



From Medina to Karbala

In the Words of
Imam al-Husayn

Ayatollah Muhammad-Sadiq Najmi
Translated and annotated by
Dr. Muhammad-Reza Fakhrr-Rohani

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Published by
Sun Behind The Cloud Publications Ltd
PO Box 15889, Birmingham, B16 6NZ
with
Imām al-Ḥusayn's Sacred Sanctuary
Karbala, Iraq

This edition first published in paperback 2012

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-908110-06-0

Printed in the United Kingdom

www.sunbehindthecloud.com

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Imām al-Ḥusayn's Discourse
in the Tāsū'ā Afternoon

(a) إني رأيت رسول الله في المنام فقال لي: إنك صائر أينا عن قريب...
(b) إركب بنفسي أنت يا أخي حتى تلقاهم فتقول لهم ما لكم و ما بدا لكم
و تسألهم عما جاء بهم...
(c) إرجع إليهم فإن استطعت أن تؤخرهم إلى غدوة و تدفعهم عنا العشيّة
نصلي لربنا الليلة و ندعوه و نستغفره فهو يعلم أنني أحب الصلاة و تلاوة
كتابه و كثرة الدعاء، و الاستغفار.

(a) "I dreamt of the Prophet of Allāh (Prophet Muḥammad – May Allāh bless him and his progeny) who told me: "You are returning to us very shortly."

(b) "O My dear brother! May my soul be sacrificed for you! Ride (on your horse) to meet them and ask them of their purpose and incentive, and enquire of any news they have received."

(c) "Return to them, and if you can, delay them until early [next] morning, and get tonight as respite so that we will be performing *salat* (ritual prayer) for our Lord. Tonight we will appeal to Him and ask His forgiveness, for He knows that I do adore *salat*, reciting His Book [the Holy Qur'an], profusion of supplications, and seeking forgiveness."

Context

According to al-Ṭabarī, it was Thursday afternoon, 9th Muharram, [2] when ‘Umar b. Sa’d ordered his army to attack the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn and they began to move towards the camp of the Imām. At that time, Imām al-Ḥusayn was leaning on his sword and had a light nap.

Upon noticing the movement of ‘Umar b. Sa’d’s army, Lady Zaynab, Imām al-Ḥusayn’s sister, rushed to him and addressed him thus: “O Brother! The enemy has got near the encampment.”

When Imām al-Ḥusayn raised his head, his first statement was that which is mentioned in (a) above, signifying that Imām al-Ḥusayn would meet Prophet Muḥammad soon.

Imām al-Ḥusayn then addressed his step-brother al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī, as quoted in (b) above, to meet the army and enquire of their purpose.

To fulfill this request, al-‘Abbās, with 20 of his men, including Zuhayr b. al-Qayn and Ḥabīb b. Maẓāhir, approached the enemy forces and enquired of the reason of their movement.

The army soldiers of ‘Umar b. Sa’d informed al-‘Abbās that they had just received a new command from their amir, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād. It was that either Imām al-Ḥusayn had to pledge allegiance with Yazīd, or they would start the war. Al-‘Abbās conveyed their mission to Imām al-Ḥusayn.

Upon this, Imām al-Ḥusayn recommended al-‘Abbās to return to the enemy soldiers with the message indicated in section (c) above. In it, Imām al-Ḥusayn expressed his adoration for prayer and supplication for which he sought one night respite.

Al-‘Abbās returned to the enemy and conveyed the Imām’s request for one night of respite. As ‘Umar b. Sa’d was hesitant to accept the suggestion, he consulted his army officers in this regard.

‘Amr b. al-Ḥajjāj, an army officer, expressed that had they been of Turk or Daylam tribes, ‘Umar b. Sa’d was supposed to give them a positive answer, while they were descendants of Prophet Muḥammad.

Qays b. al-Ash'ath, another enemy commander, believed that Imām al-Ḥusayn deserved a positive reply. He reasoned that the respite sought was neither for withdrawal nor for reconsidering the case of paying allegiance; rather Imām al-Ḥusayn's camp would start the war sooner than the enemy the next day.

Upon these consultations, 'Umar b. Sa'd was confused whether to agree to one night's respite. In the end, 'Umar b. Sa'd's answer to al-'Abbās b. 'Alī was that he would agree to one night respite provided that the following day would be critical in that their consent with paying allegiance would be accepted; otherwise, upon their denial to pay allegiance, they would not leave Imām al-Ḥusayn's camp at peace: the battle would determine everything. In this way, Imām al-Ḥusayn's camp received one night respite.

The Significance of Salat

The respite sought by Imām al-Ḥusayn indicates his whole-hearted attention to *salat*, supplication, and reciting the Holy Qur'ān. It was his ardent love of these matters that made him seek a night respite even from his brutal enemy. Such a gesture was not unexpected, for Imām al-Ḥusayn had come to that site to establish the *salat*, the Holy Qur'ān, and other Divine tenets. No doubt, supplication to Allāh made the most joyful moments of his life. Hence, any nation who rises up in the Divine cause must take lessons from these acts. It is because of this gesture that the ziyārah-text says: "I bear witness that you have established the *salat*, have paid the *zakat*, directed the public toward doing the right, prevented them from doing the evil, have followed Allāh and His Prophet – Prophet Muḥammad – until death reached you." [3]

Notes to Chapter 46
Imām al-Ḥusayn's Discourse
in the Tāsū'ā Afternoon

1. Al-Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, p. 185; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, the Events of the Year 61; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 3, p. 285; al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 230.
2. Whereas the 10th of Muharram is called 'Ashūrā', commonly spelt as 'Ashurā' in English texts, the 9th of Muharram is called Tāsū'ā.
3. These lines are taken from al-Wārith ziyārah-text, related on the authority of Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq and quoted in most of Shi'ī ziyārah-collections, including Ibn Qūlawayh's *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* in Ch. 79, all devoted to the Ziyārah-texts in favour of Imām al-Ḥusayn.

Imām al-Husayn's Sermon on
the Eve of Ashurā

(a) أنتني على الله أحسن الثناء. وأحمده على السرّاء، والضراء، اللهم إني أحمدك على أن أكرمتنا بالنبوة و علمتنا القرآن و فقّهتنا في الدين و جعلت لنا أسماعاً و أبصاراً و أفئدة و لم تجعلنا من المشركين. أما بعد فأني لا أعلم أصحاباً أولى و لا خيراً من أصحابي و لا أهل بيت أبرّ و لا أوصل من أهل بيتي فجزاكم الله عني جميعاً خيراً. و قد أخبرني جدّي رسول الله بأنني سأساق إلى العراق فأنزل أرضاً يقال لها: عموراً و كربلا و فيها استشهد و قد قرب الموعد.

ألا و إني أظنّ يومنا من هؤلاء الأعداء. غدأ و إني أذنت لكم فانطلقوا جميعاً في حلّ ليس عليكم منّي ذمام و هذا الليل قد غشيكم فاتخذوه جملاً و ليأخذ كلّ رجل منكم بيد رجل من أهل بيتي فجزاكم الله جميعاً خيراً و تفرّقوا في سوادكم و مدائنكم فإنّ القوم إنّما يطلبونني لذهلوا عن طلب غيري. فقال له أخوته و أبناؤه و أبناء عبد الله بن جعفر: لم تفعل ذلك لنبي بعدك؟ لا أرنا الله ذلك أبداً. بدأهم بهذا القول العباس بن علي فأتبعه الجماعة عليه و تكلموا بمثله فقال الحسين: يا بني عقيل حسبكم من القتال بمسلم إذهبوا قد أذنت لكم.

(b) ...إني غدأ اقتل و كلّكم تقتلون معي و لا يبقى منكم أحد حتّى القاسم و عبد الله الرضيع.

(a) "All praise is for Allāh the best of praises and all thanks be to Him in comfort and in distress. O Allāh! All praise is for You, for You have granted us prophethood and taught us the Qur'ān, granted us a profound understanding of religion. You have enabled us to hear, see and reflect, and have not made us of the polytheists."

"I do not know of any companions more loyal and better than mine, and no family members more truthful and confident than mine. Hence, may Allāh grant all of you the best of rewards."

"And, my grandfather, the Prophet of Allāh, has indeed informed me that I would be called to Iraq and would arrive at a land called 'Amūrā as well as Karbalā; and, I would be martyred here and the time has already approached."

"Beware that I believe that the enemies will start the war tomorrow, and that I have absolved you of your obligation, so all of you may leave, with no obligation to me. Use the darkness of night to depart. Let any one of you take one of my family members, so that Allāh may reward you all and you may get dispersed in your towns and cities. This is because the enemies want only me and if they have caught me, they will forget about anybody else. Hence, make the most of this opportunity."

Thereupon, his step-brothers, sons, nephews, and the sons of 'Abd Allāh b. Ja'far addressed him thus: "May it not happen for us to outlive you! May Allāh not show us this incident." From among them, al-'Abbās b. 'Alī started talking and after him, the rest of the companions spoke in the way he did. Then Imām al-Ḥusayn turned to the sons of Muslim [b. 'Aqīl] and said: "Your family have suffered enough with the killing of Muslim, return home; I give you permission." [1]

(b) "... Tomorrow I will be slain, and all of you will be slain together with me; nobody will survive, even al-Qāsim and 'Abd Allāh al-Raḍī [the Infant]." [2]

Context

After the evening *salat* of Tāsū‘ā, on the eve of Ashurā, and just a short while after gaining the respite, Imām al-Ḥusayn, gathered his companions and the Hāshimid youths and delivered a speech, as mentioned in (a) above.

The Last Test

Imām al-Ḥusayn declared his destined martyrdom on various occasions and throughout the route from Medina to Karbalā. He also gave his companions permission to leave him and freed them from the obligation and commitment. For the last time, on the eve of Ashurā, he remarked that the time for martyrdom had arrived, hence he declared his companions free from any obligation and commitment to himself, so that they could use the darkness of the night and head for their cities and towns.

This suggestion was Imām al-Ḥusayn’s last test for his companions. In return, his companions responded reiterating their loyalty to him to the last drop of their blood. In this way, they successfully passed this test. The first person who spoke after Imām al-Ḥusayn was his step-brother al-‘Abbās. He urged that they [the companions] would never leave Imām al-Ḥusayn.

Other Hāshimids spoke in a similar way as al-‘Abbās did. Then Imām al-Ḥusayn turned to the sons of Muslim b. ‘Aqīl and reminded them that the martyrdom of Muslim b. ‘Aqīl would exempt them from taking part in the ensuing day’s battle, hence they were already permitted to go back. Nevertheless, they replied that they would not be able to justify deserting their Imām and leader. Rather, they insisted on their loyalty, would sacrifice their property, lives, and sons, and would fight in company with him to the last drop of their blood.

Another companion who spoke was Muslim b. ‘Awsaja who said: “How should we stop helping you? If so, what would be our justification before Allāh? By Allāh! I will never part with you until I pierce the chests of your enemies with my spear; I will fight them so long as my sword is with me, and when I remain weaponless, I would confront them by throwing rocks and stones at them until I breathe my last.”

Sa'd b. 'Abd Allāh, another companion of Imām al-Ḥusayn, said: "By Allāh! We will never abstain from helping you until Allāh knows that we protected the sanctity of Prophet Muḥammad that is preserved in you. By Allāh! If I knew that I would be killed and burned and my ashes would be given life again 70 times, I would never abandon you; however, I know that death will be only once after which there is the Divine boundless grace."

Zuhayr b. al-Qayn said: "O Grandson of the Prophet of Allāh! By Allāh! I would rather be killed and then revived 1,000 times in support of you; moreover, I wish by my being killed I would sacrifice my life for you and of the Hāshimid youths."

At this time, Muḥammad b. Bashīr al-Ḥaḍramī, a companion of Imām al-Ḥusayn received the news that his son had been arrested. Imām al-Ḥusayn said to him that he was free to go and rescue his son. In response, Muḥammad b. Bashīr said: "By Allāh! I will never leave you." And then he added: "I wish to be killed by the beasts of the desert if I leave you alone." To contribute to rescuing Muḥammad b. Bashīr's son, Imām al-Ḥusayn gave him a few costly clothes to give to those who may help his son get rescued. [3]

Upon noticing such an admirable reaction from the Hāshimids and his companions, which indicated their knowledge, sensibility, and loyalty to the sublime status of Imāmate, Imām al-Ḥusayn wished them all the best of rewards. Thereupon, he stated explicitly that he would be killed the next day, together with the companions, and even Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan and 'Abd Allāh the infant.

Following the response and sermon of Imām al-Ḥusayn, the companions unanimously expressed that they were thankful to Allāh for He bestowed them with a high status for helping him and would gratify them with superiority through getting martyred in his army. They further addressed Imām al-Ḥusayn and said: "O Grandson of the Prophet! Should we not be delighted that we shall be with you in Paradise?"

According to al-Rāwandī's *al-Kharā'ij*, Imām al-Ḥusayn showed them with the scenes they will be granted in Paradise, and they discerned them. [4]

An Untrue Remark

Some *maqtal*-texts record a controversial point on the reactions of a group of Imām al-Ḥusayn's companions on the eve of Ashurā. Some elegizers accord the following statement to Sakīna, a daughter of Imām al-Ḥusayn, from whom it is quoted thus: "I was sitting in my tent, and my father was talking about his martyrdom; meanwhile, he told his companions that those who might not like to be martyred on the ensuing day, they would be allowed to return to their towns and cities. In consequence, his companions started leaving him in groups of 10 to 20 people, until only a bit more than 70 of them remained." The above statement is untrue regarding the events of the eve of Ashurā for the following reasons:

First-hand and authoritative historical texts have not recorded such a scene. This is a remark available in third- or fourth-hand texts, among them in Sepehr's *Nāsikh al-Tawārīkh*, without any footnote to any text, and in *Ma'ālī al-Sibtayn*, quoting from *Nūr al-'Ayn*. [5] Secondly, the above point contradicts what was quoted from the late al-Mufid and al-Ṭabarī. [6] The point is that the companions of Imām al-Ḥusayn who anticipated some material gain left him in Zubāla as soon as he declared that they were no longer committed to him, and that only the loyal companions remained.

Another proof comes from Sheikh al-Ṭabarasī's comment. He mentions Imām al-Ḥusayn's sermon in which he declared that his companions were no longer under any obligation. In the response to this speech, Sheikh al-Ṭabarasī quotes some of the replies expressed by the companions. At the end of this scene, he remarks that Imām al-Ḥusayn wished his companions well and returned to his tent. [7]

Had some of the companions of Imām al-Ḥusayn left the scene on the eve of Ashurā, al-Ṭabarasī would have certainly documented it. Perhaps the quote from Sakīna bt. al-Ḥusayn, could be true, but it must make reference to the events which took place in Zubāla: there is no mention of the eve of Ashurā in her statements. Rather, she mentions that the incident took place "one night"; however, some authors and mostly some preachers believe that "eve" to be on the eve of Ashurā, instead of the eve spent at Zubāla.

Notes to Chapter 47 Imām al-Ḥusayn's Sermon on the Eve of Ashurā

1. This sermon is quoted in the following sources: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, Events of the Year 61 AH; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 3, p. 285; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, p. 79; al-Khwārazmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, p. 246; Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyyīn*, p. 82; and Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*. However, the sentence "qad akhbaranī jaddī [my grandfather has informed me]" is not recorded in al-Ṭabarī's volume.
2. This sentence is quoted in 'Abbās al-Qummī's *Nafas al-Mahmūm* ed. Ayatollah Reza Ustādī (Qom, 1405 AH/ 1974), p. 230.
3. The above six responses are recorded in the following works: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, the Events of the Year 61 AH; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 3, p. 285; al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 321; al-Ṭabarasī, *I'lām al-Warā*, p. 235; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, p. 81; and al-Khwārazmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, p. 247.
4. This is quoted in al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, p. 258.
5. There are two books, both entitled as *Nūr al-'Ayn*, that are mentioned in Āghā Buzurg al-Tehrānī's *al-Dharī'a*. Both of them are *maqṭal*-texts and published in India. One of them was written by a recent author, and the other one's author is still unknown. However, such a text cannot be regarded as an authority in itself.
6. See Chapter 30, above.
7. Al-Ṭabarasī, *I'lām al-Warā*, p. 236.

Another Epic
in the Words of Imām al-Ḥusayn

والله! لقد بلوتهم فما وجدت فيهم إلّا الأشوس الأفعس يستأنسون بالمنية
دونى أستيناس الطفل إلى محالب أمه.

“By Allāh! I have tested them and found them all courageous and staunch, they are as associated with me like the association of the infant with the breasts of its mother.” [1]

Context

The late Iraqi scholar Sayyid ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram describes how on the eve of Ashurā Imām al-Ḥusayn moved away from the tents. Nāfi’ b. Hilāl al-Jumalī [2], a companion of Imām al-Ḥusayn, rushed out, met him and asked for his reason for leaving the encampment. Then, he said “O Grandson of the Prophet of Allāh! Your coming out toward the army of this rebellious man, ‘Umar b. Sa’d, at this moment of night has made me very anxious and agitated.”

In response to Nāfi’ b. Hilāl, Imām al-Ḥusayn said: “I have left to become acquainted with the terrain [around the encampment] lest there might be a hiding place for the enemy to attack you or reciprocate your attacks from that point.”

At that time, while holding Nāfi’ b. Hilāl’s hand Imām al-Ḥusayn remarked: “By Allāh! Tonight is the same night. A promise with no breach.”

Then Imām al-Ḥusayn pointed to the mountains visible in the moonlight and asked whether Nāfi’ might desire to escape, he asked: “Don’t you desire to escape toward these two mountains in the dark and rescue your life?”

Upon this, Nāfi’ bowed down, prostrated over the feet of Imām al-Ḥusayn, and replied: “I wish to die! I have bought this sword at 1,000 dirhams and this horse at the same price. By Allāh Who has conferred devotion to you on me, there will be no separation between me and you unless this sword gets blunt and this horse runs out of breath.”

The late Sayyid ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram related from Nāfi’ b. Hilāl that having searched the plains around the encampment, Imām al-Ḥusayn returned and went to the tent of his sister Lady Zaynab al-Kubrā and Nāfi’ was standing guard outside the tent. Thereupon, Lady Zaynab asked Imām al-Ḥusayn if he had tested his companions and was sure of their steadfastness. She was worried whether they might leave him alone amidst the foes.

In response to her concern, Imām al-Ḥusayn replied in the way quoted in the beginning of this chapter.

Upon noticing this scene, Nāfi' was about to burst into tears, and went to Ḥabīb b. Maẓāhir al-Asadī [3] to report what he had just noticed.

In reaction to this report, Ḥabīb b. Maẓāhir stressed that had it not been the case that they had been awaiting Imām al-Ḥusayn's command, they would have certainly attacked the enemy on the same night. At that time, Nāfi' suggested to him that he, together with a group of the companions, should move towards the tent of the women and children to emphasize their loyalty once more so that they would be reassured and calm.

Upon this suggestion, Ḥabīb b. Maẓāhir called on Imām al-Ḥusayn's companions, and they rushed out of their tents. Ḥabīb asked the Hāshimid companions to return to the tents and to continue either taking rest or offering prayers. Then he reported Nāfi's message for the rest of the companions. At that time, all of them maintained that had it not been because of Imām al-Ḥusayn's command, they would have certainly attacked the enemy at that moment. They assured Ḥabīb of their loyalty.

This reconfirmation of loyalty delighted Ḥabīb and he prayed for the companions. Then Ḥabīb suggested that they get closer to the tent of the women to assure them of this loyalty.

By that tent, Ḥabīb addressed the Hāshimid ladies: "O Granddaughters of the Prophet and the *ḥarām*-relatives of the Prophet of Allāh! These are your courageous youths and these are their shining swords. They have all sworn not to sheathe their swords and not to put aside their long and pointed spears until they have pierced them into the chests of your enemies."

At that time, a lady answered their call as follows: "O Brave men! Defend the granddaughters of the Prophet of Allāh and the ladies of the Commander of the Faithful!"

At hearing the above response, the men could not hold back their tears and returned to their tents.

May my parents be sacrificed for you! You have become cleansed of all impurities, the land into which you are entombed is cleansed, and you have attained a sublime felicity, martyrdom.

Notes to Chapter 48 Another Epic in the Words of Imām al-Ḥusayn

1. The materials in this section are all taken from Sayyid ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram’s *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, p. 262.
2. Nāfi’ b. Ḥilāl al-Jumalī was a fearless commander, a renowned Qur’ān reciter, and a *ḥadīth* recorder. He was a companion of Imām ‘Alī in his Iraq wars, too. In Karbalā, when he was one of those who went to the Euphrates to bring water to the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn, he never drank a drop of water, for Imām al-Ḥusayn and his entourage were still thirsty. In the Battle of Karbalā, he was injured and then was taken to al-Kūfā as a captive. He was then martyred by Shimr.
3. Ḥabīb b. Mazāhir al-Asadī was a companion of Prophet Muḥammad. In the time of Imām ‘Alī’s government, he was a resident of al-Kūfā, served as one of his companions, and participated in the wars. Ḥabīb b. Mazāhir was one of those who wrote a letter of invitation to Imām al-Ḥusayn. Upon Muslim b. ‘Aqīl’s coming to al-Kūfā, Ḥabīb was one of those who stressed his loyalty to Imām al-Ḥusayn. He was martyred at the age 75 on Ashurā. For further information, see the following book: S. A. al-Qaṣīr, *Ḥabīb b. Mazāhir al-Asadī* (Karbalā, 1432 AH/ 2011)

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Poems and Advice to his
Sisters and Wives on the Eve of Ashurā

(a) يادهر أفّيك من خليل
من صاحب أو طالب قتيل
وإنما الأمر إلى الجليل
وكلّ حيّ سالك سبيل
والدّهر لا يقنع بالبديل
كم لك بالإشراق والأصيل

(b) يا أختاه! تعزّي بعزاء الله واعلمي أنّ أهل الأرض يموتون وأهل السّماء
لا يبقون وأنّ كلّ شيءٍ هالك إلّا وجه الله الذي خلق الأرض بقدرته و
يبعث الخلق فيعودون وهو فرد وحده. أبي خير مني و أمّي خير منّي و
أخي خير منّي ولي ولهم ولكلّ مسلم برسول الله أسوة...
(c) يا أختاه! يا أمّ كلثوم! يا فاطمة! يا رباب! أنظرن إذا قتلت فلا تشقّقن
عليّ جيّاباً ولا تخمشن وجهاً ولا تقلن هجراً.

(a) "O Time! Woe unto your friendship,
When at sunrise and sunset you
Kill so many of your friends and,
Never feel content with a substitute.
Affairs all depend on [Allāh] the Glorious
And any living creature takes this cause."

(b) “O Sister! Be patient, and know that all the living creatures on the earth shall die, those in the heavens will not survive, that everything will perish save Allāh Who created the earth with His might and will resurrect the creatures so they will come into being again, and He is Alone in this regard. My father was better than me, my mother was better than me, my brother was better than me; they all left this world for the world Hereafter. All Muslims, they, must follow the Prophet of Allāh who passed away and departed here for the world Hereafter.”

(c) “O My sister! O Umm Kulthūm! O Fāṭima! O Rabāb! Pay attention to me and, when I am killed, never tear off your collars, scratch your faces, or utter anything irrelevant.” [1]

Context

It is reported on the authority of the Imām ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn “al-Sajjād”, that on the eve of Ashurā Imām al-Ḥusayn was in a tent with some of his companions, and Jawn [2] (a former servant of Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī) was sharpening Imām al-Ḥusayn’s sword. At that time, Imām al-Ḥusayn was reciting the poem cited in (a) above. From these verses, Imām ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn realised they were a prophecy of death and martyrdom, and his eyes filled with tears; but he held them back. However, his aunt Zaynab was then sitting by his bed. [3] After Imām al-Ḥusayn’s companions left him alone, his sister Lady Zaynab rushed to him and expressed her concern and distress: “Woe unto me! I wish I had died so that I could not witness such a time. O Remainder of my parents! O Shelter of my descendants! I feel as if I have lost all my beloved relatives; this very incident has renewed the calamities of the loss of my father ‘Alī, my mother Fāṭima al-Zahrā, and my brother [Imām] al-Ḥasan.”

Imām al-Ḥusayn tried to console her and instructed her in the way mentioned in (b) above. After this, he addressed his sisters, daughter, and wife as mentioned in (c) above.

Notes to Chapter 49

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Poems and Advice to his Sisters and Wives on the Eve of Ashurā

1. Al-Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, p. 185; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, the Events of the Year 61, p. 240; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kamīl fī al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 3, p. 286; al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irsbād*, p. 232; al-Khwārazmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, p. 237; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 2, p. 244; al-'Ubaydlī, *Akhhār al-Zaynabāt*.
2. Jawn b. Ḥuway was a servant of Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī. After Abū Dhar, he served the *Ahl al-Bayt*, and accompanied Imām al-Ḥusayn from Medina to Mecca and finally to Karbalā.
3. It was obviously a Divine will for Imām 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn to catch a fever on the eve and day of Ashurā. Due to this illness, he was religiously exempted from joining the battlefield. Hence, the Divine line of Imāmate was preserved for the Shi'is.

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Qur'ān Recitation
on the Eve of Ashurā

﴿وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُؤَمِّلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُؤَمِّلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزِدُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ * مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ﴾

“And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respite is better for their souls; We grant them respite only so that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement. On no account will Allāh leave the believer in the condition which you are in until He separates evil from the good.”[1]

Context

On the eve of Ashurā, Imām al-Ḥusayn's tents were buzzing with activity. One was preparing his weapon for the battle; another was engrossed in supplications; someone else was reciting verses of the Holy Qur'ān. There was a continuous hum caused by their prayers and supplications.

On the authority of Ḍaḥḥāk b. 'Abd Allāh al-Mushriqī [2], it is reported that on the eve of Ashurā there were several teams of horsemen dispatched from the army of 'Umar b. Sa'd to report what was going on in the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn. One of the enemy forces overheard Imām al-Ḥusayn's voice reciting the above Qur'ānic verse. Upon hearing this, the enemy soldier shouted: "By Allāh! We are the good people whom Allāh separated from you (the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn)."

In response to this false claim, Burayr b. Khuḍayr stepped forward and answered him in this way: "O shameless man! Allāh has placed you in the line of the corrupt people. Return to us and repent of your grave sin, for we are the honest people by Allāh."

Mockingly, the enemy soldier returned: "I bear witness by Allāh that this is true." He then returned to the enemy camp. [3]

A Scene of Testing

By selecting the above Qur'ānic verses, Imām al-Ḥusayn intended to convey the condition of the two armies on the eve of Ashurā.

The first verse provides the reason for the apparent dominance of the oppressor, while the believer must remember that this domination is short-lived. It is a transitory victory so that, by the Divine will, the oppressor will sink deeper and deeper in the abyss of corruption and sin. It can be regarded as a tactful respite for them. Therefore, any group, government, or individual with cruel and ruthless conduct that is provided with such respite must be prepared for a day when the most dreadful and painful Divine punishment will certainly embrace them.

The second verse concerns the believers. Although they are put to the test one day and receive an apparent defeat, this test is to make a distinction between the noble people and the unreliable ones. Such a test is not limited to the events of Ashurā and the plain of Karbalā which were, no doubt, one of the most significant tests. Rather, throughout time, this world has been a testing ground for people. This explains the famous quote “Every day is Ashurā and every land is Karbalā.”

Notes to Chapter 50
Imām al-Ḥusayn's Qur'ān Recitation
on the Eve of Ashurā

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān [3]: 178-179.
2. Ḍaḥḥāk b. 'Abd Allāh al-Mushriqī was a person who used to fight on Imām al-Ḥusayn's side; however, he escaped the scene once he realised that there were only two men left among Imām al-Ḥusayn's battling companions.
3. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, the Events of the Year 61 AH, pp. 324-5; and al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 233.

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Dream
on the Eve of Ashurā

«... إني رأيت في منامي كأنّ كلاباً قد شدّت عليّ تنهشني و فيها كلب
أبقع رأيته أشدها و أظنّ أنّ الذي يتوكلي قتلي رجل أبرص من هؤلاء
القوم. و إني رأيت رسول الله بعد ذلك و معه جماعة من أصحابه و هو
يقول: « أنت شهيد هذه الأمة و قد استبشر بك أهل السماوات و أهل
الصفّيح إفطارك عندي الليلة عجلّ و لا تؤخّر فهذا ملك قد نزل من
السّماء ليأخذ دمك في قارورة خضراء.» فهذا ما رأيت و قد أنف الأمر
واقترب الرّحيل من هذه الدّنيا لاشكّ فيه.

“I dreamt that it was as if some dogs were attacking and biting me, and there was a dog mottled black and white which was the severest in his attack. I feel the person who will kill me must be a leper from among those people (his enemies). And after that I dreamt the Prophet of Allāh, with a group of his companions around him, told me: ‘You are the martyr of this *ummah*, and the residents of the heavens and Paradise has announced good tidings of your arrival, and that you will break your fast in my presence this coming evening, [so] hurry up and do not delay. And, this is an angel who has come down from the heavens to collect your blood in a green bottle.’ This is what I dreamt and the time has already come, and no doubt the time of departure from this world has gotten closer.” [1]

Context

The late Sheikh ‘Abbās al-Qummī reports, on the authority of the late Sheikh al-Ṣadūq, that in the last hours of the eve of Ashurā, Imām al-Ḥusayn had a short nap, after which he reported his dream in the way mentioned above.

A Dream-Based Depiction of Reality

Whatever was going to take place in reality had appeared to Imām al-Ḥusayn in his dream. He then reported it to his companions to give them a vivid picture.

The scenes he witnessed included: his martyrdom on the ensuing day; the characteristics of his killer and that he was leprous such that he was shown in the form of “a mottled black and white dog”; being a guest of the Prophet of Allāh; the welcome of the angels for the soul of the Sublime Martyr of Islam; and preservation of his blood which must be retained afresh for good and all. These facts were what he had discerned in his dream; certainly all of them took place on Ashurā.

**Note to Chapter 51
Imām al-Ḥusayn's Dream
on the Eve of Ashurā**

1. Al-Khwārazmī, *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, p. 252; and 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Nafas al-Mahmūm*, p. 234.

Seek Help from Perseverance and Prayer

(a)...ان الله تعالى أذن في قتلكم و قتلى فى هذا اليوم فعليكم بالصبر.
 (b)... صبرا يا بنى الكرام! فما الموت إلا قنطرة تعبر بكم عن البؤس
 والضراء الى الجنان الواسعة والنعم الدائمة فأيكم يكره أن ينتقل من
 سجن إلى قصر و ما هو لأعدائكم إلا كمن ينتقل من قصر إلى سجن و
 عذاب. إن أبى حدثنى عن رسول الله: «إن الدنيا سجن المؤمن و جنه
 الكافر، والموت جسر هؤلاء إلى جناتهم و جسر هؤلاء إلى جحيمهم»
 ما كذبت و لا كذبت.

(a) "Indeed Allāh the Sublime has granted me and you the permission to fight on this day, so you must be patient and fight." [1]

(b) "Be patient, O Sons of the noblemen! Death is nothing save a bridge which leads you from calamity and distress to the lofty paradise gardens and eternal grace, so who of you resents to be taken from a prison to a castle? This castle is not for your enemies except that it would be like being taken from a castle into a prison and chastisement. Indeed my father [2] related a *hadith* for me from the Prophet of Allāh: 'This world is a prison for the believer and a paradise garden for the disbelievers, and that death is a bridge for the believers, toward their paradise gardens; and a bridge for the other group toward their Hellfires.' I have not been told a lie, nor have I told a lie." [3]

Context

According to Ibn Qūlawayh and al-Mas‘ūdī [4], having performed the dawn *salat*, Imām al-Ḥusayn glorified Allāh and turned to those who were performing the *salat* behind him. He addressed them in the way indicated in (a) above.

The late Sheikh al-Ṣadūq reported from Imām ‘Alī “al-Sajjād” the following account [5]:

“On the day of Ashurā when the war became very fierce and it was a difficult time for Imām al-Ḥusayn, some of his companions felt weak and pale when they saw the mutilated bodies of their comrades and friends and that such an end would await them. On the contrary, Imām al-Ḥusayn and some of his special companions became more tranquil and at peace as the tension of the battle increased and the time for martyrdom approached. Some of the first group became surprised at this and noticed the spiritual and delightful countenance of Imām al-Ḥusayn and expressed that he was by no means scared of death.”

Upon hearing the above remark from his companions, Imām al-Ḥusayn addressed them in the way quoted in (b) above.

After this observation, Imām al-Ḥusayn organised the lines of his army which reportedly consisted of 72 people. [6] The right flank was entrusted to Zuhayr b. al-Qayn, the left one to Ḥabīb b. Maḏāhir, and the standard to his step-brother al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī. Imām al-Ḥusayn himself and his relatives stood in the middle of the army.

Emphasis on Steadfastness

Immediately after the dawn prayer, Imām al-Ḥusayn reminded his companions of two principles, both connected with prayer (*salat*). Firstly, that they would be killed which was the Divine will, and secondly, the importance of being steadfast against the enemies. This is because there are several verses in the Holy Qur’ān that indicate statements about the *salat* which is a sign of Islam and having faith. Performing the prayer is mandatory in all situations even in situations where apparent defeat and being killed is certain. However, those who perform the *salat* but ignore joining the *jihad*, are mentioned in the

Holy Qur'ān as those who are reproached for saying “We believe in some [rules] but reject others.” [7] The spirit of steadfastness and resistance in *jihad* must also be obtained from the *salat* and communication with Allāh; one must gain strength from worshipping and spirituality, as explicitly mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān in this way: “Seek (Allāh’s help with patient perseverance and prayer.” [8]

Notes to Chapter 52 Seek Help from Perseverance and Prayer

1. Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Qūlawayh al-Qummī, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, Ch. 23, *hadith* Nos. 7, 8, and 10.
2. The First Infallible Imām 'Alī
3. Sayyid Mustafā Mūsawī Āli I'timād and Muḥammad-Hoseyn Mūsawī-Meshkāt, eds., *Balāgha al-Ḥusayn*, p. 190.
4. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Ithbāt al-Wasiya*, p. 139.
5. Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma'ānī al-Akhhbār*, p. 289.
6. Historians record the number of Imām al-Ḥusayn's combatants in different ways. This number sometimes reaches 150 people, both cavalry and infantry.
7. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' [4]: 150.
8. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqara [2]: 45.

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Supplication
on Ashurā Morning

اللهم أنت ثقتي في كلِّ كرب ورجائي في كلِّ شدة وأنت لي في كلِّ
أمر نزل بي ثقة وعدة كم من هم يضعف فيه الفؤاد و تقل فيه الحيلة و
يخذل فيه الصديق و يشمت فيه العدو أنزلته بك و شكوته إليك رغبة
منى إليك عن سواك فكشفه وفرجته فأنت ولي كلِّ نعمة و منتهى كلِّ
رغبة.

“O Allāh! You are my trustee in every calamity and my hope in every distress. And, You are with me as a trustee and a support in every affair that concerns me. How numerous are the concerns in which hearts weaken, solutions decrease, the intimate friends separate, and the enemies joyfully celebrate. I have appealed to You and complained about the situation to You out of my devotion to You and in negligence of anything except You, hence You have rescued and revived it. So, You are the source of every grace and the purpose of every (act of) devotion.” [1]

Context

In the previous chapter, Imām al-Ḥusayn organised his small army after the dawn prayer and briefed the commanders of each flank about their duties and tasks. At the same time, ‘Umar b. Sa’d was also busy organizing his army. When Imām al-Ḥusayn noticed the large army of the enemy, he raised his hands towards the heavens and offered the above supplication.

**Note to Chapter 53
Imām al-Ḥusayn's Supplication
on Ashurā Morning**

1. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 7, p. 327; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 211; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 287; and al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 233.

Imām al-Ḥusayn's First Speech on Ashurā

Part One: The Ultimatum

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! اسْمَعُوا قَوْلِي وَلَا تَعْجَلُوا حَتَّىٰ أُعْظِمَ بِمَا هُوَ حَقٌّ لَكُمْ عَلَيَّ وَحَتَّىٰ أَعْتَدِرَ
 إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ مَقْدَمِي عَلَيْكُمْ فَإِنْ قَبِلْتُمْ عَذْرِي وَصَدَّقْتُمْ قَوْلِي وَأَعْطَيْتُمُونِي النِّصْفَ مِنْ
 أَنْفُسِكُمْ كُنْتُمْ بِذَلِكَ أَسْعَدَ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ عَلَيَّ سَبِيلٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَقْبَلُوا مِنِّي الْعَذْرَ وَلَمْ
 تَعْطُوا النِّصْفَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ ﴿فَأَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ
 غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُون﴾ ﴿إِنَّ وِلَىَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى
 الصَّالِحِينَ﴾

○ People! Listen to my speech and do not make haste until I have given you a piece of advice concerning your duty towards me, and I seek your pardon for my coming here. If you accept my explanation, verify my truthfulness and deal with me with justice, you will attain prosperity, and then there would remain no way for you to fight me. And, if you reject my explanation, deny my reason and do not make a fair judgment, 'Then plan your move, and call your associates, and make certain of your plan; then do whatever you intend against me, allowing me no respite.' [1] 'My savior is Allāh who has revealed the Book; and He protects those who are righteous.' [2-3]

Context

Imām al-Ḥusayn intended to prevent the battle from taking place. When he realised that the enemy was completely ready to start the battle and had long prevented his encampment from reaching water, Imām al-Ḥusayn felt reluctant to initiate the war. He had expressed this principle from the moment they reached the plains of Karbalā. Moreover, Imām al-Ḥusayn's intent was to advise them, so that they would be able to make a distinction between the Right Path from the wrong one, so that there would not be anyone among them who would take part in shedding the blood of Imām al-Ḥusayn out of ignorance.

Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī's account is noteworthy in this regard. In *Tadhkira al-Khawāṣ*, he described: "When Imām al-Ḥusayn noticed that the people of al-Kūfā were insisting on killing him, he took a copy of the Holy Qur'ān, opened it, and placed it on his head and stood in front of the enemy's lines of troops, then he addressed the enemy soldiers in the following way: 'O People! This is the Book of Allāh and my grandfather shall be the arbiter between you and me. O People! Why do you regard it lawful to shed my blood? Am I not the son of your Prophet's daughter? Have you not heard the remark of my grandfather about me and my brother in that 'These two are the Princes of the Inhabitants of Paradise'? In case you do not believe my words, ask Jābir, Zayd b. Arqam, and Abū Sa'īd al-Khidrī. Isn't Ja'far al-Ṭayyār my uncle?'"

Nobody from the crowd responded but Shimr. He shouted: "Now, you will go to the Hell." Thereupon, Imām al-Ḥusayn returned: "Allāh is the Greatest! My grandfather has informed me in a dream that a dog was sucking the blood of his *Ahl al-Bayt*. I believe that you must be that same dog." [4]

This is the benevolence of the Infallible Imām, a philanthropist and Divine leader, even toward such a brutal enemy. This was the practice of Imām al-Ḥusayn who never turned away from the Divine Path even in the harshest situation. In this way, nobody would say "Our Lord! If only You had sent us a messenger, we would have followed Your revelations before we suffered humiliation and disgrace!" [5]

Although there was not much time nor opportunity on the Day of Ashurā, Imām al-Ḥusayn delivered a series of sermons and guidelines. The first sermon has been quoted above. As it is a long sermon, it is quoted here in four fragments.

In the first and introductory fragment, Imām al-Ḥusayn reminded the enemies of a series of facts. He reminded the people of al-Kūfā and the army of ‘Umar b. Sa’d that he never intended to pledge or to compromise with the enemies. Rather, he intended to express a range of basic and important facts concerning the role of Imāmate and leadership, which were his duty. Hence, he advised them to listen to him and not make haste.

Part Two: After a Pause in Imām al-Ḥusayn’s Sermon

According to books of Islamic history, when Imām al-Ḥusayn reached the end of the above sermon, a large number of the ladies who were listening to him began to cry and started sobbing. In response to this, Imām al-Ḥusayn paused for a short while and asked his step-brother al-‘Abbās and his son ‘Alī al-Akbar to ask them to be quiet. He said “Quieten them, for by my life, there will be much more to weep in the future”.

When they were silent, Imām al-Ḥusayn started delivering another sermon. After praising Allāh, he delivered the following sermon.

عباد الله! اتقوا الله وكونوا من الدنيا على حذر؛ فإن الدنيا لو بقيت على أحد أو بقي عليها أحد لكانت الأنبياء أحق بالبقاء، وأولى بالرِّضا، وأرضى بالقضاء، غير أن الله خلق الدنيا، للفناء، فجددها بال، ونعيمها مضمحل، و سرورها مكفهراً، والمنزل تلة، والدار قلعة فتزودوا؛ فإن خير الزاد التقوى، واتقوا الله لعلكم تفلحون.

“O Servants of Allāh! Fear Allāh, and be wary of the worldly life, for if the world had been eternal or anybody had been destined to live forever, the prophets would have been most worthy of survival and most content with the [Divine] destiny. However, Allāh created the world for extinction, hence its new makes are antiquated, its graces are fleeting, its delight is sullen, its situation is located on a mountain-slope, and its house is transient. Hence, try to avail [yourselves] of some provisions, for ‘The best of provisions is piety’ [6], and ‘Fear Allāh, so that you may reach felicity.’ [7].

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى خَلَقَ الدُّنْيَا فَجَعَلَهَا دَارَ فَنَاءٍ وَزَوَالَ مُتَصَرِّفَةً بِأَهْلِهَا حَالًا بَعْدَ حَالٍ، فَالْمَغْرُورُ مِنْ غُرَّتِهِ وَالشَّقِيَّ مِنْ فِتْنَتِهِ فَلَا تَغُرَّتْكُمْ هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا؛ فَإِنَّهَا تَقْطَعُ رَجَاءَ مَنْ رَكَنَ إِلَيْهَا وَتَخِيْبُ طَمَعَ فِيهَا وَ أَرَاكِمَ قَدْ اجْتَمَعَتْ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ أُسْخِطْتُمْ اللَّهُ فِيهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ أَعْرَضَ بِوَجْهِهِ الْكَرِيمِ عَنْكُمْ وَ أَحْلَى بِكُمْ نَقْمَتَهُ فَنَعْمَ الرَّبُّ رَبَّنَا وَ بئْسَ الْعَبِيدَ أَنْتُمْ أَقْرَبْتُمْ بِالطَّاعَةِ وَ آمَنْتُمْ بِالرَّسُولِ مُحَمَّدٍ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ زَحَفْتُمْ إِلَى ذُرِّيَّتِهِ وَ عَتَرْتَهُ تَرِيدُونَ قَتْلَهُمْ لَقَدْ اسْتَحُوذَ عَلَيْكُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنْسَاكُمْ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ فَتَبًّا لَكُمْ وَ لِمَا تَرِيدُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَ إِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاْجِعُونَ هُوَ لَا . قَوْمٌ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيْمَانِهِمْ فَبَعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ .

“O People! Allāh the Exalted created the world and has made it an abode of devastation and abatement that changes its inhabitants from one state to another. Hence the deceived person is one who has been fooled by the world, and the evildoer is one whom it has deceived. Therefore, be wary not to be deceived by this world, for it shatters the hope of anybody who has tended to it, and makes hopeless anybody who has had a hope in it.

“I see that you have decided on an act for which you have attained the wrath of Allāh against yourselves, and He has turned His graceful view away from you and has granted you His chastisement. Therefore, the best lord is our Lord and You are the worst servants [people]! You have promised to obey and accepted faith in Prophet Muḥammad – May Allāh grant him and his progeny His blessings – then you have advanced toward his progeny and house to slay them. Indeed Satan has gained control over you, so you have forgotten the remembrance of Allāh the Great. Hence, woe upon you and what you seek! ‘Surely we belong to Allāh and to Him we shall return.’ [8] They are the people who ‘turned blasphemous after their faith’ [9], “hence away with the evildoers.’ [10].” [11]

Context

In the second part of his sermon, Imām al-Ḥusayn spoke of the transience of the world, as he regarded worldly life and riches as transitory. Had the worldly life been eternal, the prophets would have been more entitled and deserving to benefit from it.

In addition, Imām al-Ḥusayn stated the underlying cause for the people of al-Kūfā's going astray. He explained that they had abandoned and betrayed Islam, faith, and the descendants of Prophet Muḥammad and embarked on fighting and killing the grandson of the Prophet simply in the vain hope of gaining a portion of this temporary worldly life.

Imām al-Ḥusayn's aim was to awaken the enemy to the truth so that he would prevent the battle and blood-shed. In this way, he intended to guide to the Right Path those who were likely to be directed and to encourage them to give priority to the Hereafter instead of life in this world.

Part Three

In the third fragment of his sermon, Imām al-Ḥusayn continued giving advice and direction to the enemy:

أيها الناس! انسبونى من أنا، ثم ارجعوا إلى أنفسكم وعاتبوها وانظروا هل يحل لكم قتلى و انتهاك حرمتى؟ ألسنت ابن بنت نبيكم و ابن وصيه و ابن عمه و أول المؤمنين بالله و المصدق لرسوله بما جاء من عند ربه؟ أوليس حمزة سيد الشهداء عم أبى؟ أوليس جعفر الطائر عمى؟ أولم يبلغكم قول رسول الله لى ولأخى: «هذان سيدا شباب أهل الجنة؟» فإن صدقتمونى بما أقول و هو الحق، والله! ما تعمدت الكذب منذ علمت أن الله يمقت عليه أهله و يضربه من اختلقه إن كذبتمونى فإن فيكم من إن سألتموه عن ذلك أخبركم؛ سلوا جابر بن عبدالله

الانصارى و ابا سعيد الخدرى و سهل بن سعد الساعدى و زيد بن أرقم
 و انس بن مالك يخبروكم أنهم سمعوا هذه المقالة من رسول الله لى و
 لأخى. أما فى هذا حاجز لكم عن سفك دمى؟

“O People! Reflect upon who I am, then look to yourselves and question your thought process. Do you think it is lawful for you to kill me and to violate my sanctity? Am I not the son of your Prophet’s daughter, the son of the trustee of the Prophet and his cousin, the first believer in Allāh, and the first to embrace what His Prophet has brought from His Lord? Isn’t Ḥamza, the Prince of Martyrs, my father’s cousin? [12] Isn’t Ja’far who flies with wings in heaven my uncle? [13] Hasn’t the statement of the Prophet of Allāh regarding me and my brother reached you [14], ‘These two are Princes of the youths of Paradise.’? If you accept what I have stated is the truth, and it is indeed the truth, for by Allāh, I have never told any lie since I realised that Allāh hates whoever tells a lie and shall defeat the liar. If you do not believe me, there are indeed among you some people whom if you asked, they could inform you of this. Ask Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, Abā Sa’īd al-Khidrī, Sahl b. Sa’d al-Sā’idī, Zayd b. Arqam, and Anas b. Mālīk, and they will report to you, for they have heard this statement about me and my brother from the Prophet of Allāh. Is this not sufficient to prevent you from shedding my blood?”

Context

Some people from al-Kūfā who were subject to the Umayyads’ propaganda were told that fighting Imām al-Ḥusayn was indeed defending the legal and approved Muslim caliph – Yazīd b. Mu’āwīya and as Imām al-Ḥusayn had risen against the welfare and interests of the Muslim public, it is obligatory for any Muslim to fight him. Therefore, in the third fragment of his sermon, Imām al-Ḥusayn reminded them of his identity, the distinction of his family members and their relation to the Holy Prophet.

He mentioned this in order to answer some of the rumors fabricated against him. These reminders struck a cord with every

Muslim. Everybody knew well that Imām al-Ḥusayn was a grandson of Prophet Muḥammad, and the son of Fāṭima al-Zahrā and Imām ‘Alī, a cousin of the Prophet and the first who embraced his faith in the religion of Prophet Muḥammad. When others were battling Islam, Imām ‘Alī supported and defended Islam. Imām al-Ḥusayn mentioned the sacrifices of his two honourable uncles, Ḥamza and Ja‘far, that strengthened Islam and the Qur’ān; they were martyred in support of Islam.

About himself, Imām al-Ḥusayn emphasized one of his merits that no Muslim could deny. It was a Prophetic *ḥadīth* which says “Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the Princes of the Youths of Paradise.”

Imām al-Ḥusayn intended to direct the enemies’ attention toward true Islam. He did this by means of reminding them of these virtues so that if they regarded the movement of Imām al-Ḥusayn to be against Islam, they would realise that the religion of Islam emerged in *their* house and was passed on to them and others due to the sacrifices of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. When Imām ‘Alī embraced Islam, the ancestors of the enemies’ ruler and caliph were followers of blasphemy. Those whom the enemies regarded as supporters of Islam and under whose leadership they were fighting had been some of the most staunch enemies of Islam. The uncles of Imām al-Ḥusayn were martyred in battle against them. Furthermore, how could it be possible that a person who was introduced by Prophet Muḥammad as “the Prince of the Youths of Paradise” could have abandoned Islam and the former enemies of Islam have proven to be the supporters of Islam?

Part Four: After Interrupting Imām al-Husayn’s Sermon

An enemy commander interrupted Imām al-Ḥusayn’s sermon. At this time, Shimr b. Dhī al-Jawshan, noticed that Imām al-Ḥusayn’s sermon could influence and awaken the enemy forces and cause them to abandon the battlefield. For this reason, he interrupted Imām al-Ḥusayn’s speech and shouted: “He is wrong and does not know what he is talking about.”

In response to this affront, Ḥabīb b. Mazāhir al-Asadī answered him that he [Shimr] had been in abysmal ignorance, for Allāh had sealed his heart.

Following this short heated exchange, Imām al-Ḥusayn continued his sermon as follows:

(a) فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ هَذَا الْقَوْلِ افْتَشِكُونِ أَنِّي ابْنُ بِنْتِ نَبِيِّكُمْ فَوَاللَّهِ! مَا بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ ابْنُ بِنْتِ نَبِيٍّ غَيْرِي وَيُحْكَمُ؛ أَتَطْلُبُونِي بِقَتْلِي قَتْلَهُ أَوْ مَالٍ اسْتَهْلَكْتَهُ أَوْ بِقِصَاصِ جِرَاحَةٍ.

(b) ... يَا شَبْثَ بْنَ رَبْعِي! يَا حَجَّارَ بْنَ أَبِجْرٍ! يَا قَيْسَ بْنَ الْأَشْعَثِ! وَيَا يَزِيدَ بْنَ حَارِثٍ! أَلَمْ تَكْتُبُوا إِلَيَّ أَنْ قَدْ أَبْنَعَتِ الثَّمَارُ وَاخْضَرَ الْجَنَابُ وَإِنَّمَا تَقْدُمُ عَلَيَّ جُنْدٌ لَكَ مَجْنَدَةٌ؟

(c) ... لَا - وَاللَّهِ! - أَعْطَيْتُمْ يَدَيَّ إِعْطَاءَ الذَّلِيلِ وَلَا أَفْرَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارَ الْعَبِيدِ يَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ! ﴿إِنِّي عُدْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَنْ تَرْجُمُونِ﴾ ﴿إِنِّي عُدْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُ يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ﴾

(a) "Hence if you are still in doubt regarding this statement [of mine], do you doubt that I am the son of your Prophet's daughter [15]. By Allāh! Between east and west [in the world] there is no son of the daughter of a Prophet except me. Woe on you! Do you want me in revenge for a slain individual I have killed, for a property I have damaged, or for a wound I have inflicted?"

(b) ... "O Shabath b. Rib'ī! O Ḥajjār b. Abjar! O Qays b. al-Ash'ath! And, O Yazīd b. al-Ḥārith! Did you not write to me, 'The fruits have ripened, the region has got verdant, and you will arrive at an army ready for you.'?" [16]

(c) ... "No! By Allāh! I shall never give them an inferior hand [to make a compromise] and shall not evade them in the way slaves do. O Servants of Allāh! 'I have taken refuge in my Lord and your Lord against your stoning me to death' [17]. 'I seek refuge in the sanctum of my Lord and your Lord from every insolent imposter who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning [18].'" [19]

Context

Upon delivering part (a) of Imām al-Ḥusayn's lecture, the enemy army became completely silent. Then he addressed some of those who had written letters of invitation and were present in the enemy army. His address was in the way indicated in (b) above. They had no answer, instead, they denied having written such letters.

At this moment, addressing Imām al-Ḥusayn in a loud voice, Qays b. al-Ash'ath enquired: "O Ḥusayn! Why don't you pledge allegiance to your cousin [Yazīd b. Mu'āwīya] to relieve yourself? In that case you will be treated as you wish and will have no problem."

In response to the above query and suggestion, Imām al-Ḥusayn delivered the above fragment of his speech mentioned in (c) above.

Conclusion

In the last and fourth fragment of his sermon, Imām al-Ḥusayn was explicit that even if all his merits were overlooked and if what Prophet Muḥammad stated about him was considered doubtful, could it be denied that he was the grandson of their Prophet? Was there any grandson of the Prophet on the earth except him? However, having stated all those facts, Imām al-Ḥusayn bravely stated that he would never come to a compromise with the enemy.

Notes to Chapter 54

Imām al-Ḥusayn's First Speech on Ashurā

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūnus [10]: 71.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-A'rāf [7]: 196.
3. This discourse is quoted with some minor variations in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, The Events of the Year 61 AH; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, vol.3, p. 287; al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irsbād*, p. 234; al-Khwārazmī, *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol.1, p. 253, and Ibn Sa'd's *al-Ṭabaqāt*.
4. Şibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ*, p. 262.
5. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah ṬāHā [20]: 134.
6. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqara [2]: 197.
7. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān [3]: 130, 200.
8. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqara [2]: 156.
9. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān [3]: 86, 90
10. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn [23]: 41
11. Al-Khwārazmī, *Maqatal al Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, p. 253. The first fragment of this discourse of Imām al Ḥusayn is also quoted by Ibn 'Asākir in *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 215.
12. The title Sayyid al-Shuhadā' [The Prince of Martyrs] was first applied to Ḥamza b. Abū Ṭālib who was martyred with a spear in the Battle of Uḥud near Medina in 3 AH/ 625.
13. Ja'far, a brother of Imām 'Alī, lost his arms and was martyred in the Battle of Mu'ta in 8 AH/ 630. He is called al-Ṭayyār, the Flying, because it is related from Prophet Muḥammad that Allāh shall give Ja'far two wings in the Hereafter for his severed arms.
14. That is, the second Infallible Imām al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā, who was poisoned and martyred at the behest of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān.

15. That is, the son of Fāṭima al-Zahrā – Prophet Muḥammad’s daughter.
16. Al-Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, p. 188; and al-Khwārazmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, vol.1, pp. 252-3.
17. The Holy Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Dukhān [44]: 20.
18. The Holy Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Mu’min [40]: 27.
19. Op. cit., note 16 (above).

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Second Speech on Ashurā

(a) ... ويلكم ما عليكم أن تنصتوا إليّ فتسمعوا قلوبي وإنما أدعوكم إلى سبيل الرّشاد، فمن أطاعني كان من المرشدين و من عصاني كان من المهلكين و كلّكم عاصٍ لأمرى غير مستمعٍ لقلوبي قد انخزلت عطياً تكم من الحرام و ملثت بطونكم من الحرام، فطبع الله على قلوبكم و يلکم ألا تنصتون ألا تسمعون؟

(b) ... تباً لكم أيّها الجماعة و ترحاً! أفحين استرحمونا و لهين متهيرين فأصرخناكم مؤذنين مستعدين، سللتم علينا سيفاً في رقابتنا و حششتم علينا نار الفتن التي جناها عدوكم و عدونا فاصبحتم إلماً على أوليانكم و بدأ عليهم لأعداكم بغير عدلٍ أفشوه فيكم و لا أمل - أصبح لكم فيهم إلماً حرام - من الدنّيا أنالوكم و خسيس عيشٍ طعمتم فيه من حدثٍ كان منّا و لا رأيٍ تفيلٍ لنا مهلاً لكم الويلات؛ إذ كرهتمونا و تركتمونا فتجهّزتم و السيف لم يشهر و الجأش طامن و الرأى لم يستصحف و يكن أسرعتم علينا كطيرة الدّديبا، و تداعيتم إلينا كتداعي الفراش فقبحاً لكم فإنما أنتم من طواغيت الأئمة و شذاذ الأحزاب و نبذة الكتاب و نفثة الشيطان و عصابة الاثام و محرّفي الكتاب و مطفي السنن و قتلة أولاد الأنبياء، و مبيري عثرة الأوصياء، و ملحقي العهار بالنسب و مؤذي المؤمنين و صراخ أئمة المستهزئين الذين جعلوا القرآن عضيّن.

(c) ... و أنتم ابن حربٍ و أشياعه تعتمدون و إيانا تدخلون أجل والله! الخذل فيكم معروف و شجت عليه عروقكم و توارثته أصولكم و فروعكم و مبتت عليه قلوبكم و

غشيت به صدوركم فكنتم أخبث شجرة شجى للنَّاطِرِ وَأَكَلَةً لِلْغَاصِبِ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى
النَّاكِثِينَ الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ الْإِيمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوَكُّيدِهَا وَجَعَلْتُمْ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا فَأَنْتُمْ وَاللَّهِ! هَمُّ.
أَلَا إِنَّ الدَّعَى بَيْنَ الدَّعَى قَدْ رَكَزَ بَيْنَ اثْنَتَيْنِ: بَيْنَ السَّلَّةِ وَالذَّلَّةِ وَهِيَاهُ مَنَا الذَّلَّةُ يَا بِي
اللَّهُ لَنَا ذَلِكَ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَحُجُورٌ طَابَتْ وَطَهَّرَتْ وَأَنْوَفٌ حَمِيَّةٌ وَنَفُوسٌ أَبِيهِ
مَنْ أَنْ تَوَثَّرَ طَاعَةَ الْكُفَّامِ عَلَى مِصَارِعِ الْكِرَامِ أَلَا إِنِّي قَدْ أَعْدَرْتُ وَأَنْدَرْتُ أَلَا إِنِّي
زَاخَفٌ بِهَذِهِ أَسْرَةٍ عَلَى قَلَّةِ الْعَدَدِ وَخِذْلَانِ النَّاصِرِ.

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| فإن نهزم فهزامون قدماً | وإن نهزم فغير مهزميننا |
| وما إن طبننا جبنٌ ولكن | منايانا ودولة آخرينا |
| فقل للشامتين بنا: أفيقوا | سيقلى الشامتون كما لقينا |
| إذا ما الموت رفع عن أناسٍ | بكلِّكليه أناسٍ بآخرينا |

أما والله! لا تلبثون بعدها إلا كريشما يركب الفرس حتى تدور بكم دور الرّحى وتفلق
بكم فلق المحور عهدٌ عهده إليّ أبي جدّي رسول الله ﴿... فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَ
شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ﴾. ﴿إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ
عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾

(d)... اللهم! احبس عنهم قطر السّماء، وابعث عليهم سنين كسني يوسف و
سلط عليهم غلام ثقيف يسقيهم كأساً مصيرةً فلا يدع فيهم أحداً قتلةً بقتلة
و ضربةً بضربةٍ ينتقم لي ولأوليائي ولأهل بيتي وأشياعي منهم! فإنهم
كذبونا وخذلونا وأنت ربنا عليك توكلنا وإليك المصير.

(a) “Woe unto you! Why do you not listen to me and hear what I say while I am inviting you to the way of righteousness? Whoever follows me will be amongst the guided ones; and whoever disobeys me will be amongst the perished. You are all disobedient towards me and do not pay attention to what I say. Your gifts are unlawful and your abdomens are filled with unlawful foods, hence Allāh has sealed your hearts. Woe on you! Do you not take heed? Do you not listen?”

(b)...“Woe on you, may you be grieved! When you called for our help you were infatuated and bewildered, so we came to your help with complete readiness. Then you raised against us a sword which was in our control and ignited against us the fire of turmoil which both our and your enemies had provided. Now you have become a support and a hand of your enemies against your friends without any justice among you and without any hope from them. From them you have received nothing but the unlawful (*ḥarām*) from the worldly life they have given to you and the ruined life you had hoped to go without for us to have erred or to have a malignant intention.

“Slow down! Woe unto you! When you disliked us, you left us alone, then you prepared [for the war]; the swords have not got unsheathed, and the hearts are still calm. The decision on the war is not settled, but you have rushed toward us like a swarm of locusts and have attacked us like insects. Woe unto you, for you are indeed the tyrants of this *ummah*; its dispersed parties; the people abandoned by the Book [the Qur’an]; what Satan let loose; the small bands of sinners; the falsifiers of the Book [the Qur’an]; the extinguishers of (the light of) sound traditions; the descendants of the killers of the prophets; the annihilators of the progeny of the Divinely-appointed vicegerents; the ascribers of the illegitimate to lineages; the exasperators of the faithful; and the yelling shout of the heads of the mockers ‘who have made the Qur’an into shreds.’ ” [1, 2]

After this, Imām al-Ḥusayn continued his sermon in the following way:

(c) “And, you rely on Ibn Ḥarb [3] and his followers, and leave us? Yes, by Allāh! Betrayal is well known amongst you, it runs through your veins, your roots and branches have received it, your hearts have grown up with it, your hearts have developed roots in it, and it has

covered your chests. Hence, you have been the most harmful tree for the gardener and the most poisonous fruit to the one who partakes of it. Behold! May the curse of Allāh be on the violators of promises who break promises after they had pledged them solemnly, ‘and you have indeed taken Allāh as your surety.’ [4] Hence, by Allāh, you are those people. Behold! The illegitimate one, son of the illegitimate one, [5] has pressed [me] between two choices, sword [6] and abasement. And, how far is abasement from us! Allāh withholds this from us, His Prophet, the believers, chaste mothers, self-esteemed minds, and unsubmitive souls to prefer obedience of the abased over the arena of the nobles. Beware that I have informed and warned you! Beware that I am advancing [toward my goal] with this family [of mine] with the small number of my companions and [the former] helpers’ leaving [us].”

Following this, Imām al-Husayn recited a poem:

*“If we expel [the enemies], we have since been expellants
 If we get defeated, defeatism has been our trait.
 And, cowardice is not our natural disposition, but
 Our death has arrived, and the power has gone to others.
 Tell our rebukers: beware!
 That they will face other rebukers as we have.
 That if the camel of death leaves one’s gate
 It will kneel down at someone else’s gate.”*

“By Allāh! You will not live save a short while as when a horse is mounted upon to take you around like the millstone and make you agitated like the center of the millstone, as this has been a promise that my father had quoted from Prophet Muḥammad. ‘So conspire together, along with your partners, leaving nothing vague in your plan, then carry it out against me, without giving me any respite.’ [7] ‘Indeed I have put my trust in Allāh, my Lord and your Lord. There is no living being but He holds it by its forelock. Indeed my Lord is on a straight path.’ ” [8]

(d)... “O Allāh! Deny them rain, give them years such as the harsh years of Yusūf, and make a Thaqafid youth victorious over them, who will make them quench their thirst with a cup of bitterness where none of them would be left unpunished such that killing would be

the revenge of killing and hurt for hurt, in revenge of me, my family, companions, and followers, for they have told us a lie and abandoned us. ‘You [Allāh] are our Lord, we place our trust in You, and to You is our returning.’” [9] [10]

Context

These words of Imām al-Ḥusayn deserve much reflection and exegeses. The lessons contained in this one sermon could fill an entire book.

In a very important section of this sermon, Imām al-Ḥusayn rebuked the people of al-Kūfā and reminded them of their betrayal. He spoke of how they had escaped the tyranny of the Umayyads and rushed toward him and then in an instant, reversed their allegiance, supported the Umayyads and betrayed him. In consequence, they used the sword they had received from the house of the Prophet against them. They kindled a fire against Imām al-Ḥusayn and the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Imām al-Ḥusayn rebuked them, saying that they acted as extinguishers of the light of guidance. He compared them to an ominous fruit that got stuck in the throat of the gardener who had cultivated it, causing him to die, while the same fruit had tasted sweet, ripe, and fresh for the unjust usurpers [the Umayyads] who made the most of treacherous plans.

In the beginning of the sermon, Imām al-Ḥusayn pointed to the root of their treason and betrayal. The reason was that they were accustomed to unlawful resources, hence they had taken unlawful food. In consequence, they decided to support the old enemy of Islam, the Umayyads. As for himself, Imām al-Ḥusayn declared his way and announced that he would not succumb to Yazīd b. Mu‘āwīya; he bravely said: “How far is abasement from us!” Finally, he warned them about the denigrating future of the people of al-Kūfā. He appealed to Allāh to make a young man from the Thaqaḥī tribe victorious over them. There are some points here that need clarification.

The first point concerns the effect of unlawful food in divergence from the right path. No doubt, any sin, not followed by repentance, will prove effective in one’s deviation from the Right Path and intellectual

difficiency. This being so, unlawful food has the most undesirable effects. Therefore, it is important for everyone to be mindful of their intake, not only when one has reached maturity but also when one is a baby and even when one is yet in the form of an embryo. Although children are not considered responsible, the type of food will certainly influence their intellectual as well as spiritual development and character in adulthood. This is why Imām al-Ḥusayn said that the reason for their betrayal and reluctance to listen to his truthful words was due to their intake of unlawful food. Over the past years, they had received huge sums of money as gifts from Mu'āwiya to defeat Imām al-Ḥusayn's father [Imām 'Alī] and his elder brother [Imām al-Ḥasan] and to conspire against them politically. They used to receive those sums of illegal money in the guise of gifts which they spent on their provisions. Therefore, the effect of those unlawful provisions had been that their hearts darkened, their eyes became blind, and their ears deaf to receive the advice of Imām al-Ḥusayn.

The second important remark in Imām al-Ḥusayn's sermon draws the attention of the Kūfāns to the point that they had arisen against Islam with the force that Islam itself had provided them. This point is by no means limited to the events in Karbalā and the Ashurā tragedy. Rather, this remains a reality in all challenges throughout history. Yet more shocking is when some people who owe their life to Islam and the Qur'ān remain hesitant in the face of anti-religious deeds which disrespect Islam. They also contribute to the opponent's movement by their silence. The danger of such people like Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī [11], those who participated in the Battle of Ṣiffīn against Imām 'Alī, the hordes who were memorisers of the Qur'ān and kindled the flame of the Battle of Nahrawān were by no means less than the danger of Mu'āwiya and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī for Islam.

The last point concerns the firm resolution of Imām al-Ḥusayn. He was so firm in his decision and belief not to succumb to abasement. He constantly maintained his resolution even when he was forced to choose either submission to 'Umar b. Sa'd's proposal or an honourable death. He was still firm even when his body was trampled. His slogan always remained: "How far is abasement from us!"

The present author believes that the above slogan is extremely expressive and instructive. It is more inspirational than the red flag hoisted over the golden dome of Imām al-Ḥusayn's sacred sanctuary. It was beneficial defense against the enemy too, for Imām al-Ḥusayn was faced with a tyrannical and ruthless enemy who attacked and raided his camp so mercilessly that the tragedy is far beyond description. However, the enemy found itself at a disadvantage when battling the firm resolve of Imām al-Ḥusayn. It was in this way that they preferred being killed over being defamed and dishonoured. This is expressed in the poem he recited.

As eloquently elegized in a poem by the late Sheikh Kāzīm al-Uzrī, the enemy's spears drastically mutilated and hurt their bodies; however, they had no effect whatsoever on the firm decision of the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn.

Notes to Chapter 55

Imām al-Ḥusayn's Second Sermon on Ashurā

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr [15]: 91.
2. Part of this sermon is quoted in Ḥasan b. Shu'bah al-Ḥarrānī's *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl* as Imām al-Ḥusayn's letter to the people of al-Kūfā.
3. "Ibn Ḥarb" refers to Yazīd b. Mu'āwīya b. Abū Sufyān. Abū Sufyān's given name was Ḥarb.
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naḥl [16]: 91.
5. "The illegitimate one son of the illegitimate one" refers to 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād. Ziyād was known as "Ziyād b. Abīh" (Ziyād son of his [unknown/unidentifiable] father); this designation signifies that he was also born of out of wedlock.
6. The Arabic word used is *al-silla* 'the swords' which is a metaphor for war and killing.
7. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūnus [10]: 71.
8. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Hūd [11]: 56.
9. A Qur'ānic fragment, Sūrah al-Mumtaḥina [60]: 4.
10. With minor textual variations, this sermon is quoted in the following sources: Ḥasan b. Shu'ba al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*, p. 171; al-Khwārazmī, *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 2, pp. 7-8; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*; 'Abd Allāh b. Nūr al-Dīn al-Baḥrānī, *Maqatal al-'Awālim*; and Şibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ*. The text quoted here is taken from al-Khwārazmī's book.
11. Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī was an imbecile who was deceived by 'Amr b. al-Āṣ. And the caliphate was quickly usurped by Mu'āwīya, leading to Imām 'Alī's apparent boycott, all owing to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī's stupidity.

The Curses Imām al-Ḥusayn Invoked

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- (a) ... اللهم! إنا أهل بيت نبيك و ذريته و قرابته فاقصم من ظلمنا و غصبنا
حقنا إنك سميع قريب.
- (b) ... اللهم! أرني فيه هذا اليوم ذلًا عاجلاً.
- (c) ... اللهم! حزه إلى النار.
- (d) ... اللهم! اقله عطشاً و لا تغفر له أبداً.

(a) "O Allāh! We are the house of Your Prophet [Muḥammad], his descendants, and relatives. Take revenge from whoever has done injustice to us and usurped our right. Indeed You are the All-Hearing and are near."

(b) "O Allāh! Show me today in him a swift despisedness."

(c) "O Allāh! Drive him toward the Fire!"

(d) "O Allāh! Kill him in a state of thirst and never forgive him!"

Context

Historians have recorded that on Ashurā three people individually confronted Imām al-Ḥusayn, all after his sermons. They insisted on denying the truth and making Imām al-Ḥusayn angry such that he invoked the Divine curse on them. In effect of such invocation, Imām al-Ḥusayn's curse on them was realised. For two of them, the curse was fulfilled almost instantly; for the third one, the effect of the curse appeared a little while after the Ashurā tragedy.

According to al-Khwārazmī, when Imām al-Ḥusayn found the enemies inattentive to his sermon and determined to attack, he looked to the sky and offered the prayer mentioned in (a) above.

Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath, an enemy soldier, who was in the front row and heard Imām al-Ḥusayn's curse, moved closer to Imām al-Ḥusayn and mockingly enquired of the family relation between Imām al-Ḥusayn and Prophet Muḥammad.

Upon noticing such stubbornness, Imām al-Ḥusayn cursed him as mentioned in (b) above. Shortly after, when he went to a corner to relieve himself, a scorpion stung him and he died right away. [1]

On the accounts narrated by al-Balādhurī, Ibn al-Athīr, and some other historians, while the enemy's army was advancing toward Imām al-Ḥusayn's encampment, a man by the name of 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥawza al-Tamīmī came forward and enquired "Is there al-Ḥusayn amongst you?"; he repeated this three times. Thereupon, while pointing to Imām al-Ḥusayn, a companion of Imām al-Ḥusayn, replied "This is [Imām] al-Ḥusayn. What do you want of him?"

'Abd Allāh b. Ḥawza shouted at Imām al-Ḥusayn and said "Hellfire on you!"

Then Imām al-Ḥusayn said, "You told a lie, for I am moving to a Lord, Gracious, Beneficent, deserving obedience, and Intercessor. But, who are *you*?"

He replied "I am Ibn al-Ḥawza."

Then, Imām al-Ḥusayn raised up his hands toward the heavens and, in a way rhyming with the enemy's byname (Ibn al-Ḥawza), he cursed him as mentioned in (c) above.

Upon hearing Imām al-Ḥusayn's curse, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥawza became angry and whipped his horse to run away from the scene. His horse made a sudden jerk movement, causing him to fall backwards from behind the horse in a bump, while his foot was still stuck in the horse's stirrup. His horse ran wild, and out of his control and it dragged him to a ditch full of fire. 'Abd Allāh's injured body fell down in the fire; he received his initial punishment in this world, with the fire in the Hereafter.

When Imām al-Ḥusayn realised that his prayer was answered immediately, he prostrated in appreciation of finding his request fulfilled. [2]

On the authority of Ibn al-Athīr, it is reported that al-Masrūq b. Wā'il al-Ḥaḍramī, who was in the front row of the Kūfān army, decided not to fight the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn. He saw what happened to 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥawza; al-Masrūq and realised that Imām al-Ḥusayn and his family had a high status before Allāh; otherwise, he [al-Masrūq] would certainly be driven to the Fire.

Al-Balādhurī's narrated that: "On Ashurā, 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥusayn al-'Aḍudī addressed Imām al-Ḥusayn in a loud voice: 'O Ḥusayn! You see this water of the Euphrates that looks like azure and as lovely as the sky! By Allāh! We will never let a drop of it reach your throat until you die of thirst.' In response to this impudence, he received Imām al-Ḥusayn's curse as mentioned in (d) above.

According to al-Balādhurī, just as Imām al-Ḥusayn had cursed him, 'Abd Allāh died of thirst. He lived just a while after the Ashurā tragedy. However, he used to drink large quantities of water without feeling his thirst quenched. [3]

Notes to Chapter 56 The Curses Imām al-Ḥusayn Invoked

1. Al-Khwārazmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, p. 241.
2. Al-Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, p. 91; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 4, p. 27; al-Khwārazmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, vol.1, p. 294; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 256.
3. Al-Balādhurī, *Anṣāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, p. 181.