

Karbala Revitalized the True Islamic Spirit

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Imam Husain (a.s.): "Indeed, I did not revolt (against the tyrannical regime of Bani-Omayya) joyfully, arrogantly, to be an oppressor or a corrupted one, rather, I revolted persuading the reformation of the Islamic Ummah of my grandfather, the Prophet".

Unlike a hasty approach to the event of Karbala which may reflect the idea that the revolution of Imam Husain was unfulfilled and it was an unsuccessful struggle, when we carefully study the historical events after the tragedy of Karbala we will, no doubt, come to the conclusion that the revolution of Imam Husain was not only successful in its own nature, but was also the major cause of all the revolutionary movements which took place after Karbala. In fact, Karbala, in the history of Islam should be regarded as a turning point in the reforming of Muslims.

It was only after the tragedy of Karbala that Muslims were encouraged to revolt against all tyrannical regimes, especially the followers of Ahlul-Bait who found their ideal role model. 'When the Master of the youth of Paradise was willing to sacrifice his life and shed his blood to reform the corrupted society, of course my blood is not more respected than his'. Such medicine was injected into the semi-dead body of the whole Islamic Ummah by the revolution of Imam Husain. As a result, all salvation movements, initiated one after the other, right after the tragedy of Karbala were, and still are, inspired by the great revolution of Imam Husain (a.s.).

To this end, Karbala is the luminous torch of human salvation which is lighting forever the high peak of Islamic history to awaken all people throughout the ages.

The difference between Jesus & Imam Husain

Imam Husain and Jesus Christ have something in common. Both were reformers, and according to Christian belief, both were martyred. However, there is a main point which makes Imam Husain different from the Jesus of present Christianity, i.e. the martyrdom of Jesus in Christianity is a personal issue. Jesus, in Christian belief, has been crucified to save his believers.

There is no more responsibility on his followers. Whereas, our Imam Husain was martyred to awaken people, and his mission was not a personal mission. His role in the history of mankind is as a role model that must be followed, whereas the role of Jesus, according to Christianity,

was to descend to Earth as an embodiment of God, the Father, to be sacrificed for the guaranteed salvation of his believers. Jesus, according to this doctrine, is the personification of God and a ransom and hence his embodiment is impossible to be followed.

A Glance at some of the major revolutionary movements after Ashoora

There is no doubt that the martyrdom of Imam Husain had a great impact on the then Islamic Ummah. It was such a great catastrophe that shocked the whole Ummah, to the extent that it not only awakened many Muslims, but some of the Bani-Omayyah were also impressed by the tragedy of Karbala.

Historians such as Dr. Hassan Ibrahim in his book 'The History of Islam', Kharbotali in 'The History of Iraq', and Philip Hatti in 'The History of Arabs' have all asserted that the event of Ashoora increased drastically the number of Shiites, to the extent that as P. Hatti says: "We

may be able to claim that Shiite movements initiated from the tenth of Moharam 61 A.H."

Nicolson, the famous orientalist holds in his book 'The Political History of Islam' that "the tragedy of Karbala made Bani-Omayyah feel regretful for what they had done, for it united the Shiites to revenge unanimously, especially in areas such as Iraq and Iran, where the new Muslims would like to be rid of the influence of Arabs."

Mind you, the policy of race discrimination and the privilege given to Arabs by Bani-Omayyah, had annoyed many new Muslims. Among all Muslims, the followers of Ahlul-Bait were the first to be shocked. The following are some of the main revolutionary movements which took place after the tragedy of Karbala which were inspired by Ashoora.

1. The event of Harreh (The massacre of Madina):

All reliable historical sources have narrated this tragedy which took place almost 3 years after Ashoora.

Although right after the catastrophe of Karbala so many protests were mobilized against Yazid, Madina the centre of revelation and the main base of the Prophet (s.a.w.w) in which hundreds of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.w) were still living, rebelled against the tyrannical government of Bani-Ommaya. Abdullah son of Handhaleh (bathed by the angels)¹⁹ who later on led the movement, upon receiving the news of Karbala, paid a visit along with a delegation from Madina to Damascus, the capital of Yazid. He reported later on, out of what he had observed in Damascus, that the extent of the corruption had gone so far, he wouldn't be surprised if they were stoned in Damascus from the sky.

As a result, upon his arrival to Madina, he mobilized an army against the government. They

captured the House of the Governor in Madina, deported the governor, Othman Ibn Mohammad Ibn Abu-Sofyan from the city and declared an autonomy. By doing this, the first capital of Islam was released from the influence of Bani-Omayya. However, as soon as the news was reported to Syria, Yazid dispatched one of his most vicious and murderous officers named Muslim Ibn Aqabeh²⁰ along with his troops which consisted of 5000 soldiers to suppress the revolt.

In spite of a heroic defense from Madinians, the barbaric troops of Yazid ultimately conquered the city. According to Mas'udi, the famous historian, so many people including Bani-Hashim and the companions of the Prophet were killed.

In short, Yazid had permitted his troops to enjoy their total freedom for 3 days in Madina, meaning no chastity, no property and no blood was respected. Tens of pages in the history of early Islam consist of descriptions of the Massacre of Madina.

Handhaleh, the father of Abdullah was among the martyrs of the battle of Ohod who had just married one night before the battle. Since he had directly gone from his wedding night to the battle without having his ritual bath done, the Prophet gave him the title of 'being bathed by the angels'. Abdullah, his son was the only child he left behind as a result of the one and only communication he had with his wife.

Al-Fakhri in his History describes this bitter part of Islamic history as: during those 3 days, hundreds of the Prophet's companions were killed. The troops of Yazid entered the Masjidul-Nabi, and polluted the mosque. Around 900 girls were raped. For many years, Madinians would not guarantee the virginity of their daughters when marrying them.

By the way, although the people of Madina were defeated in that battle, the protesting flag was transferred to Mecca, where the Holy Mosque and the Qibla of Muslims were.

2. Revolution in Mecca

Right after the Massacre of Madina, Meccans had an uprising against the central government. Although this movement was also inspired by the revolution of Imam Husain, the leader of the revolution of Mecca, Abdullah Ibn Zobair, had no intention of vengeance for Imam Husain. In order for Yazid to suppress this movement too, he also ordered Muslim Ibn Aqabeh to attack Mecca, though Allah, the Almighty did not give him any further opportunity and he died on the way to Mecca.

At that stage, Hosain Ibn Nomayr, the murderer of Abbas at Karbala, led the army of Yazid. Ibn Zobair who failed to continue the defense, sought refuge in the Holy Mosque. However, the troops of Yazid had no respect and hence they started firing at the Mosque. As a result, the

curtains of the Mosque were set on fire and some parts of the walls of the Ka'ba were destroyed by fire. This event also took place in the year 63 A.H. and Yazid, the most vicious figure of Bani-Omayya's tyranny died 11 days after the event of Mecca. Apparently, Meccans again were defeated in that battle. However, the more the crimes of Bani-Omayya increased, the more the people rose up against Bani-Omayya. The kingdom of Bani-Omayya began shaking day by day until the beginning of the year 65 when the Bani-Omayya's dynasty fell into the rubbish bin of history forever.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) in Ziarat Arbaeen (Visiting on the 40th):
"Peace be on Husain; the oppressed, the martyr. Peace be on the captives of grief and those killed by the teardrops. O God! Indeed, I bear witness he granted the advice and sacrificed the blood of his heart for Thy sake, in order for him to rescue Thy servants from the ignorance and the perplexity of going astray".

In the previous meeting, I shared with you some of the impacts of the revolution of Imam Husain (a.s.) on the awareness of people. As I mentioned, the main task and the mission of the Imam was to awaken the Ummah and to make them realise that an ill fortune was awaiting them otherwise. His mission was not just to reform the then government. Imam Husain, along with all his ancestors, being the previous Imams or prophets, all carried the unique mission, i.e.:
to fight ignorance and save people from going astray.

Their mission, therefore, was to train reformers, and hence, the school of Karbala should be considered as a school of training reformers, for it is not enough to believe Imam Husain was only a social, as well as religious, reformer. His task was higher than that. He aimed at making people rise up against all types of oppression, corruption, alteration, and discrimination. To this end, he sacrificed all that he possessed to be an everlasting role model for all who have the ambition of reforming their corrupted society.

This fact is acknowledged by Imam Sadiq in his Ziarat (Visiting) on Arbaeen. According to his Ziarat, rescuing people from ignorance has been the main philosophy behind the tragedy of Karbala.

In the last meeting, I presented two examples of the rising up of the Ummah as a result of the tragedy of Karbala. The first was the massacre of Madina, and the second was the revolution in Mecca.

As a matter of fact, the impacts of the tragedy of Karbala on awakening the Ummah can be found right from the evening of Ashoora. On that evening, after the tents of Ahlul-Bait were plundered, a woman who happened to be the wife of a soldier from among the troops of Ibn-Ziad, perhaps was the first who shouted against the tyrannical regime of Bani-Ommaya

seeking revenge for Imam Husain. She bravely shouted: "O you who look like men! the clothes of the daughters of the Prophet are being seized, and yet no one protests?! Down with this secular government!"(Ibn Tawoos; Lohoof , p.132).

By the way, it was during the battle of Mecca that joyful news reached Mecca. Yazid, the tippler, the ruthless, died, ...off to hell. Husain Ibn Nomair, who had now lost his reason for fighting Ibn Zobair, compromised with him. As a result, Ibn Zobair after he was about to be defeated, took control of Mecca again.

Bani-Omayya After Yazid

After the death of Yazid in the year 64 AH. a serious dispute arose among the Bani-Omayya family as to who should come to the throne.

Mo'awia, the Second son of Yazid was appointed to be the Caliph. However, since he was so impressed by the crimes of both his father and grandfather, he addressed the people in his first public lecture saying: "O people! Indeed, my grandfather, Mo'awia, confronted Ali Ibn Abi Talib who deserved the caliphate and forced you to commit what you are aware of until he died, carrying his sins with himself forever. Then, my father came into power, a man who did not deserve his position.

He followed his desires though he didn't gain them until he died, also carrying his sins with himself forever." He then cried and refused the throne.(Balatheri; Ansabul-Ashraaf 4:61). At that time he was only around 20 years old and 40 days after his resignation he secretly died. After his death, Marwan Ibn Hakam, the cousin of Uthman, was deported from Madina along with the governor prior to the Massacre of Madina, who took advantage of the existing gap, came to Damascus and immediately married the widow of Yazid. He then forced Bani-Omayyeh to accept him in allegiance. From that time the Bani-Omayya dynasty declined forever.

Kofa and its Revolutions

In the beginning of these series of lectures, I, as many other historical analysts, castigated the Kofans for betraying their Imam after inviting him to Kofa. Although, the blame is accurate and many Kofans unfortunately broke their promises, it is inaccurate to believe that all Kofans turned against the Imam. According to Mamaqani around 4500 people were jailed in Kofa prior to the tragedy of Karbala. In any case, after the tragedy of Karbala, Kofans more than others felt guilt and regret, to the extent that according to some historians the city had become like a volcano ready for eruption.

1. The Movement of Tawabin

In general, the citizens of Kofa were divided into 3 categories:

1. Sincere Shiites who were very emotional and seeking revenge from Bani-Omayya. The main body of this group consisted of Yemenis, Iranians and other converts.
2. The partisans of Bani-Omayyah who were mainly Iraqi aristocrats from the clan of Modhar.

The majority of the troops of Ibn-Ziad in Karbala had been provided from this group.

3. Conservatives who always avoid whatever might disturb their material life, being their business or material comfort. This group, which is always found in all communities, plays neutral or hypocritical roles. Their doctrine is to make everyone happy. Their slogan is "live in a way that after your death both Muslims and Hindus attend your funeral whilst the first washes your corpse with the water of Zamzam and the second cremates it by fire."

The first group set a movement in motion named 'the Movement of Tawabin'(meaning Penitents).

This movement was lead by noble figures such as Solayman Ibn Sorad and Rofa'a Ibn Shaddad. They came to the belief that nothing can cleanse the sin of leaving Imam Husain alone but being killed for his revenge. The movement created a battle between Tawabin and the army of Ibn- Ziad in the year 65 A.H.

Tawabin, before going to the battle, visited Imam Husain's grave and those of other Martyrs of Karbala. In their grief they performed a mourning ceremony which caused many of them to lose consciousness.

A bloody fight occurred between Tawabin and the army of Ibn-Ziad in an area out of Kofa called Aynul-Warda. The number of Tawabin is estimated at around 4000 while the troops of Ibn-Ziad, some of which had already participated in the battle of Karbala, were roughly 30000 soldiers.

As a result, in spite of the courageous fighting of Tawabin most of them including their leader Solyman were martyred.

2. The Uprising of Mokhtar

The uprising of Mokhtar was the most successful movement after the tragedy of Karbala which took place in the year 66 A.H. Mokhtar, one of the devoted Iraqis of Imam Ali (a.s.), a noble figure in Iraq, who was jailed during the visit of Muslim Ibn Aqil in Kofa,was released from prison. His main mission and ambition was to seek revenge from all the criminals of Karbala.

During his one and a half years of ruling Iraq he rigorously sought and killed the main criminals

of Karbala. Those who had already proudly narrated the story of their crimes to the people, during the time of Mokhtar were executed one after the other. Omar Ibn Sa'd, Shemer, Harmale even Ibn-Ziad were all mercilessly executed by the order of Mokhtar.

Execution of Harmala, the murderer of the six month old baby

Taking into consideration that this meeting prohibits narration of the way in which all the criminals of Karbala were executed, I would like to bring my speech to an end by sharing with you in a few words a description of the worldly punishment of Harmale, the murderer of the infant of Imam Husain.

Menhal Ibn Amr from Kofa, one of the followers of Imam Sajjad (a.s.) quoted: "in the year 66 when Mokhtar was in power in Iraq and was executing the murderers of Karbala one after the other, I made a pilgrimage to Hajj. After performing the Hajj ceremony, I went to Madina to visit Imam Sajjad. The Imam asked me about Harmale. I replied that he was still alive when I was last in Kofa.

Imam Sajjad raised up both of his hands praying: 'O God! let him taste the burning of the iron, let him taste the burning of the iron, let him taste the burning of the fire.'" All the criminals of Karbala were of course cruel, but Harmale was the most vicious figure among them all. The way Imam Sajjad was praying to God to punish him will reflect to us the bereaved heart of the Imam.

Menhal said: "I came back home. Mokhtar was busy finding the murderers. I went to see him and found him with his soldiers at the city's round-about waiting for someone. As a matter of fact, he had been informed about the hiding place of Harmale. A few minutes later some of his soldiers came back cheerfully bringing Harmale with them. Mokhtar commanded his soldiers to immediately prepare him for execution. He was of course sentenced to death and yet it was the least punishment a devil like him could have received.

However, prior to carrying out the decree he was given a chance to confess and narrate the details of his crime. He said:

"On the day of Ashoora I had three special poisoned arrows. The first I pierced through the fragile neck of the baby of Husain. I fired the second at the heart of Imam Husain after he had taken away his shirt wiping up his injured forehead. And the third one..."

Imam Hasan (a.s.) had three sons who all participated in Karbala. Hasan Mothana, the oldest one, Qasim the middle one, and Abdullah the youngest one. On the day of Ashoora, Abdullah was about 10 years old.

In fact, he was born when his father, Imam Hasan was just martyred. Because of his age, he

was kept along with the other children inside the tents. However, in the last minutes of the life of Imam Husain, when he heard the painful voice of his dear uncle calling for help, he ran away from inside the tent. He reached Imam Husain as a criminal was about to hit the Imam with his sword. Abdullah raised up his little hand to stop the devil. As a result his hand was chopped off. The orphan of Imam Hasan yelled sorrowfully and yet dropped himself on the Imam, saving the uncle who had always been as kind to him just as a father. At that very moment, Harmale confessed later on that, he targeted Abdullah with his last .poisoned arrow and brutally killed him on the bosom of his uncle