

The Role of Imam Ali Zayn al-Abidin (A.S.) in Ashura

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The pain of the memories and sufferings, during and after the unimaginable events of Ashura, lived on with those who survived to tell the stories and narrate the happenings of those earth shattering days for the people of that time, for the people of today, and for the people of tomorrow. Imam Ali b. Husayn Zayn al-Abidin ('a), Lady Zaynab ('a), other ladies of the Prophet's Household ('a) and their children were amongst those who had to endure degrading and tormenting treatment after their Imam, Imam Husayn b. Ali b. Abu Talib ('a), husbands, sons, uncles, brothers, and children were martyred on the burning sands of Karbala with no water upon their deaths. May Allah (swt) give them eternal bliss and peace, insh'Allah. These events narrated by Imam Ali b. Husayn Zayn al-Abidin ('a), also referred to as al-Sajjad ('a), and his ('a) aunt, Lady Zaynab b. Ali ('a), are the most important surviving accounts of the events which have carried the message of Islam, righteousness and honour for which Imam Husayn b. Ali ('a) was martyred.

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) had to play a very important role as a witness and narrator of the events that took place at Karbala and to inherit the Allah decreed role of the Fourth Imam on his ('a) fathers ('a) martyrdom as well as the Father to the next Holy Imam. Even though Allah (swt) decreed that the Imam ('a) would have to be very ill at this particular time, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) had remarkably clear recollection of events leading up to Ashura, during the Martyrdom of his family ('a) and afterwards, as he was able to narrate these in great detail. Imam al-Sajjad ('a) then lived for another 34 years after his ('a) father's ('a) martyrdom in which he was the guide and role model of the people in his sensitive but powerful demonstration and practice of the pure religion of Islam

Ali b. Husayn ('a)-Witness on the Day of Ashura

Among some of the narrations of Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was when he talked about the tragic day, which is immortal in the minds of all true Shias. He said; 'No day was more difficult for Allah's Messenger than the Day (Battle) of Uhud in which Hamza b. 'Adb al-Muttalib, the lion of Allah and the true lion of His Messenger, was killed, and after it was the Day (Battle) of Mu'ta in which his cousin Ja'far b. Abi Talib was killed.'

Then he (al-Sajjad ('a) said:

"There was no day like the Day of al-Husayn, when thirty thousand men advanced against him (while) they claimed that they belonged to this community, and that they (wanted) to seek proximity to Allah, the Great and Almighty, through (shedding) his blood. He (al-Husayn) reminded them of Allah, but they did not learn from him out of (their) oppression and aggression' (Al-Majlisi cited in al-Qarashi 2000).

The journey to this tragic day, although Allah (swt) decreed, consisted of a myriad of historically recorded events and interactions. One of these events, reported by 'Ali b. at-Ta'an al-Muharibi, represents the closeness, respect, love and kindness that existed between Imam al-Husayn ('a) and his son, Imam al-Sajjad ('a). The context of the narration was at the time when Imam al-Husayn ('s) and his son were riding on horseback on their journey between Mecca and their eventual destination of Karbala and had arrived at a place called Qasr Bani Muqatil where they were going to rest for part of the night. In the early morning of the new day while riding, Imam al-Husayn ('a) was seen to become weary on his ('a) horse and fell asleep momentarily. He awoke reciting:

"We belong to God and to Him we will return. Praise be to God the Lord of the worlds." He was heard to have said this two or three times. His son, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) asked his father ('a) why it was that he was reciting these words. The Imam ('a) answered his son ('a): "My son, I nodded off and a horseman appeared to me, riding a horse and he said, 'Men are travelling and the fates travel towards them.' Then I knew it was our own souls announcing our ".deaths to us

Eve of Ashura

The time was coming closer for the events that the Aylul Bait ('a) of the Prophet (sws) had been prepared for since their childhoods - the arrival on the plains of Karbala, may Allah (swt) reward them all. A selected pious group of Momins from the family of the Prophet (sws) and the companions of Imam al-Husayn ('a) were going to meet their destiny as Martyrs on the hot burning sands, arriving at Karbala on the 2nd Muharram 61AH. After several days in their camp, the evening before the 10th Muharram, the day that has burned itself into every true Shia's heart, known as Ashura, was witnessed by Imam al-Sajjad ('a).

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was very ill at that time but narrated, relating to the evening of the 9th of Muharram 61 AH, that his father, Imam al-Husayn ('a) gathered his followers around him.

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) reported that he heard the following from Imam al-Husayn ('a): "I went near to hear what he would say to then (even though) at that time I was sick. I heard my father say to his followers: 'I glorify God with the most perfect glorification and I praise Him in

happiness and misfortune. O God, I praise You for blessing us with prophethood, teaching us the Qu'ran and making us understand the religion. You have given us hearing, sight and hearts, and have made us among those who give thanks (to You). I know of no followers more loyal and more virtuous than my followers, nor of any House more pious and more close-knit than my House. May God reward you well on my behalf. Indeed, I do not think that there will be (any further) days (left) to us by these men. I permit you to leave me. All (of you) go away with the absolution of your oath (to follow me), for there will be no (further) obligation on you from me. This is a night (whose darkness) will give cover to you. Use it as a camel (i.e. ride away in it)''

(Al Mufid, 1981, pg 346-347).

After the Holy Imam, Imam al-Husayn ('a), had finished his address, he ('a) asked his ('a) most faithful and strong brother, al-Abbas ('a), to put out the candles in order for members of the camp to leave in the darkness without identification or shame. After some time al-Abbas ('a) was asked to light the candles again, leaving the remaining chosen family and followers. This evening was spent in prayers and the recitation of al-Qu'ran and the seeking of forgiveness and the glorification of Allah (swt). As the evening progressed and the dawn was near, Imam al-

Sajjad ('a) observed his father ('a).

He, Imam al-Sajjad ('a), reported:

"I was sitting of that evening (before the morning of the day) in which my father was killed. With me was my aunt, Zaynab, who was nursing me when my father left to go to his tent. With him was Jawayn, the retainer (mawla) of Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, who was preparing his sword and putting it right.

My father recited:

'Time, shame on you as a friend! At the day's dawning and the sun's setting, How many a companion or seeker will be a corpse! Time will not be satisfied with any substitute. The matter will rest with the Mighty One, And every living creature will have to journey along my path.'

He repeated it twice or three times. I understood it and realised what he meant. Tears choked me and I pushed them back. I kept silent and knew that tribulation had come upon us. As for my aunt, she heard what I heard – but she is a woman and weakness and grief are part of the qualities of women; she could not control herself, she jumped up, tearing at her clothes and sighing, and went to him.

Then I will lose (a brother),' Zaynab said to him. 'Would that death deprive me of life today, (for) my mother, Fatimah, is dead, and my father, Ali, and my brother, al-Hasan, peace be on them (all).'

'O sister,' al-Husayn said to her as he looked at her with his eyes full of tears, 'don't let Satan take away with your forbearance. (Remember:) If the sand grouse are left (alone) at night, they will sleep (i.e. let nature take its course).' 'O my grief, your life will be violently wrenched from you and that is more wounding to my heart and harsher to my soul,' she lamented, and then she struck at her face. She bent down in a faint.

Al-Husayn, peace be on him, got up and bathed her face with water. Then he said to her: 'Sister, fear God and take comfort in the consolation of God. Know that the people on the earth will die and the inhabitants of heaven will not continue to exist (for ever). For everything will be destroyed except the face of God Who created creation by His power (qudra); He sends forth creatures and He causes them to return; He is unique and alone. My grandfather was better than me, my father was better than me and my mother was better than me. I and every Muslim have an ideal model in the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family.' By this and the like he tried to console her and he said: 'Sister, I swear to you – and I (always) keep my oaths – that you must not tear at your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor cry but with grief and loss when I am destroyed.'

Then he brought her and made her sit with me. He went to his followers and ordered them to bring their tents (much) closer together so that the tent-pegs came within the area of each other's tents, and so that if they remained among their tents, the enemy could only approach (them), from one side (for there would be) tents behind them, and to their right and left. Thus (the tents completely) surrounded them except for the one way, which the enemy could come against them (Al Mufid, 1981, pg 348-349). The granddaughters of the Prophet shared that severe ordeal with Lady Zaynab ('a). Among them was Umm Kulthum, who lamented: "Oh Mohammed! Oh 'Ali! Oh Imam! Oh Husayn! We will be lost after you!"

Imam al-Husayn ('a) asked them to bear the burdens of this severe ordeal, saying: "O sister, O Umm Kulthum, O Fa'tima, O Raba'b, when I am killed, you must not tear your clothes, nor scratch your faces, nor cry out with grief and loss!" (Hayat al-Imam al-Husayn, .(cited in al-Qarashi 2000

Day of Ashura – Reports of al- Sajjad ('a)

On the morning of 10th Muharram, Imam al-Husayn ('a) and his ('a) faithful family and companions performed their last morning prayer together. The enemies shot arrows at the worshipers and several were killed. Imam al-Husayn ('a), after performing the prayers mobilised his ('a) 32 horseman and 40 foot soldiers. Umar b. Sad also mobilised his cursed followers. He (curse be on him) went out with his army to Imam al-Husayn ('a).

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) reported:

"When the cavalry began to approach al-Husayn, he raised his hands and said: 'O God, it is You in whom I trust amid all grief. You are my hope amid all violence. You are my trust and provisions in everything that happens to me, (no matter) how much the heart may seem to weaken in it, trickery may seem to diminish (my hope) in it, the friend may seem to desert (me) in it, and the enemy may seem to rejoice in it. It comes upon me through You and when I complain to You of it, it is because of my desire for You, You alone. You have comforted me in (everything) and have revealed its (significance to me). You are the Master of grace, the Possessor of all goodness and the Ultimate Resort of all desire.'

When the enemy began to move around the tent of al-Husayn ('a), they saw the ditch behind and the fire burning the firewood and cane, which had been thrown in it. (A this) Shamir b. Dhi al-Jawshan called out at the top of his voice:

'Al-Husayn, are you hurrying towards the fire (of Hell) before the Day of Resurrection?'

'Who is that?' asked al-Husayn, peace be on him, '(It sounds) like Shamir b. Dhi al-Jawsahn?'

'Yes, (it is),' they told him.

'Son of a goat-herdess, you are more worthy to be burnt by that,' he retorted.

Muslim b. Awsaja wanted to shoot an arrow at him, but al-Husayn, peace be on him, stopped him from (doing) that. 'Let me shoot him,' he asked, 'for he is a wicked sinner, one of the enemies of God, and the great tyrants. (Now) God has made it possible (to kill) him.'

'Do not shoot him', ordered al-Husayn, peace be on him, 'for I am unwilling to begin (the fighting) against them.' Then al-Husayn ('a) called for his mount and mounted on it. He called out at the top of his voice: 'O people of Iraq,' – and most of them (began to) listen to him – 'people, listen to my words and do not hurry (to attack me) so that I may remind you of the duties you have towards myself from any blame in (your attacking me). If you give me justice of your own accord (as individuals), then agree upon your affairs (and your associates); let not your affair be in darkness to you. Then carry (it) out against me and do not reflect (any further) (X.71). Indeed my guardian is God, Who created the Book; He takes care of the righteous (V11. 196).' Then he praised and glorified God and mentioned what God is entitled to. He called for blessings on the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, and on the angles and (other) prophets. No speaker has ever been heard before or after him more eloquent in his speech .than he was

He continued:

"Trace back my lineage and consider who am I. Then look back at yourselves and remonstrate

with yourselves. Consider whether it is right for you to kill me and to violate the honour of my womenfolk. Am I not the son of the daughter of your Prophet, of his testamentary trustee (wasi) and his cousin, the first of the believers in God and the man who (first) believed in what His Apostle, may God bless him and his family, brought from his Lord? Was not Hamza, the lord of the martyrs, my uncle? Was not Jafar, the one who flies in heaven, my uncle? Have you not heard the words of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, concerning myself and my brother; 'These are the two lords of the youth of the inhabitants of heaven'? Whether you believe what I am saying – and it is the truth, for by God I have never told a lie since I learned that God hated people (who told) them – or whether you regard me as a liar, there are many among you those who, if you asked them, would tell you: Asl Jabir b. Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu Said al-Khudri, Sahl b. Sad al-Saidi, Zayd . Arqam and Anas b. Malik to tell you that they heard these words from the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, concerning myself and my brother. Is there not (sufficient) in this to prevent you shedding my blood?'

'If I understand what you are saying,' interrupted Shamir b. Dhi al-Jawshan, 'then I only worship God (very shakily) on the edge.' 'I think that you worship God (very shakily) on seventy edges,' said Habib b. Muzahir. 'For I testify that you are right. You do not understand what he is saying.

For God has impressed (ignorance) upon your heart.'

'If you are in any doubt about this,' al-Hasayn, please be on him, told them, 'you are in doubt that I am the son of the daughter of your Prophet. By God there is no son of a prophet other than me among you and among, the peoples from East to West. Shame on you, are you seeking retribution from me for yours which I expropriated, or for a wound which I have inflicted?' They did not say anything to him. They called: 'Shabath b. Ribī, Hajjar b. Abjar, Qays b. al-Ashath, Yazid b. al-Harith, didn't you write: 'The fruit has ripened; the dates have grown green; come to an army which has been gathered for you'? 'We don't know what you are talking about,' said Qays b. al-Ashath. 'Submit to the authority of your kinsmen (the Umayyad). They

have never treated you with anything but what you liked.'

'By God, I will never give you my hand like a man who has been humiliated; nor will I flee like a slave,' said al-Husayn, peace be on him. Then he called out, 'O servants of God, I take refuge in my Lord and your Lord from the stoning. (XLIV 20) I take refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every haughty man who does not believe in the Day of Resurrection. (XL 27).'

He made his mount kneel and ordered 'Uqba b. Siman to tie his reins. They (the Kufans) began to advance towards him (al-Husayn). When al-Hurr b. Yazid perceived that the people were determined to fight al-Husayn, (peace be on him), he said to 'Umar; 'Are you going to fight this

man?’

‘Yes’, he replied, ‘it will be a terrible battle, the least part of which will be heads falling and severed heads flying (through the air).’ ‘Haven’t you any other way of getting what you want?’ ‘If the matter rested with me,’ answered Umar, ‘I would do (anything else), but your governor has refused (any alternative).’ Al-Hurr went and stood apart from the people. With him was a man from his tribe called Qurra b. Qays.

‘Qurra, have you watered your horse today?’ he asked.

‘No’

‘Do you want to water it?’

It was then narrated that Qurra replied that he wanted to water his horse and left al-Hurr where he was. Al-Hurr then galloped his horse to Imam al-Husayn’s (‘a) camp to repent and ask for .(forgiveness for his actions (Al Mufid, 1981, pg 350-353

Al-Abbas (‘a)

The faithful followers of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) and the male members of his Household proved themselves unfailingly brave in their defending of the Holy Imam al-Husayn (‘a) in the killing thirst of the Karbala plains. Al-Abbas, (‘a), in particular has been praised by Imam al-Sajjad (‘a), in sacrificing his life for his brother Imam al-Husayn (‘a).

Al-Abbas, (‘a), half brother to Imam al-Husayn (‘a) was truthful, noble, and sincere. Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) said:

“May Allah have mercy on my uncle al-‘Abbas, for he preferred (his brother to himself), showed extreme courage, and sacrificed his life for his brother to the extent that his hands were cut off, so Allah, the Great and Almighty, gave him two wings to fly with the angels in Heaven, as He had given Ja’far b. Abi Talib. Al-‘Abbas has a great position with Allah, the Exalted, so all the .(martyrs will envy it on the Day of Judgement” (Al-Majlisi, cited in al-Qarashi 2000, pg. 140

Transfer of Imamate from al-Husayn (‘a) to al-Sajjad (‘a)

The transfer of the Imamate to the next Holy Imam (‘a) has to occur at the death of the previous Holy Imam (‘a) and the transfer of the Imamate of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) to Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) was under particularly distressing circumstances with the severe illness that Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) was suffering and the martyrdom of so many family members and companions.

.May Allah (swt) have them all rest peacefully, insh’Allah

In the book Kitab al-Irshad, it is quoted that:

The Shia give an account of the tablet which Gabriel, peace be on him, brought down to the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, from Heaven. (The Apostle) gave it to Fatimah, peace be on her. In it are the names of the Imams after (the Apostle). The Shia also report that God, the Mighty and High, sent down to His Prophet, the blessings and peace be on him, a document sealed with twelve seals. He ordered him to give it to the Commander of the Faithful, peace be on him, and to tell him to break the first seal, and he should act according to what is in (that part of the document). At the time of his death, he should pass it to his son, al-Hasan, peace be on him, and tell him to break the second seal and act according to what is in (that part of) the document. At the time of his death, he should pass it to his brother al-Husayn, peace be on him. He should tell him to break the third seal and act according to what is below it. Then at his death, he should pass it to his son, 'Ali b. al-Husayn al-Akbar (the elder) and he should instruct him in a similar way (al-Mufid 1981, pg. 395).

It could therefore be concluded that this document was given to Imam al-Sajjad ('a) just prior to his ('a) father's ('a) martyrdom although there are disputed opinions surrounding this matter. An account concerning the testamentary of bequests (wasiyya) made by Imam al-Sajjad's ('a) father, Imam al-Husayn ('a) was that they were deposited with Umm Salama for him ('a). He ('a) received them when his ('a) father ('a) died. Imam al-Husayn ('a) made the request (for these) from Umm Salama, the sign of the Imamate of the one who should request them among men. (cf. al-Kafi, I, 204, tradition number 3), but other sources say that these things were in the hands of Fatimah, his daughter, (cf. al-Kafi, I, 363-4} in Al-Mufid 1981, pg.381). The facts do tend to favour the opinion that the bequests were left in the trusted care of Imam al-Husayn's ('a) daughter, Fatimah, as she was present at Karbala, whereas Umm Salama was in Medina at the time, and according to the information above, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) received these bequests at his father's ('a) death.

It has been narrated in, Husain The Saviour of Islam by Ahmed Ali, (1964), that Imam al-Sajjad ('a), the eldest son of Imam al-Husayn ('a), was lying unconscious on his sick bed at the time when Imam al-Husayn ('a) was preparing to part with the remaining members of his family and the families of his martyred companions. Imam al-Husayn ('a) went to Imam al-Sajjad ('a) and handed over the charge of the sacred office of Imamate to him ('a). Imam al-Husayn ('a) enumerated the difficulties and the tortures that would befall him ('a) immediately following his ('a) martyrdom and advised him ('a) to observe the highest degree of patience and fortitude against every aggression and oppression that would be inflicted on him and his dear ones, and never to get angry or curse the people (Mir Ahmed Ali, pg 183). His role was to succeed as the

Forth Holy Imam and endure the tribulations and challenges confronting him ('a) and the true
. (followers of Allah's (swt) religion (Al-Mufid 1981, pg. 380

The Prophet's (sws) Descendants Destined to Live

The divine plan of Allah (swt) appeared to ensure that the pious and pure Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was to live with the vivid and real memories of the agonising cries of his ('a) father's ('a) injured companions, the spilt blood on the burning sands, the suffocating heat, the painful thirst, the meaningful words, the loving embraces, the brave challenges and the torturous loss of loved ones and suffering through his ('a) extreme illness, which enabled him ('a) to re-tell the stories, relate the events, and guide the believers in his decisive, gentle and sensitive manner. The enemy rejoiced at their perceived success after murdering Ali Asghar (17 or 18 years of age), who they thought was Ali Akbar (Imam al-Sajjad ('a)) and then the murder of his ('a) father, Imam al-Husayn ('a). Their delight and perverted joy came with the belief that they had stopped the succession of the Holy Prophet (sws) by the martyrdoms of the last of the living progeny of the Holy Prophet (sws).

In executing their desires and the commands of the Kalif, Yazid, based in Damascus, Syria, the enemy raided and looted the tents. As they did this, they found Imam al-Sajjad ('a) semi unconscious on a bed in one of the tents. His ('a) body had become so severely weakened and emaciated by his ('a) illness that his small frame, inherited from his ('a) mother Shahzanan, who was a Persian princess, appeared to be like a child. There was an argument between Shamir, the murderer of Imam al-Husayn ('a), his foot-soldiers and Humayd b. Muslim over whether the young man ('a) should be killed. Humayd b. Muslim argued against the "killing a sick lad" and Shamir left him ('a) alone (al-Mufid 1981, pg. 364). Another report suggests that Lady Zaynab ('a) refused the killing of Imam al-Sajad ('a) and threw herself on top of the Holy Imam ('a) so that he would not be killed (al-Qarashi 2000, pg. 143). This account of the story also resulted in Shamir and his foot-soldiers leaving the Holy Imam ('a) alone.

It was not obvious to them that they had two Holy Imams ('a) in their presence, still alive, so that they ('a) would not only live to witness and narrate the events of Karbala, but that they would live to continue the blood-line of the Holy Prophet (sws). Imam al-Sajjad ('a) and his son, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a), remained alive to bear witness and therefore can testify
. against the enemy on the Day of Judgment

The Night of the Dispossessed

After the enemy looted the tents, they set the tents alight burning all of them. It was a scene of chaos and stress. Lady Zaynab ('a) had to assemble the women and children and account for all of them while deciding to save their lives, as they are commanded to in Islam. Lady Zaynab ('a), as the leader of all the women and children, mustered all her strength to save the remainder of the family of the Prophet (sws) and the widows and children of the martyrs. This decision was made by her ('a) knowing that many tribulations were still to follow as had been narrated to her by her Brother, Imam al-Husayn ('a), her Mother, Lady Fatimah ('a), her father, Imam Ali Amirul Momineen ('a) and her grandfather, the Holy Prophet of Islam (sws).

With the memory of this event, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) said: 'By Allah, when I look at my aunts and my sisters, tears choke me because I remember the day of al-Taff when they escaped from tent to tent and the caller of the people was calling: 'Set fire to the homes of the oppressors.'" (al-Qarashi 2000, pg. 143).

It is claimed by some historians that some children were killed in this rampage and the burning of the tents, but at this time this writer does not have access to sufficient facts to support this claim.

Once the fires had gone out, a part of one of the tents remained standing. The remainder of the Prophet's House ('a), the widows of the martyrs and the children, sheltered in this tent for the small amount of protection that it provided. An emotional and tiring night followed the Day of Ashura, which has been named The Night of the Dispossessed. This was the first night without their loved Imam al-Husayn ('a), family and friends. This was the first night of the Imamate of Imam al-Sajjad ('a) who then had to take on the role as the guide and leader of the Muslims in an unimaginable sad time. A night of prayer, remembrance and of consolation of who remained.

The Journey From Karbala to Kufa, Iraq

In the afternoon of the following day, the cursed enemy, Umar b. Sa'd b. Ziyad, summoned the remaining family of the Holy Prophet (sws), the daughters and sisters of al-Husayn ('a) together with Imam al-Sajjad ('a). The Imam ('a) could not even sit up owing to his illness of dysentery and was bound in heavy chains prior to their forced departure from Karbala. (al-Mufid 1981, pg 364) Umar b. Sa'd b. Ziyad made preparations for the journey that the caravan of survivors, the Holy Heads ('a) of the 72 martyrs and the assigned soldiers, were going to take from Karbala to Kufa in Iraq and then as far as Damascus in Syria (Mir Ahmed Ali, pg 189). This distance was travelled barefoot by our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) and by camels with no saddles by the women and children. Looking at maps and photos of the desert and terrain

between the three destinations, if you have never been there, you can see the vastness of the desert, the harshness of the thorny and rocky landscapes and the severity of the climate. This long and arduous journey would have been at least 800km in distance if you draw a straight line from Karbala to Damascus. It is reported that the caravan was taken to several different towns on the journey, some even stating that part of the journey took them to northern Syria and into the east of Lebanon (Hammoud 2004, pg. 28).

Our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was made to walk behind the caravan of the enemy soldiers and the believers and he ('a) fell many times due to his illness and weakness. The caravan would .not stop for him and he ('a) had to stumble to his ('a) feet and continue on

In the Presence of Ibn Ziyad - Kufa

Upon arrival in Kufa, the Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a), the ladies and children of the house ('a), the remainder of the surviving widows and children of the martyrs, and the Holy Heads ('a) of the martyrs, were taken to Ibn Ziyad at the palace after being taken through the streets and markets of Kufa. They were assembled in the hall in which Ibn Ziyad was seated on his decorated chair. He was proud and rude, cruel and horrid in his manner with the Holy Imam ('a), Lady Zaynab ('a) and the others. It is reported that he initiated the conversation towards Lady Zaynab ('a) with some unforgivable comments about the killing of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and the martyrs, of which our pious Lady Zaynab ('a) replied with dignity:

"God decreed death for them and they went forward (bravely) to their resting places.

God will gather you and us together.

You will plead your excuses to Him and we will be your adversaries before Him."

Ibn Ziyad was angry and aggressive and asked who the man (Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was. Our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) replied to him that he was, "Ali b. Husayn". Ibn Ziyad was confused, as he believed that Ali b. Husayn had been killed at Karbala. The army had been celebrating the killing of Ali b. al-Husayn and the killing of Ali b. al-Husayn, which meant, in their minds, that they had killed the line of the Holy Prophet (sws).

Ibn Ziyad retorted and said:

"Didn't God kill Ali b. al-Husayn?"

Our Holy Imam (a) replied:

"I have a brother who is also called Ali, the people killed him.

God receives the souls at the time of their death (XXXIX 42)."

This made Ibn Ziyad even angrier and he threatened to have Imam al-Sajjad ('a) taken away and have his ('a) head cut off. Lady Zaynab ('a) intervened and insisted that that did not occur

(Al Mufid, 1981, pg 366-367). Ibn Ziyad rose from the assembly, after some interrogation of the members of the House ('a), to leave the palace and go to the mosque to make the declaration that Yazid and his party had killed "the liar who is the son of a liar and his Shia". Ibn Ziyad was strongly opposed by Abd Allah b. Afif al-Azdi who was, later that evening, taken .(from his home and executed, may Allah have mercy on his soul (Al Mufid, 1981, pg 367

The Journey from Kufa, Iraq to Damascus, Syria

Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad firstly despatched the severed head of Imam al-Husayn ('a) then ordered the women and the children to be made ready for travelling. He ordered Imam al-Sajjad ('a), to be chained with a chain around his neck then sent them to follow the severed heads with Muhaffir b. Tha'laba al-A'idhi and Shamir b. Dhi al-Jawshan. They followed until they caught up with the people who were accompanying the severed heads. Imam al-Sajjad ('a) did not speak a word to any of the people who had the Holy Heads ('a) on that journey from Kufa to Damascus in Syria.

This was the longest part of the journey travelling from Kufa in central Iraq to the other side of Syria where Damascus is situated. The caravan only stopped for short periods of time for the soldiers to feast and satisfy their desires, while the women and children of the Prophet's House ('a) were given hardly enough to sustain life. It is reported that many children and ladies passed away on the arduous journey, as they were not given much food or water, they had injuries, in a state of trauma and very weak. The ropes tied around the necks of the children were tied to the ladies' hands so that if a child fell from the camel, the lady would fall with the child, or in order to prevent the child from certain death from strangulation or a broken neck, would throw themselves also down from the camel. Although there is not much literature detailing the events that occurred on this journey, it is reported that the graves of the women and children who died along the way are located in different towns and places where they died. Shrines of some of these women, who in my humble opinion are also martyrs following the Battle of .(Ashura, can be found in Homs in Syria and Baalbek in East Lebanon (Hammoud, pg. 29

Ibn Ziyad Reports to Yazid

Ibn Ziyad reporting to Yazid of the killing of Imam Husayn ('a) and the capture of the Prophets' House ('a) Upon arrival in Damascus, the caravan was halted outside the gates of the city in the hot sun. Yazid, the new Caliph who had ordered the killing of Imam al-Husayn ('a), was notified of the arrival of the people of the House ('a), so the town was decorated to celebrate

the enemy's cruel success, which will burn them in the Hellfire for eternity. After some time, the caravan was told that it could proceed.

It was reported by Abd Allah b. Rabi'a al-Himyari that when they reached the door of Yazid's palace, Muhaffir b. Tha'laba raised his voice and shouted: "Here is Muhaffir b. Thalaba who has bought the Commander of the faithful these vile profligates." Imam al-Sajad ('a) responded to this statement saying: "What did the mother of Muhaffir give birth to more evil and more grievous (than him)?". Our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was empowered and righteous and was not afraid of this cursed man nor did he cease enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. Our Holy Imam ('a) assertively opposed the enemy and was a pious and valiant example for all of the people to observe. He ('a) only demonstrated fear of Allah (swt) and not of mankind.

The door was opened and the people were summoned inside. As they entered the palace, the severed Holy Heads ('a) of the martyrs were placed in front of Yazid first. He was pleased to see this as his desire to remain as the Caliph drove him to this extreme, murdering Imam al-Husayn ('a), fearing that Imam al-Husayn ('a) would be more popular and righteous than he, that the people would plead allegiance to Imam al-Husayn ('a) and not himself. Naturally Imam al-Husayn ('a) would have greater popularity and authority being that he ('a) was the rightful inheritor of the leadership of the Muslim Ummah. On seeing the head of our Holy Imam al-Husayn ('a), Yazid said:

"We will split the skull of proud men (who come) against us; they were very disobedient and oppressive." Directing his dialogue at Imam al-Sajjad ('a), he said: "Son of al-Husayn, your father cut (the bond of) kinship with me and showed ignorance of my rights, trying to deprive me of my position of authority. (Now) God has treated him in the way you have seen."

Our Holy Imam ('a) replied to him:

"No misfortune strikes the earth nor yourselves, unless it has been written in a book before We bring it into existence; that is easy for God (LVII 22)".

Yazid was unable to respond to the Holy Imam ('a).

Yazid then summoned the women and the children and they were made to sit in front of him. What he saw was dreadful (Al-Mufid 1981, pg 368-369). It was at this point that a hadith reported by Fatimah b. Husayn ('a), proved that she had been present at Karbala and not left back in Medina as many reports suggest.

Fatimah b. Husayn ('a) reported that:

"When we sat before Yazid, he showed pity on us. An Ahmar of the Syrians stood up and said to Yazid: "Commander of the faithful, give me this one."

He meant me. (Then) I was a pretty young girl. I shuddered for I thought that that would be

allowed to them. I caught hold of the skirt of my aunt Zaynab and she told (me) that that would not happen. She said to the Syrian: "By God, you are a liar." By God, you are (too) lowly born!

Such a thing is not for you nor for him (to decide)."

"You are a liar," Yazid cried out angrily. "That is for me (to decide)." If I wish to do anything, I can do it." "No, by God," she replied, "God would only let you do that if you left our faith and professed belief in another (religion)." "It is me, screamed Yazid, distraught with anger, "whom you are treating in this (way). It is your father who has left the religion, and your brother."

"I am led by the religion of God, the religion of my father and the religion of my brother," she answered, "and (it is what) you are led by, and your grandfather and your father, if you are a Muslim."

"Enemy of God, you lie," he shouted.

"You are a Commander of the faithful, (yet) you vilify unjustly and you have become oppressive with your authority," she answered. (At this) he was ashamed and became silent.

"Give me that girl", repeated the Syrian.

"Be a bachelor", Yazid said to him, "May God strike you dead!" " (al-Mufid 1981, pg. 369). After some dialogue and Lady Zaynab's ('a) famous speech, Yazid dismissed the court and then ordered for the women to be imprisoned in a house on the banks of the river. He also sent with them Imam al-Sajjad ('a). Later a house was set-aside for them, which was attached to Yazid's own house. They stayed there for several days then Yazid organised al-Nu'man b.

Bashir and told him to make preparations to take the women back to Medina in Saudi Arabia. It was at this time that he summonsed Imam al-Sajjad ('a) to him where he cursed Ibn Murjana then said: "If I had been with your father, he would never asked me for a favour without me granting him it; I would have protected him from death with all my power. But God has decreed what you have seen. Write to me from Medina and everything that you need will be yours."

He presented clothes to him ('a) and to his ('a) family. He sent with them, in the group of men under the command of Nu'man b. Bashir, a messenger, who brought him (al-Nu'man) the order to set out in the night; and that they should go in front of him but they should never be out of sight. When they stopped, he should go aside from them and he and his followers should separate around them like a group of guards over them. He should only keep away from them when any person of their group wanted to wash or perform a need, so he or she would not be shamed . The messenger went with the group of al-Nu'man until they arrived in Medina (al-
.(Mufid 1981, pg. 370

There are conflicting reports as to whether the caravan of the women, children and the Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) of the Prophet's House ('a) travelled back to Karbala in Iraq to bury the Holy Heads ('a) of the martyrs or directly back to Medina. The above quote indicates that the caravan went directly to Medina with the people of Nu'man, but as Imam al-Sajjad ('a) had been successful in having Yazid return the 72 precious Holy Heads ('a) of the martyrs of Karbala, it is also stated in other literature that the caravan went back to Iraq to bury the Holy Heads ('a) which they ('a) had in their ('a) possession.

This journey in itself was extremely arduous, not just in terms of the travelling, whether they had a camel, a horse, were walking, had food or not, but for the fact that they were returning to the place where so many sad memories were associated, where the bodies of their loved ones were lying. Our Ladies ('a) returning without other relatives and loved ones who had died after the tragedy of Karbala. This includes Imam al-Sajjad's ('a) little sister Sakina ('a), the most beautiful little girl that our Holy Imam al-Husayn ('a) loved so much. Her gentle and loving soul passed away in Damascus from her injuries and grief at the age of approximately 5 years. May Allah (sws) give her eternal bliss, happiness and provide her with soft cushions and embroidered garments with her family and loved ones, insh'Allah. Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was the only living child of Imam al-Husayn ('a) on return to Karbala.

As there is not enough accurate literature to narrate the returning to Karbala or the journey to .Medina in Saudi Arabia, I will not try to elaborate on this

Three Generations of Holy Imams ('a) Present at Karbala

Allah (swt) is the best of planners though as a very optimistic view brings us to the remembrance, that although our Holy Imam al-Husayn ('a) had no other living children other than our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a), he did have a pure grandson returning to Karbala. That is the son of Imam al-Sajjad ('a), Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a). This little brave, bold son, resembling all the strong characteristics inherited by him from his ('a) forefathers, was only 4 years old at the time of Karbala. He witnessed all of what occurred and suffered along with the other children who had no water. It was he ('a) who demanded from one of the enemy soldiers to point out to him ('a) the direction of Najaf so that he could complain to his ('a) grandfather, Imam Ali Amirul Momineen ('a) of the killing, sufferings and abuse they were experiencing. The foot-soldier, not knowing who he ('a) was, had been astonished by the boldness of this brave young boy.

We can therefore conclude that three generations of Holy Imams ('a) were together at Karbala .until Imam al-Husayn ('a) was martyred. May Allah (swt) give him ('a) eternal peace, insh'Allah

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) as a Guide and Role Model to all Muslims

The caravan arrived back in Medina over 1 year later given that it took them ('a) five (5) whole months to get from Medina, via Mecca, Hijaz, to Karbala, Iraq, then the journeying at walking pace from Karbala to Kufa and then Damascus in Syria. The family ('a) was then kept as prisoners for at least a month in Damascus and then they ('a) returned to Medina via Karbala (most common opinion). Therefore, the caravan could have been away for up to 2 years if the estimations are accurate.

On return to Medina, our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a), Lady Zaynab ('a) and Umm Kultum ('a) gave many speeches and Majlis on the events and happenings from the time they left Medina on the 28th Rajab 60 AH until their return.

The people of Medina welcomed them ('a) back with tears in the remembrance of the large caravan of people leaving Medina with their Holy Imam, al-Husayn ('a), his ('a) brothers, sons and daughters, the brothers and sons of his ('a) father, Imam Ali Amirul Momineen ('a), the wives and sisters of the House ('a) and the close companions, and then the return of only a few who remained alive. Not many of the survivors returning to Medina lived long lives so the tragedy took its toll.

After their return, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) lived in Medina for 35 years teaching Islamic Jurisprudence and the "secrets" of prayer and supplication. He lived as a pious role model for the people to follow and imitate based on his ('a) impeccable practice of the religion, behaviour in his ('a) daily life, his ('a) fasting and acts of charity. He ('a) was a man of patience and self-control. Our Imam ('a) cried and shed tears in the remembrance of the events of Karbala and what eventuated after Karbala, until he ('a) was martyred. Everything that our Holy Imam ('a) did, pivoted around the worship of Allah (swt) in every breath, step and movement of his ('a) body. We can see this in his Whispered Prayers and Supplications in Al-Sahifat Al-Kamilat Al-Sajjadiyya.

It is narrated in Kitab al-Irshad:

Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-'Alawi informed me on the authority of his grandfather (Yahya b. al-Hasan), on the authority of Muhammad b. Maymun al-Bazzaz, who said: Sufyan b. 'Uyayna informed us on the authority of Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, who said: "Ali b. Al-Husayn, peace be on them, who was the best Hashimi we ever met, said: "Love us, for it is the love of Islam. May your love for us never cease even if it becomes a (public disgrace. (al-Mufid 1981, pg.382

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) is famous for his ('a) unique written texts. He ('a) taught and wrote "Al-Sahifat Al-Kamilat Al-Sajjadiyya, Psalms Of Islam", "The Hajj", "Risalat Al-Huquq, Treatise On Rights", and "Kitab Ali ibn Husayn". The first three documents have survived until today, but unfortunately, the forth, respectively, is missing (al-Qarashi 2000, pg.525). These texts are well known and are used by believers who desire a greater closeness to Allah (swt) and specific knowledge on Hajj and rights.

The supplications in the book "Al-Sahifat Al-Kamilat Al-Sajjadiyya, Psalms Of Islam", gives the believer the most appropriate and beautiful words to speak to the Almighty Allah (swt). The Imam's ('a) detailed and invaluable dialogue on Hajj guides and teaches the believer the very serious aspect of Niyat (intention) at every step of the Sacred Pilgrimage. In his ('a) "Risalat Al-Huquq, Treatise On Rights", the concept of "rights" is clearly stipulated, detailed under 6 headings starting with Allah has Rights Against You. If the believer understands and follows the direction and instruction particularised in these rights, then it truly will assist in righteous .(practice and conduct among men and before Allah (swt

Conclusion

The essence of this pure soul of Imam al-Sajjad ('a) cannot be adequately captured in words, nor can he ('a) be fully described with our limited understanding as simple creations of Allah (swt). Only the Almighty Allah (swt) can know the true essence of the man ('a) who whispered his ('a) prayers day and night, supplicated until his knees were hard and endured everything as a witness with patience and forbearance as directed by his ('a) father, Imam al-Husayn (a'). Traditions, knowledge and training from the Holy Prophet of Islam (sws) had given the House ('a) foundations and strength to withstand the tortures that only Prophets and Infallibles are faced with. The inner constitution and purity of the House ('a) was beautifully reflected in our Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) who took a vital role at Karbala as a witness to the brutal murders of his ('a) father Imam al-Husayn ('a) and subsequent events, and then as the Holy Imam in Medina after their ('a) return.

In Medina, people would gather and join with the Imam ('a) as they greatly honoured and respected him for his knowledge, purity, sensitivity and humble character. They would ask him ('a) for advice and guidance and he ('a) would demonstrate to them the most appropriate conduct and words.

It was reported by Suffyan al-Thawri, on the authority of Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Mawhib that:

The great merit (fadl) of 'Ali b. Husayn, peace be on him, was mentioned to him but he replied:

"It is sufficient for us that I should be one of the righteous members of our people. (Al-Mufid 1981, pg. 384).

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was martyred by poisoning on the sad day of 25th Muharram 94AH by the Omayyid Kalif, named Walid bin Abdul Malik (Imam Reza.net 2002). The Holy Imam al-Sajjad ('a) was then buried in al-Baqi, Medina in the year 95 A.H., with the grave of his ('a) uncle Imam al-Hasan ('a). At that time he was 57 years of age (S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali, pg 38). A hadith quoted by Imam al-Sajad ('a) stated the following when he ('a) was asked,"Who is most in danger?" Imam al-Sajjad ('a) replied:

"The one who does not regard the world dangerous for himself. (Islamic Propagation Organisation, 1373 AH, pg. 131).

May Allah (swt) keep Imam al-Sajjad ('a) in close proximity to give him ('a) satisfaction in meeting his Creator, insh'Allah.

Salawat on Imam Ali b. al-Husayn ('a)

O Allah, send blessings on Ali bin Husayn,

The lord among (Thy) adorers,

Whom Thou selected for Thy pure friendship,

And in his lineage,

Appointed his offspring as the true guides (Imams)

Who truthfully guided the mankind,

And for that purpose repeated them,

One after the other, as Thy own preferred choice.

Thou kept off uncleanness for from him,

Elected him in preference over others,

And appointed him as the rightly guided guide.

O Allah, send blessings on him,

Much and more blessings than on the descendents of the Prophets,

.till Thy blessings enthrall him with joy and in the hereafter

Verily Thou art Almighty, All-Wise (al-Qummi 2004, pg. 718).

.May Allah (swt) forgive me for any mistakes or omissions in my humble writings