

# What happened after Karbalā?

## Introduction

This is a brief paper charting the events that took place after the tragic yet selfless martyrdom of Imām al-Husayn, may Allāh be pleased with him. As much as possible, I have depended on reliable sources such as *Tārīkh al-Khulafā* (Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 911 A.H./1505 C.E.)), *Tārīkh al-Tabarī* (Abū Ja'far Muhammad Jarīr al-Tabarī (d. 923/1517)), *Tārīkh al-Islām* (Hāfiz Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348)) and *al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya* (Hāfiz ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)).

## 1. In Karbalā and Kūfa

After Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him) was martyred, the enemies took all of his belongings and looted his tents. They even took the blanket used by the wife, sister and daughters of Imām al-Husayn. Shamir saw Imām al-Husayn's young son Alī ibn al-Husayn (Zayn al-Ābidīn) there who was small and ill. He was about to kill him too when Humayd ibn Muslim prevented him from doing so.<sup>1</sup>

All of the family members were rounded up and taken into custody.

Shamir collected the blessed head of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him) and instructed Khawla ibn Yazīd and Humayd ibn Muslim to take it to Ibn Ziyād's palace in Kūfa. Night had already fallen, so Khawla decided to take the blessed head with him home that night.

When Khawla reached home, he told his wife that he had brought home the blessed head of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him). She replied in anger: 'People bring back bags of money when they go away; and you bring back the head of the grandson of the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him)?' She refused to speak to him and slept in another part of the house. It is reported that in the morning, she saw a radiant light emit from the box containing the head of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him), and fluttering white birds were surrounding it.<sup>2</sup>

In the morning, the blessed head was presented to Ibn Ziyād in his palace. He had a cane in his hand and began to poke the mouth of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him). A Companion called Zayd ibn Arqam was nearby and saw this atrocious behaviour. He cried: 'Do not poke those lips! For I have seen those same lips kissed by the Messenger of Allāh (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him)!'<sup>3</sup>

A day later, Shamir brought the remaining family members of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him) in front of Ibn Ziyād. He showed no respect

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<sup>1</sup> p. 51. *The History of Karbalā*. Abū Ammar.

<sup>2</sup> p. 51. *The History of Karbalā*. Abū Ammar.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

towards them and in fact taunted them. Like Shamir before him, Ibn Ziyād was intent on killing Zayn al-Ābidīn. But others convinced him that he was the only male *Mahram* for the women.<sup>4</sup>

Not content with insulting the Ahl al-Bayt in the palace, Ibn Ziyād used the Friday sermon to insult Sayyiduna Alī (may Allāh be pleased with him). One Companion called Abd Allāh ibn Afif Azdī stood up and cried: ‘You have martyred the grandson of the Prophet and you are talking like you have done a good deed!’ Ibn Ziyād had the Companion crucified in the mosque.<sup>5</sup>

After the sermon, Ibn Ziyād ordered for a parade in the streets of Kūfa of the blessed head of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him), which had been placed on a long spear. Zayn al-Ābidīn and the women were shackled onto camels, forced to unveil themselves and they too were paraded around the streets of Kūfa.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. The journey to Damascus**

The remaining family and the blessed head of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him) was brought to Yazīd in Damascus. When Yazīd saw the blessed head, he showed joy.<sup>7</sup> They were still in shackles and cuffs. The people said to Yazīd: ‘Is it fair to make the relatives of the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) prisoners?’ Zayn al-Ābidīn too spoke and asked Yazīd: ‘If the Prophet saw us, would he not release us?’ Yazīd agreed to unchain them. He freed them, set up tents for them and gave them clothes and provisions.

## **3. Zayn al-Ābidīn’s Khutba**

In Damascus, Yazīd asked Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him): ‘O son of al-Husayn! Are there any requests I can fulfil for you?’ Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) said: ‘I have a wish and that is you hand over those people who killed my father.’ Yazīd however rejected this wish. Had he done so, then this would have shown at least some remorse and regret. The Imām then asked Yazīd to hand over the head of his father so that it could be buried with its body and so that it could rest in peace. Yazīd accepted this request. Yazīd then asked the Imām if he had any other request. Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) asked for him and his family to be allowed to go back to their home in al-Madīna. Yazīd also accepted this request. Yazīd again asked Imām if there was anything else he wanted fulfilling. Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) asked Yazīd to allow him to lead the Jum’a prayer in the Jamia Masjid of Damascus. Yazīd accepted.

So the next day Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) climbed the stairs of the pulpit for the Jum’a Khutba. After praising Allāh and His Messenger (peace be upon him) he began his Khutba. The people inside the Masjid anticipated every word and action of Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) as he sat on the Minbar.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> p. 20. *Tārikh al-Islām*. Imām al-Dhahabī.

He said: 'Those who know who I am know and those who don't let me tell them. I am the great grandson of the Prophet of Allāh (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him), the grandchild of Mawla Alī (Karram allāho wajhahu) and Sayyida Fātima (may Allāh be pleased with her). I am the nephew of al-Hasan al-Mujtabā (may Allāh be pleased with him) and the son of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him). I was kept thirsty and hungry with my family for three days in the baking heat of Karbalā. My father and other men with us were all killed for no reason at all.'

The people inside the mosque heard this, which caused great commotion. The reaction of the people scared Yazīd, who then ordered the Muezzin to stand up and give the *Iqāma*. Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) took off his turban and threw it and the Muezzin and told him to stop for the sake of the Prophet of Allāh (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him). The Muezzin fell silent.

Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) then said: 'Yazīd! Is Muhammad Mustafa (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) my grandfather or yours? If you say he is yours then everyone including yourself knows that you lie. And if he is my grandfather then tell me, why did you kill my father without reason? You have orphaned me. You have made my family migrate and leave our home. You bring us to Karbalā where you oppress us and insult us by imprisoning us. You have caused fractures in the *Din* of Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) even though you read his Kalima, and you have no shame.'

Imām Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) then turned towards the worshippers and said: 'Are any of you related to the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him)?' The people having finally realised what had happened in Karbalā again erupted in commotion as they began to cry. Yazīd told the Muezzin off and told him to complete the *Iqāma*.

After Jum'a prayers, Yazīd called a meeting to allay the fears of the people of Damascus about what really happened. He presented the events in Karbalā on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram in such a way that he blamed and humiliated the chieftains of Kūfa (who he appointed and bribed) and scolded and cursed Ibn Ziyād in particular for what had happened. He cursed Ibn Ziyād and the Kūfans and made it look like that he had nothing to do with it. The only reason was so the people would not scold him for the murder.

#### **4. Return to al-Madīna**

A convoy was organised to take Zayn al-Ābidīn (may Allāh be pleased with him) and the remaining family members to al-Madīna Sharif. They were given provisions and manpower for this journey by Yazīd.

#### **5. Yazīd's attack on al-Madīna**

After Karbalā, Yazīd changed the governor of al-Madīna from Walīd ibn Utba to Uthmān ibn Muhammad. Uthmān requested a handful of revered individuals to meet Yazīd in Damascus, including Abd Allāh ibn Hanzala, Abd Allāh ibn Abī

Amra and Munzir ibn Zubayr. When they reached Damascus, Yazīd showed supposed courtesy to them and showered them with gifts. When he returned, the people of al-Madīna asked Abd Allāh ibn Hanzala about the character of Yazīd. He replied: 'We have just come from a person who does not practice religion. He drinks alcohol and listens to music.' He added that with the 100,000 Dirhams Yazīd gave to him, he would buy weapons to fight him.<sup>8</sup> Others voiced the same opinion when they said:

'We have come from a man who has no religion, who drinks wine, who plays lutes, who passes his time with songstresses, who plays with dogs and spends his evenings talking to robbers and young men. We ask you to bear witness that we repudiate him.'<sup>9</sup>

Based on this news, the people of al-Madīna removed Uthmān from his post (as given by Yazīd) and Abd Allāh ibn Mutī was elected the governor. Uthmān wrote a letter to Yazīd and explained the situation. In reaction to this news, Yazīd prepared an army of 12,000 people and instructed them to bring al-Madīna into his governance once again. He bribed each one of these soldiers with one hundred dinars.<sup>10</sup> He actually approached Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād and Umar ibn Sa'd to be his commander, but both flatly refused.<sup>11</sup> Eventually, Muslim ibn Uqba agreed to be in charge of the army. He was instructed by Yazīd:

'Leave the people for three days. If they agree to your demands, so be it. Otherwise fight them and when you overcome them, give licence to pillage the city for three days. Whatever property, silver coins, weapons and food are found belong to the army. When the three days have passed, withdraw from the people.'<sup>12</sup>

When Muslim ibn Uqba approached al-Madīna, he blocked off all escape routes in and out of the city. He then sent a message to Abd Allāh ibn Mutī that he had three days to accept allegiance with Yazīd. Abd Allāh ibn Mutī refused and so the Yazīdis attacked the city of the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) at the end of Dhū'l Hajj (28<sup>th</sup> according to al-Tabarī) in 63. Abd Allāh's seven sons were killed in front of him, after which he too was executed. The Yazīdis tied their horses in the Prophet's mosque and allowed them to urinate in it. For three days, there was no Azān, Iqāma or Salāh in al-Masjid al-Nabawī.<sup>13</sup> They beheaded 10,000 people who refused to accept Yazīd; 700 Companions and 1700 children of Companions were killed.<sup>14</sup> Abd Allāh ibn Hanzala too was killed. For three days, they violated the sanctity of this city.

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<sup>8</sup> pp. 57-8. *The History of Karbalā*. Abū Ammar.

<sup>9</sup> p. 198. *The History of al-Tabarī*.

<sup>10</sup> p. 203. *The History of al-Tabarī*.

<sup>11</sup> p. 253, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr.

<sup>12</sup> p. 205. *The History of al-Tabarī*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 59-60.

<sup>14</sup> p. 255, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr.

They allegedly raped over a thousand women. Al-Madā'inī reports from Abū Qurra that Hishām ibn Hassan said: 'After the attack on al-Madīna, one thousand women gave birth to children without husbands.'<sup>15</sup>

Many prominent Companions hid during this siege, including Jabir ibn Abd Allāh and Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī. Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab took refuge in al-Masjid al-Nabawī, next to the final resting place of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him. He only knew of the time of *Salah* due to the sound of Azān emitting from the Prophet's final resting place.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps this is the biggest indication that Yazīd was not remorseful upon the martyrdom of Imām al-Husayn (may Allāh be pleased with him) and had no concern for Islam. If he did, then he would have known that the Messenger of Allāh (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

'Whosoever scares the people of al-Madīna, Allāh will scare them. And upon him is the curse of Allāh, His angels and all of the people.'<sup>17</sup>

It is upon the basis of this hadith that scholars like Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr have stated it is permitted to curse Yazīd.<sup>18</sup>

Imām Muslim reports from Abū Hurayra (may Allāh be pleased with him) that the Prophet of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

'Whosoever intends evil with the people of al-Madīna, Allāh will dissolve them just like salt dissolves in water.'<sup>19</sup>

## 6. Yazīd's attack on Makka

Not content with violating the city of the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him), the army advanced to Makka, upon the commands of Yazīd, in 64 A.H. Muslim ibn Uqba died on route in Muharram<sup>20</sup> after being poisoned by his slave wife and Husayn ibn Numayr took his place. When the neighbouring areas heard what had happened in al-Madīna and how they were advancing towards Makka, many Muslims appeared to help the Makkans in fighting Yazīd and his army. Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr led the Makkans in the battle, which was fierce, tense and bloody. It continued for three months. The Yazīdis began to throw fireballs into the city and as a result, the Ka'ba's cloth was burned (3 Rabī al-Awwal 64<sup>21</sup>). The walls and the roof were also badly damaged.<sup>22</sup> Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī writes that the horns from the ram that Ibrāhīm sacrificed in place of Ismā'il were on top the Ka'ba. They too were destroyed.<sup>23</sup> Despite their superior manpower, the Yazīdis could not conquer the city.

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<sup>15</sup> p. 254, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr.

<sup>16</sup> *Mishkāt Sharīf*; 544. Cited in *Aana Jaana Nūr Ka*, Mawlāna Abū al-Nūr Muhammad Bashīr, p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> Reported in *Sahih Muslim*. Cited in *Tārīkh al-Khulafā*, Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, p. 161,

<sup>18</sup> p. 257, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr.

<sup>19</sup> p. 256, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr.

<sup>20</sup> p. 222. *The History of al-Tabarī*.

<sup>21</sup> p. 224. *The History of al-Tabarī*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp. 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> p. 162, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā*, Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> Rabī al-Awwal 64, Yazīd died a miserable death. Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr learnt of this first and called out to Yazīd's army: 'Who are you fighting for? Your king has died!' They quickly dispersed and returned to Syria. <sup>24</sup>

### **7. Yazīd's demise and 'legacy'**

\*Yazīd died on the 15<sup>th</sup> Rabī al-Awwal 64. According to one report, he died of thirst. He would drink only to then immediately vomit it up. The last seven days of his life were spent in this miserable state. He was only 38.<sup>25</sup>

\*Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr writes that Yazīd would spend his time playing with monkeys. When a monkey of his would die, he would express sadness. It is said that Yazīd actually died from a disease picked up from a monkey that had bitten him.<sup>26</sup>

\*Nawfal ibn Abī al-Furāt said:

I was with Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz when a man mentioned Yazīd and said, "the Leader of the Believers [*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*] Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya ...." Umar ibn Abd al-Azīz was enraged and said: "You call him the *Leader of the Believers*?" Umar then ordered for him to be lashed twenty times. <sup>27</sup>

\*Imām al-Bukhārī, in his book *Tārikh Kabīr* listed the biographical details of 213 people named Yazīd. But he did not make any mention of Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya.

\*Though he belonged to the generation of Tābi'īs, Yazīd was not trusted at all in religious affairs. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī writes in *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* that he has 'no prophetic reporters that are dependable.' In fact, he only mentioned Yazīd at all in his biographical dictionary to differentiate between another Yazīd called al-Nakha'ī.

\*Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr then became the leader in Makka. As for the people of Syria, they elected Yazīd's son, Mu'āwiya as the leader. No sooner than he became leader he fell severely ill. He did not make any public appearances as a Khalīfa, nor did he once lead the Muslims in Salah. He reigned for forty days only, and died at the age of twenty-one. <sup>28</sup>

### **8. Fate of the other perpetuators**

Umar ibn Sa'd. Hafs, his son, was sent to speak to al-Mukhtār (who wanted to take revenge for the atrocities in Karbalā) and told him he was old and had now devoted himself to Allāh. He again ordered to see Umar ibn Sa'd. When asked, he simply replied that he was fulfilling orders from above, Ibn Ziyād and Yazīd. Hafs was slaughtered in front of Umar ibn Sa'd, followed by Umar himself.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> p. 225. *The History of al-Tabari*.

<sup>26</sup> p. 269, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr.

<sup>27</sup> *Tārikh al-Khulafā*, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūti, p. 161. See also *Muqalaat*, Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh al-Azharī, II: 302.

<sup>28</sup> p. 163. *Tārikh al-Khulafā*, Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūti.

Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. He learned about Umar's outcome and so he gathered 15000 supporters and reached Mosul. Al-Mukhtār sent his army out too. In the same place of Karbalā, on the tenth of Muharram, there was a confrontation. Ibn Ziyād's army was seized as was Ibn Ziyād. He was killed at al-Furāt. He was beheaded and his head was bought to al-Mukhtār. A snake appeared and went into the nose of Ibn Ziyād and re-appeared from his mouth.

Shamir: He too was found and was brought to al-Mukhtār. He too was killed in a savage manner.

Khawla. He is the one who placed Imām al-Husayn's head on a pole. Abū Amra was sent by al-Mukhtār to his house to seize him. His wife al-Ayūf answered the door. When she was asked where Khawla was, she said 'I do not know' and at the same time, pointed to the area in the house where he was hiding. She was angry with Khawla from that day when he brought the blessed head of Imām al-Husayn into their home. He was killed near his home and then his body was set alight.<sup>29</sup>

Sinān. He too was seized. He was starved without food and water for three days and then killed. Five people were told to fire arrows to him continuously. He suffered from a condition whereas he felt very hot at the front and cold at the back.

Even those who were in Kūfa, did not come to Karbalā, they too were inflicted with illness, insanity, disability and so on.

## **9. What we learn**

a. Victory is when Allāh says so, not you. All of the Yazīdis thought they had won on the 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram 61 A.H. But their joy was short-lived and all met a despicable end. Sometimes, we show elation on the fortunes of others, only for others to later have the last laugh.

b. Was Yazīd remorseful? The fact that he went on to attack the two Holy Sanctuaries after Karbalā clearly indicates how vile, evil and despicable he really was.

c. Was Yazīd forgiven? Dr. Allāma Mohammad Shāhid Razā Sāhib commented that for those who think Yazīd was forgiven, they should pray 'O Allāh! Make us with Yazīd in the hereafter.' No one does. Instead they pray for going Janna with the *Abrār*.

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<sup>29</sup> p. 302, vol. VI. *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr