in Madina within seventy days of the above declaration, after a short illness.

On receiving the news of the death of the Holy Prophet, these conspirators moved swiftly to impose their own choice of a successor over the entire nation diverting everyone's attention from the Prophet's burial. History reports that only about ten men were involved in the final rites of this great Messenger of the Almighty. Even some of his very close relatives including some of his wives were unaware of his funeral arrangements "...until they heard the shovels..."

After imposing their own choice as leader, these people rushed towards the House of Fatimah, seeking Ali's allegiance, even if it meant to use force, and in the process, damaged the walls of her thatched house with fire. The entrance door fell upon Fatimah, who was behind it, instantly killing her unborn child, Muhsin and causing grievous body injuries to the very daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) about whom he had said: "Fatimah is a piece from me, whosoever tortures her, has tortured me and pleases her pleases me."

Ali, together with his family were subjected to immense atrocities and hostility, to the extent of Lady Fatimah lamenting: "If these hostilities were to fall on a mountain, it would crumble and were it to afflict the daylight, it would turn into night." Lady Fatimah passed away seventy days after being wounded when her house was attacked in 11 A.H (632 C.E) at the tender age of 18 years only. She was survived by her two sons Hassan and Husayn, (about whom the Prophet had declared: "Hassan and Husayn are

the leaders of the youths of Paradise” and “Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn.”) And two daughters: Zainab and Umm Khulthum.

Ali stayed indoors not reclaiming his right of caliphate for the next 25 years until he was sought for and elected as the fourth caliph. On his ascension to the caliphate, his opponents kept him busy defending Islam in battles which numbered not less than 40 in a span of 4 years of his rule.

“Islam is submission, submission is conviction, conviction is affirmation, affirmation is acknowledgement, acknowledgement is discharge (of obligations), and discharge of obligations is action.”

Ali bin AbuTalib (a.s.) (599-661 C.E.)

TYRANNY AND SUPPRESSION

Whilst Ali was “elected” by popular acclaim, Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan assumed and declared himself as the Caliph of the Muslims in the year 36 A.H. (657 C.E.) upon the assassination of Uthman, the third Caliph.

The self imposed dictator, turned the Muslim state of Hijaz into a tyranny and began his conquests of lands, far and near, to expand his “empire”, with Damascus as his Capital City. In the process he not only vilified the basic tenets of Islam such as the forbiddance of the consumption of alcohol, and prostitution to name a few, but also spread corruption to its highest level, and persecuted the upright followers and Companions of the Holy Prophet. Besides, harassment of the members of “the Household of the Prophet” was intensified to the extent of plotting their extermination.

These anti-Islamic acts including the harassment of the Household of the Prophet and disregard for the tenets of Islam to the extent of even holding Friday Prayers on a Wednesday were totally unacceptable to the upright companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.), which attracted Muawiya’s wrath on those who opposed him.

Another facet of the misrule of Muawiya, son of Abu Sufyan, was propagating anti-Ali feelings to the extent of ordering his abuse from the pulpits (disregarding that the Holy Prophet had declared him (Ali) as his own “Nafs”) and proclaiming that there was no revelation to Muhammad. Finally, Muawiya had Ali slayed while praying in the mosque of Kufa in the year 40 A.H. (661 C.E.). Hassan Ibne Ali, the elder son and the next Imam was equally harassed. However, in one of the battles that Hassan Ibne Ali was defending against the hypocrites led by Muawiya, a truce and peace treaty was signed.

This peace treaty between Hassan and Muawiya was to maintain a truce in the Muslim World with certain conditions spelt out by Hassan, and accepted publicly by Muawiya, violation of which would mean aggression against Islam. Some of the conditions of this peace treaty were: Islamic

law in accordance with the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions will be maintained; to stop Ali Ibne AbuTalib being abused from pulpits with immediate effect, and that Muawiya would not appoint a successor after him. However, none of the conditions set in the peace treaty were adhered to by Muawiya, rather usurping the rights and properties of individuals and the populace at large remained and even intensified

Neither did Muawiya's non-Islamic advances stop nor the intimidation of the right. Corruption in the entire state spread to the extent that people could hardly recognize and differentiate the truth from falsehood and good from bad. Due to the presence of Hassan, popularity was always with him as truth prevails over falsehood, which did not in the least please Muawiya and his cronies. Through Jo'ada Binti As'ash, a wife of Hassan, Muawiya managed to poison him, causing the death of yet another "Member of the Cloak", in the year 51 A.H. (671 C.E.). Jo'ada was promised marriage to Yazid, the son of Muawiya and "heir to the Empire".

Having fallen for Muawiya's false promise to make her the next "queen" of Hijaz (then the greater Arab State), Jo'ada did not hesitate to become the treacherous murderer of Hassan Ibne Ali, the grandson of the Holy Prophet. However, immediately on completion of the mission, perpetrated by Muawiya, Jo'ada was condemned as an infidel and unfaithful woman, and neither the promised marriage nor the hereafter was achieved.

Husayn bin Ali was the appointed third vicegerent of the Holy Prophet, after Ali bin Abutalib and Hassan bin Ali, and the last of the members of the "Cloak". Husayn buried his brother, Hassan, in the graveyard of Madina having had to avert a near war situation. Some of the "very close relatives" of the Holy Prophet, who were not part of "The Household," chose to spray the coffin of the slain grandson of the Holy Prophet with arrows to prevent his burial near the Prophet. Husayn diverted his brother's burial to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

"Death with dignity is better than life of humiliation"
Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) (626-680 C.E.)

HUSAYN'S DEPARTURE FROM MADINA

In the year 60 A.H. (680 C.E.), Muawiya died, having once again broken his promise under the truce, by appointing his son Yazid as the next Caliph. Yazid, an open flirt who had no concern for the welfare of Muslims or Islam in general was declared the Caliph all the same. He declined prayers, usurped power, dictated his "Kingdom" with fear, favored his cronies, wine, women and vice was the order of the day, squandering of public funds had become part of his flesh, moral values were at their lowest ebb and the Commands of the Almighty Allah were openly mocked.

This deviant Yazid, a descendant and successor of the Umayyad Clan, sought allegiance of all his "subjects" upon ascension to the throne. He also did not spare the Makkans and Madinites as well and sought the allegiance of Husayn, through his governor in Madina, Walid bin Utbah, a cousin to Yazid, with express instructions. Walid with his deputy, Marwan bin Hakam, sought the presence of Husayn at the royal palace in Madina in the month of Rajab, the seventh month of the Islamic Calendar, in the Year 60 A.H.

The general atmosphere in Madina was of tension and fear and the very fact that Husayn was not called upon, but called to the royal palace signalled a very delicate situation.

At this meeting, Walid informed Husayn of the death of Muawiya and the ascension of Yazid to the throne, who in return sought an allegiance from each of his subjects and, especially, from Husayn.

Let us ask ourselves thus? If all his subjects other than Husayn and his very few followers had sworn allegiance to Yazid, why would Yazid insist on his allegiance and if Husayn turned it down what could he spoil for the then very powerful Yazid?

Yazid very well knew that allegiance from Husayn did not just mean

that he has personally accepted his ascension as a Caliph, but very categorically meant that he (Yazid) was the rightful Caliph and that the Household of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) accepted it and this acceptance would mean his character and anti-Islamic acts as well as usurpation of rights and property was legalized by a venerated member of the “Cloak”.

Any upright thinking human being would not have accepted this as it also meant that the Prophetic Mission and the Message of the Almighty Allah was in vain and would have vanished in time. Husayn seemingly held this very thought and despite the intimidation and threat to his life, defied these orders forthright.

However, Walid and Marwan were already planning his murder if he resisted as they expected he would, even if the sanctity of the Holy land of Madina would be tainted.

Husayn immediately after the meeting, ordered preparations for travelling away from Madina to preserve its sanctity from being violated by Yazid's expected retribution.

Husayn asked his entire family, save for Umme Salma (the Prophet's wife), Fatimah binti Kalebiya (Ali bin Abutalib's surviving wife and Abbas bin Ali's mother), and his daughter Fatimah, to travel with him. These painful preparations were supervised personally by his valorous brother, Abbas bin Ali.

As the Madinites started getting the news of his migration, people of all walks of life came to offer their sympathies to Husayn and some of them even warned him not to go to Iraq, as they had heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) say that his household will be brutally tortured in Iraq.

Abbas was the son of Ali bin Abutalib and Fatimah binti Kalebiya, the last of Ali's wives. He was a result of the prayers of Ali, who sought to have a son who would be his representative at the well-prophesised war at Karbala. This war was foretold by the Holy Prophet himself after a revelation. Since the Holy Prophet would be represented by Husayn, Ali wished he would also be represented in the form of Abbas.

The Prophet's saying: "...my vicegerents shall be twelve in number, all from my progeny and the first is like Muhammad, the last is like Muhammad, each of them is like Muhammad and all of them are like Muhammad" was kept true to its word. At the time of embarking on the caravan, Husayn showed to the world that Islam respected women more than any culture or tradition. He personally supervised the embarking of the caravan witnessed by thousands of people and when each lady was escorted by her "Mahrim" in full "hijab", Hashimite youths ensured calm prevailed.

"The one who comes to a rich man and shows humbleness to him for the sake of his wealth, has lost two-thirds of his religion"
The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) (570-632 C.E)

"A nation which buys the leisure of the living beings in exchange for the wrath of the Creator does not get salvation"
Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) (626-680 C.E.)

HUSAYN'S ARRIVAL IN KARBALA

Husayn left Madina on 28th day of Rajab, 60 A.H. (7th May, 680 C.E.) and arrived in the holy land of Makkah which was the sanctuary for all mankind. However, in the month of Dhulhajj, the month of the pilgrimage to the holy land, Husayn uncovered a plot by the forces of Yazid. A few armed men were sent under the pretext of being pilgrims to “kill” him during this Holy ritual of Hajj. Worthy of note here is that although hunting, even the killing of insects, is strictly prohibited within the precincts of Makkah, Yazid had planned to kill the grandson of the very same Prophet he purported to be a vicegerent of.

On the 9th day of Dhulhajj, 60 A.H. (13th September, 680 C.E.), when all pilgrims to the House of Allah proceed to Mount Arafat, donning the prescribed garb, Husayn had to quit this ritual of the greater pilgrimage (Hajj), to the smaller pilgrimage (Umrah) and leave Makkah on this very day in order to protect the sanctity of the House of Allah, which was his duty. Husayn with his entire entourage proceeded for Kufa, a city in Iraq.

The populace of Kufa had written in their thousands to Husayn for his divine guidance and, in order to gauge the depth of the demand, he had already dispatched his ambassador, Muslim bin Aqeel, his cousin and a devout disciple of the teachings of the Holy Prophet.

On his way to Kufa, Husayn learnt of the treachery of the people of Kufa who left this ambassador on his own, out of fear of Yazid's retribution. Muslim bin Aqeel, who had traveled with his sons, was brutally tortured and slain whilst the whereabouts of his two sons was still unknown. During the course of the journey, Husayn also received the news of the brutal beheadings of these two sons of Muslim, aged 8 and 9 years respectively.

Simultaneously, Husayn was stopped by a battalion comprising of a thousand cavalymen led by Hurr ar-Riyahi who diverted them into the depth of Iraq towards the plains of Karbala, a desert in southern Iraq, bordered by River Euphrates on its north.

On arrival at Karbala, Husayn pitched his tents near the banks of River Euphrates on the 2nd Day of Muharram, 61 A.H (5th October, 680 C.E.). The forces of Yazid started adding on by the hour and encircled him and his household. They ordered Husayn and his supporters to decamp from the near-bank of the river to a much farther site just to compound the difficulty in obtaining water.

Yazid commanded his chief of staff, Umar bin Sa'ad, who was also a knowledgeable person, to ensure that all, including birds and animals but not the family of the Holy Prophet, be allowed access to water.

By the ninth day of Muharram, the army of Yazid had grown to seventy thousand, whilst Husayn who had neither planned nor prepared any warfare, had a meagre seventy men which included male children.

Once again, Yazid through Umar bin Sa'ad this time, demanded Husayn's allegiance to him and was turned down once more. At this stage, having known the inevitable, Husayn called upon all his companions and expressing his grief at the situation forewarned them of the ultimate - Martyrdom, and that no booty or spoils of war was to be expected. He further explained that Yazid's forces were only after his blood and that he would have no grief if they (the Companions) would go away. He even put out the lights in the night for anyone who felt embarrassed to leave.

Though none of the companions left, at least three from the forces of Yazid crossed over to Husayn's camp, having realized that the battle was not for the "kingdom" but had an ulterior motive of legalizing and justifying Yazid's Caliphate.

These "defectors" included Hurr ar-Riyahi with his brother and his son. Hurr was the same person who blocked Husayn's passage and entrapped him. Hurr knew and realised in his heart that Imam Husayn was on the side of the truth and the enemy i.e Yazid on the side of falsehood.

True to the divine and selfless nature of his stand, Husayn not only accepted the repentance of Hurr but also prayed for him, finally allowing him to fight the infidels and hypocrites in Yazid's forces.

THE MASSACRE OF “THE HOUSEHOLD”

It was on Wednesday, the tenth day (Ashura) of the first month of the Muslim Calendar, Muharram, in the year 61 A.H. (13th October, 680 C.E.) Husayn asked his second son, Ali Akbar, to call for prayers at dawn, and also to remind those who had seen and heard the Holy Prophet of, his status. Ali Akbar not only resembled the Holy Prophet, but also had a voice like his, a fact that could have woken the misguided from their stupor and avert bloodshed. Even his gesture was not heeded and instead a full fledged war in the form of an arrow-shower was the answer.

Prior to this, on the eve of Ashura, Abbas bin Ali, who was the chief of security in Husayn's Camp, wept at seeing each of the ladies encouraging their husbands and their sons to give their lives in support of Husayn. Such was the steadfastness of Husayn's remaining band of followers.

Husayn planned his strategies of defence under the command of his brother Abbas bin Ali. His army was divided into three divisions to defend against the aggression of Yazid's army.

As anticipated by Husayn, resisting over a thousand troops per each individual, at an average, was not to obtain a physical victory, but was to ensure the continuity of the message of the Almighty through his chosen Prophet. Having failed to convince the enemy, Husayn cried: “...If the religion of Muhammad cannot survive without the sacrifice of my blood, then, O Swords! come and get me!”

By the time of the midday prayer, half of Husayn's army had already attained martyrdom and after the fall of all the companions and valorous warriors, the turn of the Hashimites began, since not a single companion agreed for any of these Hashimites to proceed to fight until their last breath. Proud of his companions Husayn declared: “Neither my Grandfather, nor my father, nor my brother had the companionship with such sincerity as seen in my companions.”

One after the other, all Husayn's companions and friends fell, including Habib bin Mazahir at the age of 86 and one of his closest and childhood friends, Muslim bin Ausajah, Hurr ar-Riyahi, John and Wahab, among others. The companions were not from any single tribe and or country; in fact at least thirteen Africans fought on Husayn's side for the cause of Islam and the Almighty.

When came the turn of the youths of the Hashimite Clan who were aged between six to thirty four years, Husayn called upon his second son Ali Akbar, and ordered him to go to the battlefield. He explained that if the Prophet would have been with them, he would have taken up the position of Ali Akbar in the defense of Islam. Ali Akbar resembled the Prophet in each and every aspect of life including his physique, speech and movement and the most handsome of the princes.

He too was martyred on the battlefield and the news of the death of the youthful son of Husayn saw Imam Husayn (a.s.) lament: "What is this world after your death?"

Kassim, son of Hassan bin Ali, was the next who was only allowed to go to the battlefield after a lot of hesitation because he was only thirteen years old and had not even attained puberty, besides being the only reminder of Husayn's late brother. Kassim was trampled upon by the horses of the enemy whilst still alive until he died. Lady Zainab was accompanied by her two sons, Aun and Muhammad, aged 6 and 7 years respectively. They were to take to the battlefield next and they too were martyred leaving no survivors from the offsprings of this valiant lady. One after the other, all the Hashimite youths took to the field and each one was finally martyred.

Prior to Husayn himself going to the field for defending Islam, his brother Abbas bin Ali, who was the most brave and courageous of the army, despite having sought permission repeatedly to fight, was turned down. Instead, Abbas was asked to arrange for water for the Household from the river Euphrates, since all reserves of water had finished and it was already three days since any of the members of the Prophet's family, including children as young as six months old, had even a drop of water.

Abbas bin Ali, having managed to fill up one of the containers with water from the river, was on his way back to the camp, when the enemy attacked him from the rear and not only ensured that the water did not reach the children of Husayn's camp, but also managed to kill Husayn's most valorous warrior, brother and Commander in Chief, leaving him on his own.

"If the religion of Muhammad cannot survive without the sacrifice of my blood, then, O! Swords, come and get me!"
Husayn bin Ali (626-680 C.E.)

"I do not consider death except prosperity and do not consider life along with oppressors and tyrants except affliction and anguish"
Husayn bin Ali (626-680 C.E.)

"Enjoin the Good and forbid the Bad (Evil), other-wise evildoers will be installed over you, and your calls for the best among you (to rule) will go unheeded."
Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) (570-632 C.E.)

THE END OF “THE CLOAK”

Having none in and around his camp Husayn cried out: “IS THERE ANYONE TO HELP US, IS THERE ANYONE TO HEED OUR CALL.” This call was not lightly received and a child, Ali Asghar bin Husayn, the youngest and the last of his sons, who was then only six months old, cried out, as if in answer to his father's appeal.

Husayn carried this child of his to the front to seek some water for him to quench his thirst which for a child of that age had become unbearable. The enemy answered his call with a three-pronged arrow shot towards the child, who died in his hands. When Husayn returned to the camp with the child's body, the mother lamented: “Are the children of your age also slain in this manner?” Husayn dug a small grave with his sword and buried this child.

After this unceremonial burial of the child Ali Asghar, Husayn was once again in the camps and called on each one of the ladies and children to bid them farewell.

With his sister Zainab, he bid farewell to his youngest and favorite daughter, Sakina, who was only four years in age. He advised her to observe optimum patience and forbearance at all the atrocities to follow, as the mission of The Almighty through his chosen Prophet was paramount in all aspects and second to none including her own welfare.

Finally, accompanied by Zainab, Husayn came to his ailing son, Ali Zainul Abideen, who was the eldest of his children and his designated successor. Ali bin Husayn, who was ill all along and unaware of the happenings of the day and the deaths of all his father's companions, was shocked at the sight of his severely wounded father; Husayn calmed him and having bade him farewell, mounted his horse for the final time with the help of his sister, Zainab. She was now the commander in chief of the depleted army which comprised of none but Zainul-Abideen Ali bin

Husayn, women who had lost their husbands, sons and brothers in the massacre and a few surviving children.

Standing in the midst of the enemy, Husayn called out to them to spare his life and let him go away, despite having killed all his companions, friends, brothers, nephews, and sons in just one day; to this he was answered in unison that unless he swears allegiance to Yazid they would not leave him, whatever the Holy Prophet, had said about him.

At this stage, Husayn introduced himself by telling the forces of Yazid that he was the grandson of the Holy Prophet, the son of Ali and Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet and a brother to Hassan, and that spilling his blood would benefit neither their world nor the hereafter. Thereafter, he also tried to awaken their thoughts: “If you do not believe in any religion, at least think as free men.”

At the age of 57, and having had the grief of losing all of 72 men in his camp, which included 18 members of his immediate family and descendants of Abutalib, Husayn fought valiantly.

It was now the time for the evening (Asr) prayers. At this stage, Umar bin Sa'ad ordered the battalions to surround Husayn and fight him together.

The earth tremored and the sun eclipsed on the announcement that “Husayn has been killed in Karbala, Husayn has been slaughtered in Karbala” amid the chants of “Allah is Great”. The last member of the “Cloak” had fallen and beheaded hungry and thirsty by Shimr Ibne Joshan for the promise of worldly favours by Yazid.

The atrocities did not end at the martyrdom of Husayn, his body and those of his companions were mutilated by the hooves of the horses of the enemy, prior to being beheaded.

And history repeated itself, the forces of Yazid headed for the Household and burnt all the tents and snatched all the head-coverings of the ladies having looted them of the little they had possessed, which included even

the cradle of Ali Asghar. The family of the Holy Prophet was humiliated and taken captives.

Zainab binte Ali, “the second Fatimah” and “the partner of Husayn” stepped into the shoes of a brave and courageous warrior. She kept her grief of having lost all the men aside and handled and protected all the ladies and children, and the ailing Zainul-Abideen, in leaving the burning tents and saving their lives. She was also the chief of security for the ensuing night, not relinquishing her duties of being compassionate with the afflicted members of her “new entourage.”

“Death with dignity is better than life of humiliation”
Husayn bin Ali (626-680 C.E.)

“If you do not believe in any religion at least think as free men”
Husayn bin Ali (626-680 C.E.)

“O People! The Prophet has said that whoever comes across a ruler who perpetrates cruelty and transgresses the Divine limits, breaks the covenant made with Allah, violates the Prophet’s traditions and rules over the people with coercion, if he does not oppose that ruler with word and deed, Allah will not allot him a Good abode in the Hereafter.”
Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) (626-680 C.E.)

THE “HOUSEHOLD” OF THE PROPHET IN CAPTIVITY

It was the eleventh day of the new Islamic year, Ali bin Husayn, whose titles included “the pride of the worshippers” and “the leader of those who prostrate” was bundled in heavy chains despite his illness. The ladies and children of the Household were tied up in ropes and boarded onto the bare backs of camels. The bodies of the martyrs were left unburied and these “captives” were taken from Karbala to Damascus, the capital city of Yazid’s empire via Kufa, a distance of about a thousand miles, through the scorching heat of the desert.

At every village the Household was “paraded” and “introduced” to the people in humiliation, since they had to cover themselves with their own hair, not having the “hijab” or the head covering available. These forces of the so-called Caliph (Yazid) had not the slightest of remorse for their atrocities towards the household of the Holy Prophet or the place of Women, or the treatment of orphans as taught and practiced by the Holy Prophet, and also expressly instructed in the Holy Qur’an.

These “captives” were then taken to the court of Ibne-Ziyad in Kufa. Ibne-Ziyad was the illegitimate son of Abu-Sufyan and thus a “brother” to Muawiya. His cunning behavior and ruthlessness were known in the entire Arab world. He received these “captives” of the Household of the Prophet in absolute rejoicing and ordered that every street of Kufa be decorated for the victory of the Umayyads over the Hashimite “Kingdom” and that the family of Muhammad be paraded in front of all gathered.

During one of these processions, he provoked the honorable Lady Zainab and to his utmost surprise, saw her answer him in the midst of the street.

With the voice that people mistook for Ali bin Abutalib, addressing him as one of the “sons of freed slaves.” Without any fear, referring to the ancestors of her Umayyad tormentors who were freed by the Prophet at the time of the conquest of Makkah.

Zainab's address in Kufa created such a revolt in the populace that Ibne Ziyad could no longer detain them in Kufa and thus immediately made arrangements for their departure. He had forgotten, maybe, that it was not long before, (20 years only) these very ladies were the princesses of Kufa during the time of the Caliphate of Ali, who had his Capital here. The Household were finally taken to Damascus with the heads of all the martyrs, as signs of the Umayyad's "victory," to the Grand Umayyad Palace of Yazid. These captives were held in prison for a period of one year.

At one of the sessions of Yazid's "court," he mocked Ali bin Husayn, and asked him, who were victorious in this battle. Zainul Abideen's reply was: "Whichever side's mission remains is victorious, irrespective of the physical outcome - If the call 'Muhammad is His Messenger,' after the call of 'Allah is Great' exists and remains, Husayn is Victorious."

Yazid applied all forms of torture and brutality towards the Household in captivity in the prison of Damascus, until one day, Husayn's daughter, Sakina, died in captivity.

Upon the death of this child, the people began revolting against Yazid seeking the immediate release of the Household of the Holy Prophet.

On realizing the threat now posed to his empire, which his forefathers had so craftily managed and inherited to him, Yazid conceded to the call and released all members of the Household of the Holy Prophet, in the year 62 A.H. (682 C.E.). He not only released them with optimum respect and regard, but also conceded to their demand of holding a mourning session in Damascus prior to their departure for Madina.

Ali bin Husayn, arrived in Madina, having visited the graves of his slain father and his companions in Karbala. He was the only male adult of the family to return. Bashir bin Jaslam, was the guide of this heart-broken caravan. On seeing the walls of Madina, the younger daughter of Ali bin Abutalib lamented:

"O! city of our grandfather (the Holy Prophet). Do not accept us, the

honor with which we left you and the humiliation we suffered, we have come without our warriors or our sons!”

The caravan stopped outside Madina and Bashir entered the city with a tearful announcement: “O! People of Madina, the grandson of the Prophet was slain in Karbala and his kin have come back.” Hearing this shocking announcement, all Madinites gathered at the Grand Mosque of the Prophet where each one offered his/her sympathies.

“Take care, avoid the companionship of a transgressor because he sells you for a morsel (of food) or less than that”
Ali bin Husayn (a.s.) (657-716 C.E.)

“The best wealth is contentment and the worst poverty is humility before the rich one”
Hassan bin Ali (a.s.) (625-671 C.E.)

THE PERSPECTIVE

Yazid however, feeling defeated, sent an army of ten thousand men to ransack Madina in the year 62 A.H. (681 C.E.), soon after the arrival of Ali bin Husayn. These men not only harassed and ransacked homes in Madina, but ensured they were disrespectful to the Holy Prophet by tying their horses and camels on his grave, besides causing enormous humiliation by raping Muslim women and killing their men.

However, in the year 63 A.H. (682 C.E.), Yazid disappeared into oblivion having abdicated never to be heard of. His son, Muawiyah II, took up the throne after him and categorically accused his forefathers of having usurped the rights of the Household and withdrawing from the Kingdom. The Umayyad Dynasty however did not end here as the “plotters” of their times ensured continuity until their rule finally ended in the year 132 A.H. (749 C.E.)

Ali bin Husayn, the pride of worshippers, for forty years after the tragic event of Karbala taught through supplications and educating the general public of the atrocities committed by the Umayyads. He was finally poisoned by Hashim bin AbdulMalik in 98A.H. (716 C.E.).

In the year 102 A.H. (720 C.E.), the Abbasids began fighting the Umayyads who finally fell to the strength of the Abbasids. During this time, when the Umayyads and the Abbasids were busy warring for power over the “Kingdom” of Hijaz, Muhammad bin Ali (Al-Baqir), and Jafar bin Muhammad (As-Sadiq), both direct descendants of the Holy Prophet, through the lineage of Husayn, spread and taught various sciences and disciplines amongst the populace.

These teachings were at their climax at the time of Jafar bin Muhammad (As-Sadiq), when at least four thousand students in various subjects were objectively learning under his guidance. Learned men like Abu Hanifa and Avicenna (Ibne Sina), the reputed Physician and Mathematician, are some of the most well-known students of Jafar bin Muhammad (As-Sadiq.)

In conclusion, and examining the historical events, we deduce that the massacre of Karbala was neither an accident nor an event that came up in the year, it actually happened; rather the proven fact is that it was a climax and result of a protracted war against the Prophet and his household long before the Ashura massacre. Also proved beyond any doubt is that the atrocities were against ISLAM and the religion of the Almighty by the staunch idol-worshippers who were non-believers with Muslim names. Thanks to the struggles and martyrdom of the warriors of Karbala, today the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.), is attached to the name of the Almighty and heard at least five times a day from each and every corner of the world. The moral values taught by him prevail, Islamic “hijab”, the head covering, is practiced and Islam lives on until today, thus victory at the battle of Karbala is HUSAYN’S.

Imam Shafi says: “Our prayers are incomplete, if we do not send salutations to you, O! Household of the Prophet.”

Dynasties like Umayyads and the Abbasids came and went, power they achieved and lost, tyranny they enhanced, dictatorships they promoted, harassment of the Household of the Prophet, they intensified, physical rule they applied but.

HUSAYN RULES THE HEARTS OF THE UNIVERSE EVEN TODAY.

Days have turned into weeks into months; years have turned into decades into centuries, none has been remembered with equal vigor, but Husayn. Each soul is mourned on his death, some for hours, some for months, but time heals the grief of the loss, which turns from the “unbearable” to “bearable”. But the brutality with which Husayn and his companions were slain on the plains of Karbala has such a burning fire in the hearts of the faithful, that each year the grief becomes anew.

Husayn’s mission still lives and his sacrifices are not void. He is the King of Martyrs and shall live in the hearts of one and all. Millions of faithful, throughout the world not only respect him and commemorate his martyrdom on this day, they revere him second only to the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.w.), his father, Ali bin Abutalib (a.s.), his

mother, Fatimah binti Muhammad and his brother, Hasan bin Ali, peace be upon them and their progeny.

“The company and social intercourse with the people committing transgression is (causes) blame and incredibility”

Husayn bin Ali (a.s.) (626-680 C.E.)

And reckon not those who are killed in Allah’s way as dead; nay they are alive (and) are provided sustenance From their Lord.

(Holy Qur’an, 3:169)

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