

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## FROM KARBALA

The most painful event in Islamic history is undeniably the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. There were many other very painful incidents thereafter: the martyrdom of ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and ‘Ali *radiallahu anhum* etc. The incident of Karbala; the brutal murder of the grandson of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, Husain bin Ali *radiallahu anhuma*, is among the saddest and most painful. This article focuses on a few important lessons from this episode.

### **“... I declare war on him!”**

After the martyrdom of Husain *radiallahu anhu* his head and the heads of all those who were martyred with him were severed and thereafter sent to ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad, the governor of Kufah. When the head of Husain *radiallahu anhu* was placed in front of ‘Ubaidullah, he used a stick to scratch the front teeth of Husain *radiallahu anhu*. Zaid bin Arqam *radiallahu anhu* was in the gathering. Witnessing this insolent behavior, he angrily reprimanded ‘Ubaidullah. “Lift the stick from these teeth” he said, I swear by the being besides whom nobody else is worthy of worship, I saw the lips of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* touching and kissing these lips.”<sup>1</sup> According to another narration Anas bin Maalik *radiallahu anhu*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.554 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

was also in the gathering. Observing ‘Ubaidullah’s audacity, he remarked, “By Allah, I will displease you! I saw Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* kissing the spot that your stick is touching.”<sup>2</sup>

Sometime later, ‘Ubaidullah was killed by Mukhtaar bin Abi ‘Ubaid Ath-Thaqafi. ‘Umaarah bin ‘Umair narrates that: “When the heads of ‘Ubaidullah and his men were brought, they were put on display in the *masjid* in Ar-Rahbah.<sup>3</sup> So I went to them and they were saying ‘It came! It came!’ They were referring to a snake that was creeping between the heads until it entered the ‘Ubaidullah’s nostrils. It paused for a little while, then came out and went away. A few moments later I heard the people shouting, ‘It came! It came!’” This happened twice or thrice.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the assassins of Husain *radiallahu anhu*, the famous historian and scholar of tafseer and hadeeth, Al-Haafidh Ibn Katheer, said:

و أما ما روى من الأمور و الفتن التي أصابت من قتله فأكثرها صحيح — فإنه قل من نجا منهم في الدنيا الا أصيب بمرض — و أكثرهم أصابه الجنون

*“With regards to the narrations concerning the afflictions that befell his assassins, most of it is authentic. There were few*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.554 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

<sup>3</sup> Ar-Rahbah was an area in Kufah.

<sup>4</sup> Abu Eesa At-Tirmidhi, *As-Sunan* Hadith 3780 V.5 Pg.660 (Dar-ul-Hadeeth, Cairo)

*among them who escaped and were not afflicted with illness.  
Most of them went insane.”<sup>5</sup>*

The lesson learned from the above is conveyed in the *Hadith*

من عادى لى وليا فقد آذنته بالحرب

*“Whoever shows enmity to any friend of mine,  
I declare war on him.”<sup>6</sup>*

### **In This Palace**

Abdul Malik bin ‘Umair Al-Laythi said with reference to the palace of the *Ameer* (governor) in Kufah: “I saw in this palace the head of Husain in front of ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad. I thereafter saw the head of ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad in front of Mukhtaar bin Abi ‘Ubaid Ath-Thaqafi. Next I saw the head of Mukhtaar in front of Mus’ab bin Zubair. Then I saw the head of Mus’ab in front of Abdul Malik. I mentioned this to Abdul Malik. He regarded this as a bad omen and vacated the place.”<sup>7</sup>

The lesson learned from this is condensed in the famous adage

كما تدین تدان

*“The way you treat people is how you will be treated.”*

‘Ubaidullah commanded the assassination of Husain *radiallahu anhu* only to be murdered by Mukhtaar who was in turn killed by Mus’ab bin Zubair.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.576 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

<sup>6</sup> Muhammed bin Isma’eel Al-Bukhaari, *Al-Jaami-‘us-Saheeh Ma-‘al-Fath Hadeeth* 6502 V.11 Pg.348 (Al-Maktabah As-Salafiyyah, Cairo, 1407)

<sup>7</sup> As-Suyuti, *Taarikh-ul-Khulafaa* Pg.183 (Dar-ul-Ma’rifah, Beirut, 1999\1420)

### **At the Hands of a Liar**

It was not long after the martyrdom of Husain *radiallahu anhu* that Mukhtaar bin 'Ubaid Ath-Thaqafi rose to power. Mukhtaar was a liar whose objective was nothing more than power. Capitalizing on the public's sympathy, especially that of the supporter's of the *Ahl-ul-Bayt* (household of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*), he falsely claimed that he was commissioned by the son of 'Ali *radiallahu anhu*, Muhammed ibn-ul-Hanafiyyah, to avenge the blood of Husain *radiallahu anhu* and the other martyrs of Karbala. He thus pursued and killed 'Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad (the governor of Kufah), Umar bin Sa'd (the head of the army that was sent to kill Husain *radiallahu anhu*), Shamir bin Dhil Jowshan (the commander of the regiment who killed Husain *radiallahu anhu*) and many others. Ibn Katheer writes: "He (Mukhtaar) then began pursuing the assassins of Husain *radiallahu anhu* and all those who witnessed the incident of Karbala on the side of Ibn Ziyaad. He killed a huge number of them and seized the (decapitated) heads of the senior officers among them; Umar bin Sa'd (the commander of the army that killed Husain), Shamir bin Dhil Jowshan (the commander of the thousand who were responsible for the actual killing), Sinaan bin Abi Anas, Khawli bin Yazeed Al-Asbahi and many others. He continued until he sent Ibrahim bin Al-Ashtar An-Nakha'l with an army of twenty thousand men to fight Ibn Ziyaad . . . Ibn-ul-Ashtar killed Ibn Ziyaad, defeated his army and took everything in his camp. This was on the Day of 'Aashoora (the tenth of Muharram), 67AH."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.12 Pg.66-67 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

Mukhtaar was himself an imposter. Thus Ibn Katheer writes that there is no doubt regarding the compulsion of killing the assassins of Husain *radiallahu anhu* and the benefit in hastening to do so. However, Allah had destined this to happen at the hands of Mukhtaar, the liar who became a *kaafir* (unbeliever) by claiming that he receives *wahi* (divine revelation). This reminds us that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, “Allah helps the *deen* by means of a sinful man.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Allah said, “In a similar manner do We turn some of the wrongdoers against the others due to what (the actions) they earn.”<sup>10</sup> In this regard a poet said:

و ما من يد الا يد الله فوفها — و لا ظالم الا سبيلى بظالم

“There is no hand but the hand of Allah is above it.

There is no oppressor but he will be tested by an oppressor.”<sup>11</sup>

### **In the Court of ‘Ubaidullah**

At the end of the battle there was only one male survivor; Husain’s *radiallahu anhu* son, Ali (who was later given the title *Zain-ul-‘Aabideen*). He was then sent with the female members of his family to ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad in Kufah and subsequently to Yazeed in Damascus. In Kufah the following discussion ensued between ‘Ali and ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad:

‘Ubaidullah: What is your name?

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammed bin Isma’eel Al-Bukhaari, *Al-Jaami-‘us-Saheeh Ma-‘al-Fath Hadeeth* 4203 V.7 Pg.538 (Al-Maktabah As-Salafiyyah, Cairo, 1407)

<sup>10</sup> Surah Al-An’aam Aayah 129

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.12 Pg.28-29 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

## ***In The Gardens of Knowledge***

- 'Ali: I am Ali bin Husain.  
'Ubaidullah: Did Allah not kill Ali bin Husain?  
'Ali: (Ali did not respond to this question.)  
'Ubaidullah: What is wrong? Why do you not answer?  
'Ali: I had a brother who was also called 'Ali. The people killed him.  
'Ubaidullah: Allah killed him.  
'Ali: (Ali did not respond to this question also.)  
'Ubaidullah: What is wrong? Why do you not answer?  
'Ali: *"Allah takes the souls away at the time of their death."*<sup>12</sup> *"It is not possible for a soul to die except with the command of Allah."*<sup>13</sup>  
'Ubaidullah: By Allah, you are one of them!

Ubaidullah then turned to one of his men and said, "Check if has reached puberty! I think that he has." Mury bin Mu'aadh checked him and confirmed that Ali had reached puberty. "Then kill him!" retorted 'Ubaidullah. "And to whom do you entrust these women?" cried 'Ali. At that moment 'Ali's paternal aunt, Zainab, began speaking. "O son of Ziyaad! You have harmed us enough. Are you not quenched with our blood? Have you left any of us?" She then clung to 'Ali and said to 'Ubaidullah: "I implore you in the name of Allah, if you are a believer, if you kill him, kill me also!" 'Ali spoke again: "O son of Ziyaad! If there are any family ties between yourself and these women, please send with them a man of *taqwa* who will accompany them according to the laws of Islam." 'Ubaidullah looked at the women and then at his men and said: "Family ties

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<sup>12</sup> Surah Az-Zumar Aayah 42

<sup>13</sup> Surah Al 'Imraan Aayah 145

are amazing. She desired that if I kill him, I should kill her too. Leave the boy. (Although ‘Ali had already reached puberty, he was still very young.)” ‘Ali was thereafter sent with the rest of the family (the women and children) to Yazeed in Kufah. However, his hands were fettered to his neck throughout the journey.<sup>14</sup>

### **In the Court of Yazeed**

‘Ali’s aunt, Fatimah, narrates: When we were seated in front of Yazeed, he felt sorry for us and commanded that we be given something (to eat). He spoke gently to us. Then a man from the Syrians went up to him and said, ‘Give me this girl.’ He was referring to me. I was a young girl with a bright face. Thinking that this was permissible for them, I began trembling with fear and caught hold of my sister Zainab’s clothes. She was elder than me and more understanding. She knew that this was not permissible for them. ‘You are a liar and an evil man!’ she shouted to him, ‘It is neither permissible for you nor for him (Yazeed).’ This angered Yazeed. ‘You are lying’ he retorted, ‘By Allah, it is permissible for me. I will do so if I wish.’

Zainab: Never! By Allah, Allah has not given you permission to do so unless if you exit our religion and adopt a religion other than ours.

Yazeed: Do you speak to me in this manner? It was your father and brother who left the religion.

Zainab: You, your father and your grandfather were guided through the religion of Allah – the religion of my father, brother and grandfather.’

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<sup>14</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.561, footnotes (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

Yazeed: You are a liar, O enemy of Allah!

Zainab: You are an oppressive ruler! You swear oppressively!  
You utilise your authority to oppress!

Fatimah continues: By Allah, he felt ashamed and did not say anything further.<sup>15</sup>

### **Back to Madinah**

After a few days Yazeed arranged for the whole family to be taken back to Madinah. At the time of bidding them farewell he said to 'Ali, "May Allah curse Ibn Marjaanah ('Ubaidullah bin Ziyaad). By Allah, if I was in his position, I would have given your father whatever he requested and I would have tried my best to protect him from being killed, even if it resulted in the death of my own children. However, Allah decreed what you have seen." He then gave him provisions for the journey and a huge sum of money and told 'Ali to write to him for the fulfillment of any need that he may incur in the future. He also commanded the guide who was appointed to lead the family to Madinah to take care of them. Thus the guide remained in their service throughout the journey and, despite ensuring that he never lost sight of the women, maintained a slight distance from them until they reached Madinah. In view of the stressful events of the past few days (the martyrdom of Husain *radiallahu anhu* and fourteen other members of the family in front of their eyes, Ubaidullah's threat to kill 'Ali and the incident of the Syrian man in Yazeed's court), the women were so appreciative of his modest conduct that, upon reaching

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<sup>15</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.562 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)



Madinah, they gathered some of their jewelry and offered it to him as a token of thanks. He, however, refused to accept it saying, “I did that for the pleasure of Allah and due to your relationship with Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.”<sup>16</sup>

### **What Do We Say?**

Fourteen centuries later, reading about the events of Karbala still brings more than just tears to one’s eyes. Is there anything which we can do? Is there anything which we can say? Ibn Katheer replies that Husain *radiallahu anhu* narrated from his grandfather, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, that when a Muslim recalls a difficulty which he experienced in the past and thus reads *انا لله وانا اليه راجعون* (We belong to Allah and to Him will we return)<sup>17</sup>, Allah blesses him with the same amount of reward as the day when he was afflicted with that particular difficulty. This *(انا لله وانا اليه راجعون)* is therefore the best thing we can say whenever we recall Karbala and any other calamity.<sup>18</sup>

### **What We Should Not Do**

Ibn Katheer writes that the murder of Husain *radiallahu anhu* should make every Muslim feel sad because he was among the *saadaat* (masters) of the Muslims and the ‘*Ulamaa* of the Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum*. He was the son of the most excellent daughter of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. He

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.563-564 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

<sup>17</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah (Aayah 156)

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.579-560 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

was an *aabid* (worshipper), brave and generous. This, however, does not make it permissible for us to mourn his death. His father, Ali *radiallahu anhu*, was *afdal* (better) than him. He was assassinated on a Friday, the seventeenth of Ramadaan, while on his way for the Fajr *salaah*. The status of 'Uthmaan *radiallahu anhu* was greater than that of 'Ali *radiallahu anhu*. He was murdered during the days of *tashreeq* in the month of Dhil Haj. Umar *radiallahu anhu* ranked higher than both, 'Uthmaan and 'Ali *radiallahu anhu*. He was killed in the *mihraab* while leading the Fajr *salaah*. Greater than 'Umar *radiallahu anhu* was Abu Bakr *radiallahu anhu*. However, nobody ever mourns the death of any of these august personalities. What about the *sayyid* (master) of all mankind in this world and the Hereafter, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*? Nobody mourns his death! So then, why should we mourn the death of Husain *radiallahu anhu*?<sup>19</sup>

May Allah guide us to a better understanding of His *deen*.

May He guide us to ponder and take heed.

*Aameen.*

*Abu Hudhaifa Muhammed Karolia*

*12 Rajab 1431 | 25 June 2010*

*Al-Jaami'ah Al-Mahmoodiah*

*Persida, Springs*

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<sup>19</sup> Ibn Katheer, *Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah* V.11 Pg.579 (Ed. Abdullah bin Abdil-Muhsin At-Turki, Daar Hajar)

## ***In The Gardens of Knowledge***