

3- IMAM HOSSEIN (AS): THE PROPHET'S NATION'S AWAKENER

This chapter reviews the major historical events of the life of Imam Hossein (AS) and gives a preview of the complicated, political, and unfortunate series of events that led to his martyrdom.

3-1-With his Grandfather, the Prophet

3-1-1-Birth

Imam Hossein (AS) was born on the third of Sha'ban in the fourth year of Hijri in Medina. He was the second child of Imam Ali (AS) and Lady Fatimah (SA) after Imam Hasan (AS), and the second grandchild of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The age difference between Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein was less than 11 months. After his birth, the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and said, "O' Prophet, Ali to you is like Haroon was to Musa, so name this child the name of Haroon's younger son, Shubair, which in Arabic is Hossein." After the Holy Prophet whispered the Azan in the baby's ears, he had tears in his eyes. He said, "This child will be killed by a group of rebellious and cruel men to whom God has forbidden my intercession (shifa'at)." The Prophet also performed similar traditions for the newborn as he did for Imam Hasan, such as sacrificing two animals, shaving the baby's head, and paying silver equivalent to the weight of the baby's hair to charity.

3-1-2-With his Grandfather

The Holy Prophet had a special place in his heart for both of his grandsons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, who are, according to the verse of Tat-heer (Purification) [33:33], a part of his household, and are purified. The Prophet encouraged all of the believers to love and respect his household as the verse [42:23] from the Holy Quran states, "I do not ask you for any reward except love for (my) kin." The Prophet said, "Hasan and Hossein are the leaders of the youth of Paradise" and are Imams whether they are sitting or standing, implying whether they are at peace, or at war against injustice. The Prophet also said, "Hossein is from me and I am from Hossein."

There are a few incidents when the Prophet treated Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as adults, honoring them with a special social status despite their young age. One such incident is when the Prophet accepted them as witnesses for the treaty with the Thaqif tribe and accepted their allegiances in the allegiance of Rizwan. This was a

privilege that no child ever had during the Prophet's history.

3-1-3-Mubahilah (Cursing of the Untruthful)²⁸

The Christians of Najran refused to accept Islam after discussing Christianity with the Holy Prophet but were willing to do Mubahilah or cursing of the untruthful. To the surprise of the Christians, the Holy Prophet did not bring an army or his companions. Instead, he brought his family, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. After seeing the Prophet's family, the Christians felt discouraged from doing Mubahilah. The verse of the Mubahilah [3:61] was then revealed, calling Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein the sons of the Holy Prophet.

3-1-4-Demise of the Prophet²⁹

Imam Hossein was six years old at the Prophet's demise, and was present by his bedside. During his last moments, the Prophet hugged his grandsons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, and said that they both would be oppressed after him and would be killed cruelly. The Prophet then cursed anyone who would oppress them three times.

3-2-During the Three Caliphs

3-2-1-Martyrdom of Lady Fatimah³⁰

Lady Fatimah (SA), the only surviving daughter of the Holy Prophet, was martyred within a few months after the demise of the Holy Prophet. The attack on her house in an attempt to forcefully gain allegiance from Imam Ali for the first caliph left Lady Fatimah fatally injured, causing the miscarriage of her baby and her eventual passing. Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein witnessed this injustice and were present at the secret burial of their mother at night.

3-2-2-During the Third Caliph

²⁸ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 5)

²⁹ 28 Safar, 11 AH (Imam's age: 6)

³⁰ 13 Jumada al-Awwal/3 Jumada al-Thani, 11 AH (Imam's age: 6)

3- Imam Hossein (AS): The Prophet's Nation's Awakener

Abu-Zar, a companion of the Prophet, objected to the luxurious overspending of the third caliph's government. The Caliph exiled him and ordered that no one accompany him. However, Imam Ali, his brother Aqeel, Imam Hasan, Imam Hossein, and Ammar went to bid farewell to Abu-Zar. Imam Hossein expressed his sympathy and provided him with comforting words.

When the Caliph's house was surrounded by people objecting to his unjust government, Imam Ali sent a group from Banu Hashim, including his sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, to protect the Caliph.

3-3-During the Caliphate of Imam Ali (AS)

3-3-1-Battle of Jamal (Camel)³¹

Imam Hossein always accompanied his father during his caliphate and supported him in all circumstances. Imam Hossein was a brave and courageous warrior in the Battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan. He also advised and delivered wise speeches on many occasions, and encouraged people to join the war and to support his father. During the Battle of Jamal, Imam Ali appointed Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as the leaders of the right and left sections of his army, respectively.

3-3-2-Battle of Siffin³²

Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein had key roles in preparing and recruiting the army in the war against Muawiyah. They delivered impactful speeches to encourage participation in the war and also contributed in organizing and training the army.

When Imam Ali left Kufa with his troops for the Battle of Siffin, he stopped at the land of Karbala. Imam Ali was deeply sorrowful and cried. He informed Imam Hossein about his martyrdom on that land.

³¹ 10 Jumada al-Awwal, 36 AH (Imam's age: 31)

³² 1 Safar, 37 AH (Imam's age: 32)

Before the Battle of Siffin, when Muawiyah's troops blocked access to water for Imam Ali's troops, Imam Ali sent Imam Hossein with his troops and successfully regained access. Imam Ali said, "This first victory is due to the blessings of the presence of Imam Hossein."

During the battle, Imam Ali appointed Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as the leaders of the right side of his army, and they fought courageously. Imam Hossein was also appointed as one of his father's witnesses during the negotiation after the battle.

Towards the end of Imam Ali's life, he was preparing an army to go against Muawiyah. He appointed Imam Hossein as the leader for 10,000 soldiers. Unfortunately, after Imam Ali's martyrdom, the army lost its unity.

3-3-3-Martyrdom of Imam Ali³³

After Imam Ali was struck, he appointed Imam Hasan to take care of his personal affairs and introduced him as the next Imam to his followers. These followers are known as Shias. He also appointed Imam Hossein as the next Imam after Imam Hasan. Imam Hasan, Imam Hossein, and a few others buried Imam Ali secretly at night for fear of revenge and insults from his enemies. The progeny of the Prophet had to face atrocities, which Imam Hossein witnessed, such as the secret nighttime burials of his mother and father.

3-4-During the Caliphate of Imam Hasan (AS)

3-4-1-With his Brother

When Imam Hasan became the caliph, Imam Hossein paid allegiance to his brother. He was Imam Hasan's right hand during the short caliphate that lasted less than seven months. Imam Hossein had a key role in the preparation of the army, and was with his brother when they moved to Madain for the war against Muawiyah.

³³ 21 Ramazan, 40 AH (Imam's age: 36)

3- Imam Hossein (AS): The Prophet's Nation's Awakener

When Imam Hasan had to accept the peace treaty with Muawiyah due to lack of support from his army, Imam Hossein obeyed his brother's decision and accepted the peace treaty. Imam Hossein refused a group of Shia followers who asked him to wage war against Muawiyah, and notified them of his adherence to his brother's decision. After the peace treaty with Muawiyah, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein returned to Medina.

3-4-2-Martyrdom of Imam Hasan³⁴

When Imam Hasan was poisoned, in his will to Imam Hossein he requested to be buried near his grandfather, the Prophet. Imam Hasan did not want any bloodshed during his burial, and in case of any opposition, he requested to be buried near his grandmother, Fatimah bint Asad, in the Baqi' cemetery.

On the first day as an Imam, Imam Hossein faced a challenge during the burial of his brother. Marwan ibn al-Hakam and his troops, with support from Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives, did not allow Imam Hasan's body to get close to the Prophet's tomb. In the conflict between the people and the troops, many arrows were fired towards Imam Hasan's body. Imam Hossein controlled the situation and directed the crowd towards the Baqi' cemetery by reminding them of Imam Hasan's will.

3-5-During the Government of Muawiyah

3-5-1-Resistance Against Muawiyah

The conflict during Imam Hasan's burial was a strong message to Imam Hossein from the Umayyads, that in case of any opposition, he would be faced with their swords. During Muawiyah's time, Imam Hossein's life and activities were under intense pressure and surveillance by the government to the extent that even his supporters were sometimes

³⁴ 28 Safar, 50 AH (Imam's age: 45)

prevented from meeting him freely. Due to this pressure, the number of narrations quoted from Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein during Muawiyah's time are fewer than those from the other Shia Imams.

Imam Hossein continued his brother's policy regarding Muawiyah for around 10 years until Muawiyah's death. When the Imam's Shia followers from Kufa contacted him shortly after Imam Hasan's martyrdom and asked for his uprising against the injustices of Muawiyah, the Imam reminded them about his commitment to the peace treaty and asked them to wait until Muawiyah's death. If the Imam would have risen in Muawiyah's time, Muawiyah would have killed the Imam and accused him of violating the peace treaty. As a result, the Imam's death would have been misinterpreted by the Muslim community.

The Imam's commitment to the peace treaty did not stop him from objecting to Muawiyah's crimes and violations against the treaty's conditions. In many situations, the Imam contacted Muawiyah and condemned his actions, such as the killings of the Shia leaders and the Prophet's companions, Hujr ibn Adi and Amr ibn Hameq.

Imam Hossein was respected for being the closest living blood relative to the Prophet, and he was a symbol of piety in society. The Imam used all opportunities to guide the Muslims to the true Islamic teachings. He performed the Hajj 25 times on foot during his lifetime. His famous supplication of Arafah is narrated during this time.

3-5-2-Allegiance for Yazid

After years of being in power, Muawiyah decided to keep the government within the Umayyads by passing it to his only son, Yazid. For the first time since the Prophet's demise, Muawiyah intended to change the system of government from a caliphate to a monarchy. Muawiyah himself knew that Yazid lacked public popularity as he did not even keep an Islamic outlook in life like himself. Yazid publicly drank alcohol, womanized, and indulged in sinful behavior.

In order to get the allegiances for Yazid, Muawiyah poisoned and bribed

Yazid's main rivals for the caliphate. Muawiyah martyred Imam Hasan, as he knew that appointing a successor was explicitly against their peace treaty. Muawiyah tried bribing some of the political leaders, commanded some to advocate for Yazid as a good leader, and removed those governors who failed to implement this mission.

After years of planning, he finally succeeded in accumulating allegiances from people all around the Islamic territory. However, Imam Hossein refused to pledge allegiance. Muawiyah sent a letter to Imam Hossein, to which the Imam responded by condemning his actions to coerce allegiance for a successor, especially for someone like Yazid. Muawiyah then decided to personally visit Medina and made a public speech in which he spoke highly of Yazid to encourage the people to pledge allegiance to him. Imam Hossein interrupted the speech and disqualified Yazid, rejecting allegiance to someone of his character. Thus, Imam Hossein remained Yazid's primary opposition.

3-6-During the Government of Yazid

3-6-1-The Imam in Medina

Muawiyah died³⁵ after being in power for nearly 42 years. He was initially appointed by the second caliph as the governor of Syria, and was in control of the entire Islamic territory for around 20 years after the peace treaty was established with Imam Hasan.

After Muawiyah's death, his son, Yazid, came into power. Yazid sent letters to his governors, asking them to announce Muawiyah's death and demand allegiance from the people on his behalf. He sent an additional letter to Medina, in which he ordered his governor, Valeed, to demand immediate allegiance for him from Imam Hossein before the news of Muawiyah's death spread in the city. Yazid explicitly asked Valeed to either get the Imam's allegiance, or to send the Imam's severed head to him.

³⁵ 15 Rajab, 60 AH (Imam's age: 55)

In his efforts to get the Imam's allegiance, Valeed called the Imam to his palace. The Imam was suspicious of this meeting. He went with approximately 30 men from his family and supporters for protection. He told them to hide their swords, to stay behind the door, and to intervene only when he called. Inside, Valeed told the Imam about Muawiyah's death, and asked for the Imam's allegiance to Yazid. The Imam responded by saying that someone like him should not pay allegiance in private, but in public. Valeed accepted this statement and let the Imam go, as he did not want to bear the responsibility of killing the Imam. On the following day, the Imam notified Valeed about his refusal to pay allegiance to Yazid. Valeed reported back to Yazid, who responded by threatening Valeed and ordering him to force allegiance from the Imam.

3-6-2-Migration to Mecca

Imam Hossein knew that Medina was no longer safe for him, as Yazid would take drastic measures to eliminate him. The Imam did not want his death to be forgotten silently similar to the injustice that happened to Imam Hasan. Thus, the Imam decided to leave Medina, and migrated to Mecca in less than three days after his meeting with Valeed. The Imam decided to migrate with his family, as it was very likely that the government would imprison them as hostages to pressurize the Imam for allegiance.

Prior to migrating, the Imam bid farewell to his relatives and visited the tombs of his grandfather, the Prophet, as well as his mother, Lady Fatimah, and his brother, Imam Hasan. The Imam wrote a will and entrusted it to his brother, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah. In his will, the Imam clearly explained the purpose of his uprising. The Imam wrote, "My intention for this uprising is to guide the nation of my grandfather and enjoin the good and forbid the wrong."

The Imam left Medina at night while reciting the verse of the Quran that Prophet Moses was reciting when he was escaping alone from Egypt to Madyan in the fear of the pharaoh [28:21], "Therefore he got away from there while in fear. He (Moses) said, 'Oh My Lord, save me

from the wrongdoing people’.”

On his way to Mecca, the Imam met some travelers and informed them of his intention to refuse allegiance to Yazid. A few of these travelers joined the Imam. When the Imam saw Mecca from afar³⁶, he recited the verse of Quran that Prophet Moses had said when he was moving towards Madyan [28:22], “And when he directed himself toward Madyan, he said, ‘Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the sound way’.”

Later, when Yazid was informed about the Imam’s migration to Mecca, he revoked the governor of Medina in anger and assigned the duty to the governor of Mecca.

3-6-3-The Imam in Mecca

While in Mecca, the Imam was visited day and night by many pilgrims who had come to Mecca for Umrah and Hajj. The Imam spoke to them about his intention for uprising against Yazid, but the Imam had limited support from the Meccans. Mecca was dominated by the Quraysh tribe, who had opposed the Prophet ever since he began his mission. The majority of them did not convert to Islam until after the conquest of Mecca by the Prophet. Furthermore, they had hatred towards Imam Ali, as the Imam had killed their relatives during their wars against the Prophet.

When the people of Kufa found out that the Imam had not paid allegiance to Yazid and had migrated to Mecca, they decided to invite the Imam to Kufa, and pledged to support his uprising against Yazid. A flood of letters arrived to the Imam from Kufa. In just one day, the Imam received around 600 letters from Kufa, with a total of about 12,000 letters. The Imam had many Shia followers in Kufa and they had more political freedom. Kufa was a bigger city than Mecca or Medina, with a larger population and potential for troops. It was the main center of opposition to the Umayyads since the caliphate of Imam Ali. Thus, the Imam sent his cousin, Muslim ibn Aqeel, to investigate whether the

³⁶ 3 Sha’ban, 60 AH (Imam’s age: 56)

Kufans were sincere in their intentions.

To fulfill his responsibilities, the Imam also sent letters to the tribal leaders of Basrah to ask for their support. Unlike the Kufans, the people from Basrah had not contacted the Imam prior to this. Only a small group of people from Basrah joined the Imam. One recipient of the Imam's letter took the letter to Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Basrah. In response, the governor ordered to kill the Imam's messenger, Sulayman ibn Razin, who became the first martyr of the Imam's uprising.

3-6-4-Muslim ibn Aqeel in Kufa

Muslim ibn Aqeel arrived in Kufa and 18,000 people paid allegiance to him on behalf of the Imam. He informed the Imam of this, and asked him to come towards Kufa immediately. People were continuously coming to Muslim for giving allegiance and a total of up to 40,000 people paid allegiance.

Yazid's supporters were continuously reporting the political status of Kufa to Yazid, and wanted him to replace the current governor of Kufa with a hostile one. Yazid thus gave the governorship of Kufa to Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Basrah, and ordered him to suppress the uprising of the Kufans.

Ibn Ziyad immediately departed towards Kufa and, upon arrival, he delivered a speech in the mosque during which he introduced himself as the new governor of Kufa. He promised kindness to the obedient citizens and threatened the supporters of Muslim. Ibn Ziyad also asked the city's record keepers to provide him with a list of all the politically active residents that were in support of Muslim's uprising. He also spread rumors in the city that Yazid's army was underway to suppress them.

Ideally, Muslim wanted the Imam to arrive before initiating the uprising. He secretly relocated to Haani ibn Urwah's house, who was an influential Shia leader. However, Ibn Ziyad's spies found Muslim's location and arrested Haani. People from Haani's tribe came in large numbers to Ibn Ziyad's palace to free him. The city's judge, whom the

3- Imam Hossein (AS): The Prophet's Nation's Awakener

people trusted, lied to them by telling them that Haani was safe and would be released soon, leading his supporters to disperse.

Muslim noticed his supporters dividing and scattering. With a governor like Ibn Ziyad, no one, including himself, would be safe in Kufa. Thus, Muslim started an uprising to release Haani by calling his supporters. As a result, nearly 4,000 people surrounded Ibn Ziyad's palace.

Ibn Ziyad ordered the elderly and influential individuals of Kufa to make promises to the people in obedience to the government, and to create fear in the hearts of the protesters by threatening them with a war against the army of Yazid. This fear caused families to separate their relatives from Muslim's army. The number of Muslim's supporters dwindled so drastically by nightfall, that Muslim was left completely alone. Eventually, Muslim was caught by Ibn Ziyad and martyred. Ibn Ziyad then ordered Haani to be killed, and sent Haani's and Muslim's heads to Yazid.

After Ibn Ziyad gained complete control over Kufa, he imprisoned many Shia leaders and followers, and threatened thousands of the Kufans into joining his army. He also blocked all access roads from Kufa to the Imam so no one from Kufa could join the Imam.

3-6-5-The Imam Towards Kufa

After receiving the letter from Muslim, the Imam left Mecca in the darkness of dawn on the 8th of the month of Zu al-Hijjah, one day before the Hajj pilgrimage started. This day coincided with the day of Muslim's uprising and defeat in Kufa. The Imam left Mecca as he verified news that Yazid was planning his assassination while the pilgrims would be performing Hajj, and would not be carrying any weapons. The Imam did not want his blood to be shed in the vicinity of the Holy Ka'ba due to the sanctity of the holy site. The Imam told some people that he preferred that his blood be shed outside, as opposed to inside the holy site's vicinity. Thus, the Imam left Mecca with a caravan, whose count is estimated by some to be about 130 people, after staying there for four months and five days.

When the Imam was leaving Mecca, the Meccan army stopped him. There was a physical tension between the two sides. The Meccan governor finally withdrew in fear of turmoil from the Hajj pilgrims. When the Imam left Mecca, the governor of Mecca sent a letter to the Imam and asked him to return to Mecca, which he refused.

Shortly after leaving Mecca, the Imam sent a messenger to Muslim to inform him of his departure towards Kufa. The Imam's messenger, Abdullah ibn Yaqtar, was arrested, and Ibn Ziyad ordered that Abdullah ibn Yaqtar be thrown off the roof of the palace, and martyred him. Halfway through his journey, the Imam sent another messenger, Qays ibn Mos-her, towards Muslim, but he too was arrested. Ibn Ziyad asked him to go to the pulpit and curse the Imam. Qays went on the pulpit and told the people that the Imam was underway, and cursed Ibn Ziyad. He was then martyred, similar to Abdullah ibn Yaqtar, and became the third martyred messenger of the Imam.

The Imam advanced forward at a very fast pace in the desert towards Kufa. This distance would normally take around one month for the travelers. On his way, he informed the travelers about his intention of the uprising against Yazid. Some people such as Zuhayr ibn Qayn, a famous warrior, as well as the Christian, Wahab, who converted to Islam, joined the Imam on his way.

The Imam had traveled most of the way towards Kufa for about 15 days. At the place known as Zubala, which is in the modern day border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the Imam received verified news of the martyrdom of Muslim, Haani, and Abdullah ibn Yaqtar. The Imam spoke to his supporters about the crisis in Kufa and allowed them to leave him. Many who had joined the Imam for power or political convenience separated from the Imam at this location.

There was no place for Imam Hossein, the dear grandson of the Prophet to go. It was as if the earth had shrunk for him. He had initially left Medina towards Mecca because Yazid had ordered his governor in Medina to force the Imam's allegiance, or kill him. The Imam had then left Mecca towards Kufa, as Yazid had sent his agents to assassinate him

3- Imam Hossein (AS): The Prophet's Nation's Awakener

during the Hajj pilgrimage. Now, in the middle of the vast desert between Hijaz and Iraq, the Imam had received disappointing news from Kufa.

The Imam decided to continue on his way towards Kufa, as he knew that his presence in Kufa would be much more effective than Muslim's. He believed he might still have an opportunity to unify his Shia followers, who had been divided for a long time by Muawiyah's politics. There was also a possibility that many other non-Shias, who had invited the Imam to Kufa, would change sides.

After a few days, the Imam was confronted by a Kufan army of about 1,000 horse riders under the leadership of Hurr with orders to arrest the Imam. The Imam resisted, and decided to return to Medina since he was left with no choice. Hurr opposed him, and stated his orders were to not leave the Imam alone under any circumstances. He told the Imam that he did not have an order for war, and gave the Imam two choices, to surrender and come with him to Kufa before Ibn Ziyad, or to go somewhere other than Kufa and Medina. Thus, the Imam had to redirect his caravan away from Kufa.

After a few days, Hurr received a letter from Ibn Ziyad in which he ordered Hurr to stop the Imam in the desert away from any residential areas. Therefore, on the second day of Muharram, the Imam entered the land of Karbala. Some of the Imam's companions suggested starting a war with the army of Hurr before any reinforcements joined him, but the Imam declined, as he did not want to initiate the war.

3-6-6-The Imam in Karbala

On the third day of Muharram, Umar ibn Sa'ad arrived in Karbala with 4,000 troops, and took away the leadership of the Kufan army from Hurr. Umar ibn Sa'ad was hesitant to come to Karbala, but Ibn Ziyad threatened his candidacy for governorship of Rey in Iran so he accepted. The Kufan army was arriving by the thousands each day. By the sixth day of Muharram, the Kufan army was complete at around 22,000 to 35,000 soldiers.

During this time, the Shia followers in Kufa were no longer united and had lost the power of unity. The majority of them were either in prison or hiding to save their lives and avoid joining the Kufan army. If they were forcefully recruited, they would escape before arriving in Karbala. According to some narrations, up to around 32 soldiers from the Kufan army joined the Imam in Karbala.

Over several days, the Imam held a few meetings with Umar ibn Sa'ad, during which he tried to warn him to avoid bloodshed and allow the Imam to return. Umar ibn Sa'ad wrote a letter to Ibn Ziyad and encouraged him to accept the Imam's offer.

Ibn Ziyad ordered Umar ibn Sa'ad to block access to the water from the Euphrates River to put more pressure on the Imam to pay allegiance. Thus, by the beginning of the seventh day of Muharram, the Imam did not have access to water.

On the ninth day of Muharram, Umar ibn Sa'ad received a letter from Ibn Ziyad, denying his proposal to avoid a war and threatening to replace him with Shimr if he failed to finish the Imam. Ibn Ziyad also asked Umar ibn Sa'ad explicitly to trample the Imam's body after his victory. Thus, after the afternoon prayers, Umar ibn Sa'ad prepared his army for war, where the Imam sent his brother, Abbas, to postpone the war until the next day's morning. Umar ibn Sa'ad accepted with hopes that the Imam would surrender.

At nightfall, the Imam delivered a speech to his companions and informed them that everyone who would stay with him would certainly be killed the next day in the war. The Imam appreciated them for being loyal to him, and informed them that their presence would not prevent his death. He urged them to use the darkness of the night to leave from his side, and asked each of them to take the hand of one of his male family members. The Imam's companions expressed their unwavering loyalty and no one left the Imam.

That night, the Imam asked his companions to rearrange the tents and to dig a trench behind the tents. He asked them to fill the trench with

wood and leaves. The Imam and his companions spent that night in prayer, and prepared for the war.

3-6-7-Tenth of Muharram (the Day of Ashura)³⁷

On the morning of Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram in the year 61 Hijri, after the morning prayers, the Imam prepared his thirsty army of 72 companions, which consisted of 40 soldiers on foot and 32 on horses. The Imam then ordered the trench behind the tents to be put on fire so that the enemy could not attack them from behind.

The Imam spoke to the Kufan army, reminding them that he was the grandson of the Prophet, and was very dear to him. He told them that he had arrived because of their invitations. He told them that if they did not want him in Kufa, he would go back to somewhere safe. The Imam also asked them if anyone wanted to join him.

Hurr, the army leader who had first confronted the Imam, was amongst the very few people who was touched by the Imam's words and decided to switch sides and joined the Imam. Hurr repented and requested to be sent to the battlefield immediately. The Imam accepted Hurr's repentance and allowed him to go into the battlefield.

Umar ibn Sa'ad was the first person to start the battle by firing an arrow. He asked his army to witness for Ibn Ziyad that he had initiated the war. His troops followed by firing thousands of arrows and then invaded the Imam's army. By that time, up to around 50 of the Imam's companions, a large fraction of his army, were martyred. No one from the Imam's companions were left without an injury caused by an arrow.

Only a small group of the Imam's companions remained alive against the thousands of enemy soldiers. The Imam's companions proceeded to the battlefield one by one and fought courageously with great honor. They were completely surrounded, but did not surrender until they were martyred, one after the other.

The battle continued until noon. The Imam called his companions for

³⁷ 10 Muharram, 61 AH (Imam's age: 56)

the prayer and shortened it by reciting the prayer of fear. The groups of companions protecting the Imam switched amongst each other, so that when one group of them prayed, the other groups protected them. During the Imam's prayer, many arrows were shot to stop the Imam, as Umar ibn Sa'ad did not want his army to know that the Imam was a practicing and dedicated Muslim. According to their propaganda, any action against the caliph violated the religion.

The Imam's companions did not allow any member of the Imam's family to go to the battlefield while they remained alive. After all of them were martyred, a total of 17 members from the family of the Imam went to the battlefield one after another, including his son, Ali al-Akbar, seven of his brothers, including Abbas, his nephews such as Aun, Muhammad, and Qasim, and his cousins.

Towards the end of the battle, the Imam came to the tents to bid farewell to his family. He saw his six-month old son, Ali al-Asghar, who was suffering from unbearable thirst. The Imam carried Ali al-Asghar to the Kufan army and requested them to take the baby and grant him some water. At that moment, an arrow shot by Harmalah pierced the neck of the baby while he was in the Imam's hands.

The Imam went to the battlefield and spoke to the army one last time to convey his message, but their hearts could not be guided. The Imam then went to the battlefield alone and after a brave combat, he fell with wounds from hundreds of swords, spears, stones, and arrows on his body. No one dared to go and kill the Imam, as no one wanted to bear the shame and responsibility of killing the Imam. Finally, Sinan ibn Anas approached the Imam and beheaded him from the back of the Imam's neck while he was still alive.

After the Imam was martyred, his sword, shoes, ring, clothes, armor, and all of his belongings were looted. His tents were attacked, looted, and put on fire.

To fulfill Ibn Ziyad's order, Umar ibn Sa'ad asked for volunteers to trample the headless bodies of the Imam and the other martyrs on the

sands of Karbala.

The women and children of the Imam were taken as captives to Kufa to Ibn Ziyad's palace, then to Damascus to Yazid's palace.

3-7-Conclusion

Only 50 years after the demise of the Holy Prophet, the leader of the Muslim nation was a man who did not abide by any of the Islamic commandments and openly indulged in sinful behavior. Yazid's family, the Umayyads, with the leadership of his grandfather, Abu-Sufyan, were the main enemy of the Prophet and had only converted to Islam after Muslims had conquered their home city of Mecca, solely to save their lives. They were not sincere in their belief in Islam, and were always looking for their power and benefits. They had the chance to reach power during the time of the second and third caliphs, and were able to stabilize their power during the long governorship of Muawiyah.

The title that Muslims used for the caliph was literally 'Successor of the Prophet', and they also called the caliph the 'Commander of the Faithful'. Muslims viewed the caliphate as a sacred religious leadership and believed in political obedience despite the character of the person in power. This belief was deeply rooted, to the extent that following the legacy of the previous caliphs was part of their faith, and a requirement for the new caliph. In this situation, any action against the caliph was interpreted as a false action against the unity of the Muslims and publicly condemned.

Imam Hossein knew that he had only two choices, pay allegiance to Yazid, or be killed. The Imam had said, "Even if I hide inside a hole, they will finally find me and kill me if I don't pay allegiance." However, the Imam knew that his allegiance would legitimize Yazid as a leader, as well as the Islam propagated by Muawiyah and the Umayyads. Therefore, the Imam pursued the second choice, and sacrificed everything he had for the sake of God and the awakening of the Prophet's nation. He was martyred in an unprecedented, horrifying, and

brutal way, where his family and companions were martyred thirsty, his six month old baby slayed, his head slaughtered, his belongings looted, his ring finger cut off, his body trampled, his family imprisoned, all in the holy month of Muharram, when war and bloodshed was strictly forbidden (Haram) in Islam.

The Imam made a series of wise decisions to maximize the effects of his martyrdom. The Imam's choice to move from Medina to Mecca, to informing the pilgrims from all over the Islamic territories, accompanying his family (women and children) to witness and carry his message, postponing the battle from the darkness of the night to the daylight of Ashura, and his martyrdom in front of thousands of witnesses, these were all reasons that his message would never be forgotten or misinterpreted.

The Imam's martyrdom not only disqualified Yazid as a righteous caliph, but for the first time since the Prophet's demise, put an end to the so-called sacred caliphate system and the Islam that was propagated by those caliphs. Shortly after the Imam's martyrdom, a chain of objections against Yazid and the Umayyads initiated, which included the battle of al-Harrah in Medina, the uprising of Ibn Zubayr in Mecca, the uprising of Tawwabin in Kufa, the uprising in Kufa of Mokhtar, who took revenge against the people responsible for the Imam's martyrdom, the uprising of Zaid in Kufa, and the uprising of Yahya in Khorasan. Although these uprisings were defeated by the Umayyads, they removed the legitimacy and popularity of the Umayyads as the righteous governors and were a basis for the next uprising against them, until their destruction. The awakened nation of the Prophet realized that the true Islamic teachings were coming from the family of the Prophet, and they supported various uprisings against the Umayyads.

Imam Hossein was called Sayyid al-Shuhada or 'Master of the Martyrs', and became a symbol of justice, free will, and liberty. To this day, the message of Imam Hossein continues to resonate. Despite many difficulties and attempts at suppression, millions of people shed tears while grieving him, and visit his shrine in Karbala to honor his message.

3- Imam Hossein (AS): The Prophet's Nation's Awakener

They hope to include themselves as proponents of justice alongside Imam Hossein.

IMAM HOSSEIN (AS):

“I am the martyr of tears.

No believer remembers me unless

his tears begin to flow.”