شهداء كربلاء:
إرث سيدة زينب بنت علي



The Martyrs of Karbalāʾ
&
The Legacy of Sayyidah Zaynab
عليها السلام

notes for a talk given by:

Sẖaykẖ A. Nooruddeen Durkee

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وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

ʾinnamā yurīdu-llāhu li-yudẖhiba ʿankumu-r-rijåsa
ʾahla-l-bayti wa yuṭahhirakum taṭåhīrā

Allāh only wishes to remove impurity from you
oh People of the House
and to purify you with a thorough purification.
(Sūrah al-ʾAḥzāb 33:33)



I wish to acknowledge
The Life of Zaynab bint 'Ali. The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint 'Ali
Researched and Edited by M. H. Bilgrami. Zahra Publications Pakistan (1986)
as a source for valuable information on the life of Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ

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Sẖaykẖ A. Nooruddeen Durkee
Green Mountain School
GreenMountainSchool.Org
313sand313@gmail.com

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قُل لَّآ أَسئَلُكُم عَلَيهِ أَجرًا إِلاَّ المَوَدَّةَ فِي القُربىَ

qul-lāā-as-ʾalukum ᶜalayhi ʾajåran ʾilla-l-mawaddata fi-l-qurbā

Say,"I do not ask any reward of you
save the love of those who are near to me."
(Sūrah asḫ-Sḫūrā 42:23)

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا
وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنفُسَنَا وَأَنفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ
لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ

fa-man hāāājjaka fīhi mim baᶜdi mā jāāʾaka mina-l-ᶜilmi
fa-qul taᶜalaw nadåᶜu ʾabånāāʾanā wa ʾabånāāʾakum
wa nisāāʾana wa nisāāʾakum wa ʾañfusanā wa ʾañfusakum
tḫumma nabåtahil fa-najåᶜal-laᶜnata-llāhi ᶜala-l-kādḫibīn

And whoever argues with you after there has come to you knowledge
then say,"Come! We shall call our sons and your sons
and our women and your women and our selves and yourselves
and then we shall pray humbly and invoke the
Curse of Allāh on those who lie."
(Sūrah ʾĀl ʾImran 3:61)

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

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ʾʾĀᶜisḫa ﵂ reported that the Prophet ﷺ went out one morning wearing a striped cloak of the black camel's hair and that there came along Ḥasan b. ᶜAli ﵇. He wrapped him under it, then came al-Ḥusayn ﵇ and he wrapped him under it along with the other one.

Then came Fatima ﷺ and he took her under it, then came ᶜAli ﷺ and he also took him under it and then said: Allāh ﷻ only desires to take away any uncleanliness from you, Oh people of the household, and purify you (with a thorough purification)." (33:33) Ṣāḥiḥ Muslim: Book 031, Number 5955

ᵃIbn Kaṯīr, as-Suyuti, Bayḥaqi, and al Kẖatīb al-Bagẖdadī (الخطيب البغدادي) in '*Tarikẖ al-Bagẖdad*', have quoted Umm Salma ﷺ as having said, "The verse, 'Oh People of the Prophet's House.....', was revealed in my house and Fāṭima, ᶜAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn ﷺ were in the room. The Prophet ﷺ spread his cloak on them and said: 'These are the members of my family. (Oh Allāh!) Remove uncleanness from them and make them pure'". And Ḥakim too has quoted Umm Salma ﷺ in '*Mustadrak*' as having said, "This verse (33:33) was revealed in my house".

When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ noticed that a blessing from Allāh ﷻ was going to come down, he told Safiyya ﷺ (one of his wives): "Call to me! Call to me!" Safiyya ﷺ said: 'Call who, Oh Messenger of Allāh?' He said: 'Call to me my Ahlu-l-Bayt who are ᶜAlī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn ﷺ.' Thus we sent for them and they came to him. Then the Prophet ﷺ spread his cloak over them, and raised his hand (toward the sky) saying: 'Oh Allāh! These are my family, so bless Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad.' And Allāh ﷻ, to whom belongs Might and Majesty, revealed: 'Allāh only wishes to remove impurity from you, oh People of the House and to purify you with a thorough purification. (33:33).'"

Tirmiḏẖī narrated in his '*Ṣaḥīh*' in the chapter relating to the attainments of Sayyida Fāṭimah az-Zahra ﷺ and similarly in the '*Riaz al-Nuzrah*' and '*Taḥzib al-Taḥzib*' that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "O Allāh! These are the members of my family. Ward off uncleanness from them and make them pure."

The Prophet ﷺ took ᶜAlī by the hand and said: "Whomsoever master (*mawla*) I am, ᶜAlī ﷺ is his master, O Allāh! love him who loves ᶜAlī ﷺ, and be the enemy of the enemy of ᶜAlī ﷺ; help him who helps Ali, and forsake him who forsake ᶜAlī ﷺ." *Tafsir-ul'-kabīr* vol.12, pp 49-50, by Fakẖur-d-dīn ar-Razi.

ʾImām Muslim related from Anās ﷺ that he said: "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: 'None of you will truly believe until I am more beloved to him than his family, wealth and all the people.'"

The import of all that as I have quoted above is that in accord with Qurʾān and ʾAḥadīṯ, ʾAhl as-Sunnah should love and support the family of the Prophet ﷺ, and honor his will in regard to them in light of his request ﷺ, "I ask you by Allāh ﷻ to take care of my family. I ask you by Allāh ﷻ to take care of my family." (Muslim) Beyond all sectarianism, in the end we are all Muslims together.

Over the past five years we have been trying to re-educate the wider Sunni community on the events of Karbalāʾ. I have spoken many times on both the background of the events that led up to Karbalāʾ and on the Battle of Karbalāʾ itself.

I refer the reader to an earlier essay of mine entitled *Karbalāʾ: Action, Reaction, Action* which discusses all the events thoroughly, specifically from the point of view of Ahl-e-Sunnah wa Jamᶜat. I ask that those either listening to my words or reading this paper keep what I have said in both mind and heart .

This talk/essay on *Karbalāʾ: The Legacy of Sayyidah Zaynab* ﷺ is an exploration of some aspects of the life and the part that Zaynab , the Lady of the Garden, ﷺ played in the events that led up to and came after the Battle of Karbalāʾ



It was five years after the Muslims had accompanied the Prophet ﷺ and his family in the the migration (*al-hijrah*/الـهـجـرة) to Madinah, when the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, Sayyida Fatima ﷺ gave birth to a little girl. When her father, ʾImām ᶜAlī ﷺ, saw his daughter for the first time al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, who was then almost three years old, was with him. The boy exclaimed in delight, "O father, Allāh ﷻ has given me a sister."

At those words ʾImām ᶜAlī ﷺ began to weep. When al-Ḥusayn ﷺ asked why he was crying, his father ﷺ answered that he would soon come to know. Sayyida Fatima ﷺ and ʾImām ᶜAlī ﷺ did not immediately name their new born child for they awaited the return of the Prophet ﷺ from a journey so that he could propose the name.

When finally the baby girl was brought before him he held her in his lap and kissed her. The Angel Jibrāʾīl (جبرائيل) ﷺ came to him and conveyed the name that was to be hers, Zaynab which means the beauty of her father, and then the Jibrāʾīl ﷺ began to weep.

The Prophet ﷺ asked why Jibrāʾīl ﷺ wept and he answered, "Oh Prophet of Allāh, from early on in life this girl will remain entangled in tribulations and trials in this world – first she will weep over your death; thereafter she will cry over the loss of her mother, then her father, and then her brother al-Ḥasan ﷺ.

"After all this she will be confronted with the trials of the land of Karbalāʾ (كربلاء), and the tribulations of that lonely desert, as a result of which her hair will turn grey and her back will be bent."

When the members of the family heard this prophecy they all broke down in tears. al-Ḥusayn ﷺ now understood why earlier his father had also wept. Then the Prophet ﷺ named her Zaynab ﷺ.

When the news of birth of Zaynab ﷺ reached Salmān al-Farsī ﷺ, he went to Sayyidinā ʿAlī ﷺ to congratulate him. But instead of seeing him happy and rejoicing he saw ʿAlī ﷺ shed tears, and he too was apprised of the events of Karbala and the hardships that were to befall Zaynab ﷺ.

One day, when Zaynab ﷺ was about five years old, she had a strange and terrible dream. A violent wind arose in the city and darkened the earth and the sky. The little girl was tossed hither and thither, and suddenly she found herself stuck in the branches of a huge tree. But the force of the wind was so strong that it uprooted the tree. Zaynab ﷺ caught hold of a branch but that broke. In a panic she grabbed two twigs but these too gave way and she was left falling with no support.

When she woke up she told her grandfather, the Prophet ﷺ, about this dream and wept bitterly saying "O my daughter that tree is me who is shortly going to leave this world.

"The branches are your father ʿAlī ﷺ and your mother Fātimah az-Zahra ﷺ, and the twigs are your brothers al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn ﷺ. They will all depart this world before you do, and you will suffer their separation and loss."

In her character she reflected the best attributes of those who raised her. In sobriety and serenity she was likened to ʾUmmu-l-Muʾminīn Kẖadija, her grandmother ﷺ; in chastity and modesty to her mother Fatimah az-Zahra ﷺ; in eloquence to her father ᶜAlī ﷺ; in forbearance and patience to her brother al-Ḥasan ﷺ; and in bravery and tranquility of the heart to al-Ḥusayn ﷺ. Her face reflected her father's awe and her grandfather's reverence. Among her names was al-ᶜAlimah, the knowledegable; al-ᶜArifah, the well-versed; al-Muwatẖaqah, the trustworthy and al-ᶜAqilah, the gentlewoman.

In the pure environment that enveloped her, she absorbed the teachings of ʾIslām that her grandfather ﷺ imparted and after him her father ﷺ. She had barely attained the tender age of seven when her beloved mother passed away. Her mother's death had closely followed passing away of her beloved grandfather ﷺ. Some time later her father ﷺ married Fatimah bint Hizam al-Qilabiyya, commonly known as Umm ul-Banin ﷺ or "the mother of sons", whose devotion and pledge encouraged Zaynab ﷺ in her learning and from whom she learned do all household chores with great proficiency.

After the death of her mother and while still a young girl she cared for and was responsible for the running the household. As much as she cared for the comforts and ease of her brothers and sisters, in her own wants, she was frugal and was known for being unstintingly generous to the poor, homeless and the orphans.

From very early on she developed an unbreakable bond of attachment to her brother al-Ḥusayn ﷺ. At times, when as a baby in her mother's arms she could not be pacified and made to stop crying, she would quiet down upon being held by her brother, and would sit quietly gazing at his face. Before she would pray she always used to first cast a glance at the face of her beloved brother ﷺ.

When she came of age and the time came for marriage, she was married in a simple ceremony to her immediate first cousin, ᶜAbdullah ibn Jaᶜfar at-Tayyar who had been brought up under the direct care of the Prophet ﷺ. After his death, ᶜAlī ﷺ became his supporter and guardian until he came of age. He grew up to be a handsome youth with pleasing manners and was known for his sincere hospitality to guests and selfless generosity to the poor and needy.

Together this young couple had five children, of whom four were boys, ʿAlī, Aun, Muḥammad, and ʿAbbās and a daughter, named Umm Kulṯum.

In Madinah it was her practise to hold regular meetings for women in which Zaynab ﷺ shared her knowledge and taught them the precepts of the Dīn of ʾIslām from Qurʾān and the Sunnah of her grandfather ﷺ. Her gatherings were well and regularly attended.

She was able to impart the teachings with such clarity and eloquence that she became known as *al-Fasiḥah* (the skillfully fluent) and *al-Balighah* (the intensely eloquent).

When in the thirty-seventh year of the hijrah ʾImām ʿAlī ﷺ moved to Kufa to take up his position as *khalifah* and ʾAmīru-l-Muʾminīn. he was accompanied by his daughter Zaynab ﷺ and her husband.

Her reputation as an inspiring teacher among the women had preceded her so that in Kufah too women would throng to her daily sittings where they all benefited from her erudition, wisdom and scholarship in the exegesis of the Qurʾān.

The depth and certainty of her knowledge earned her the name given to her by her nephew, Zaynu-l-ʿĀbidin ﷺ, of *ʿAlimah Gḥayr Muʿallamah* or she who has knowledge without being taught.

That phase of her life came to an end when on the night before Friday the 19th of Ramaḍān in the fortieth year after hijrah, her father ʾImām ʿAlī ﷺ went to the central mosque for morning prayers (*ṣalātu-l-fajr*/صلاة الفجر). Shortly after the call to prayer (*ʾādḥān*/أذان), Zaynab ﷺ the cries of a crowd of people which were coming nearer and nearer to her house bringing the news that her father ﷺ had been brutally asssaulted by a man named Ibn Muljim, a Kẖarjite, who had struck ʾImām ʿAlī ﷺ what turned out to be a fatal blow while he was in *sajdah*. Mortally wounded, but still living, he was carried home on the shoulders of his followers.

There was to be no recovery from this wound. On the twenty-first night of Ramaḍān, ʾImām ʿAlī ﷺ died, leaving his two sons and daughter to witness and face his enemies' misguided lust for power and revenge.

After his father's soul was released, ʾImām al-Ḥasan ﷺs said, "Tonight such a great man has died with whose good conduct no one in the past or the future can compare. He fought side by side with the Prophet ﷺ, and made his life a shield for him. The Prophet ﷺ made him a standard-bearer of the army and the angel Jibraʾīl (جبريل) ﷺ walked on his right and Mikāʾīl (ميخائيل) ﷺ on his left. He never came back from any war without victory."

When he died he left nothing save seven hundred dirhams with which he had intended to provide the people of his house a servant.

Zaynab ﷺ was immersed in grief at the brutal loss of her dear father ﷺ and together with her husband she returned to Madinah.

When ʾImām ʿAlī ﷺs was assassinated, Muʿāwīyyah (معاوية) was the strongest political and military candidate to assume the kẖilāfah. For the peace and well being of the Muslim community ʾImām al-Ḥasan ﷺ signed a truce with him and retired to private life in Madinah. Taking advantage of this time Muʿāwīyyah set out to establish the Kẖilāfah of Bani Umayyah, which was destined to become a hereditary dynasty and governed more like a king than a kẖalif from Damascus in Syria instead of Madinah or Kufa.

Some ten years later Zaynab ﷺ was once again stricken with a grievous loss when her brother, ʾImām al-Ḥasan ﷺ fell victim to the schemes of the power-hungry Muʿāwīyyah.

Muʿāwīyyah was intent on converting the kẖilāfah into a hereditary kingship so as to retain the seat of power within his clan by securing the allegiance of the people thereby insuring that his reprobate son Yazīd. would be in control of the Ummah which, in any case, was in the process of becoming more a State than a Community of Believers As long as al-Ḥasan ﷺ was alive this was impossible. Accordingly Muʿāwīyyah successfully eliminated al-Ḥasan ﷺ through an ingenious intrigue in which the hand that dealt al-Ḥasan ﷺ the deadly poison was none other than a disaffected wife of al-Ḥasan ﷺ whom Muʿāwīyyah had bribed with offers of money and marriage.

The rights of leadership, according to the treaty between Muʿāwīyyah and al-Ḥasan ﷺ, now passed into the hands of al-Husayn ﷺ, but the Bani Umayyah would not leave him in peace.

Within six years of the death al-Ḥasan ﷺ, Muᶜāwīyyah began to openly call upon people to swear allegiance (*bayᶜah*/بَيْعَة) to his son Yazīd, and people met his desire willingly or unwillingly.

al-Husayn ﷺ numbered among the five men who, alone in the Muslim community, refused to pledge themselves to Yazīd.

During the four years left to his life Muᶜāwīyyah set about securing allegiance for his son but was unable to dissuade al-Husayn ﷺ from his firm opposition to the rule of Yazīd. If the kẖilāfah was to be based on heredity, then none other than the grandson ﷺ of the Prophet ﷺ and nearest surviving kin was more suitable. And if the right to rule was to be given on the basis of piety and learning, then to whom else other than al-Husayn ﷺ could this position be rightfully apportioned since it was he who was proven and known to be possessed of untainted wisdom, complete knowledge of ʾIslāmic law, piety and devotion of the highest degree.

Muᶜāwīyyah died in the month of Rajab in the sixtieth year after Hijrah (May 6, 680 CE), allegedly from a stroke brought on by over weight whereupon Bani Hasẖim were confronted with the now de-facto kẖilāfat of Yazīd who had not the forbearance of his father, and was not content to let al-Husayn ﷺ stay in Madinah in peace.

The day after his father's death he wrote to Walid ibn ᶜUtba ibn Abu Sufyan, then governor of Madinah, asking him to pursue al-Husayn ﷺ, ᶜAbdullah ibn ᶜUmar, and ᶜAbdullah ibn Zubayr, and compel them to swear allegiance to him. Again al-Husayn ﷺ refused. He then left Madinah for Makkah to first make Hajj, and, then at the behest of other oppressed people, to go to Kufa where, he had been led to believe, there were many who wished to combat the tyrannical rule of the transgressing Bani Umayyah and see to it that pure enlightened leadership of Muslims based on the teachings of Qurʾān and Sunnah prevailed instead.

So far all of or most all of what I have written is what happened on the outer planes or in the *ḍẖāhir*.

But even looking at just the outer events one cannot be but shocked and appalled to see what happened to the *ummah* in these fifty years following the death of the Prophet ﷺ.

These events affected not only the *ummah* as a whole but to those who were closest and among the most dear to the Prophet ﷺ. When we look at the history we see how companion turned on companion, how Muslims wound up killing Muslims and conspired against each other and engaged in intrigues and plots. How could it be even imagined that Muslims planned to murder al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, the much loved grandson of the Prophet ﷺ – al-Ḥusayn ﷺ the beloved grandson ﷺ who had taken his life from the milk of his mother, Sayyida Fāṭima az-Zahra ﷺ and had been trained and taught by his father, ᶜAlī ﷺ, the gate to the city of knowledge, the first man who accepted ʾIslām on the hand of the Prophet ﷺ? How had things ever come to such a pass?

It is one thing to look at outer events, but how to understand what must have gone on inside al-Ḥusayn ﷺ as he witnessed his whole world fall apart, bit by bit and mite by mite until the old Arab ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) (جاهلية), conservatism, casual aggression, covetousness, naked ambition, vulgarity, lust, lewdness, drunkeness and debauchery finally manifested in the form of Yazīd, a man who openly ridiculed the *sunnah,* had no time for the Qurʾān and would, ᶜnally, upon on ordering the death of the beloved grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, who had been named, along with his brother, al-Ḥasan, to be the Leaders of the Youth of Jannah ﷺ, (*Sayyidu-sẖ-Sẖabāb-i-ʾAhli-l-Jannah*), openly declare ”My ancestors who were killed at Badr have been avenged” .

How could such a man even dare to call himself, *ʾAmiru-l-Muʾminīn* — the Leader of the Faithful?

A man who, according to ʾibn Kaṯẖīr, “loved worldly vices; drank alcohol; listened to music; kept the company of beardless boys; played drums; kept dogs; made dogs, bears and monkeys fight. Who was drunk every morning and used to tie monkeys to the saddle of horses and make the horses race gambling on the outcome.”

A man who came to power, according to Sẖaykẖ al-Ḥadīṯẖ, Muḥammad Zakaria, an Indian Sunni scholar, by sending an army “to Madinah comprised of 60,000 horsemen and 15,000 foot soldiers. An army that for three days shed blood freely, 1000 women were raped and 700 named Quraysẖ and ʾAnṣar were killed.

An army who under Ibn ʾUqba forced people to give allegiance to Yazīd in such a manner that ten thousand women and children were were enslaved and Yazīd sold them as he pleased and no ṣaḥabi ﷺ who was with the Prophet ﷺ at Hudaibiya was spared."

In physics we talk about the second law of thermodynamics, which is an expression of the universal principle of entropy, stating that the entropy of an isolated system which is not in equilibrium will tend to increase over time. In other words, everything is falling apart constantly which on all levels: religiously, spiritually and socially was exactly what was happening to the ʾummah. Clearly the ʾummah was suffering and in many instances it was falling apart and something was needed to bring it back together.

Clearly some thing or some act was needed that would counter the forces of cynicism, political opportunism, personal wrangling, petty jealousies, deceits, and outright corruption which had come to plague the ʾummah – then and now. Something that would make clear and obvious what was true and what was false.

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

wa qul jāāʾa-l-ḥaqqu wa zahaqa-l-bāṭil ; ʾinna-l-bāṭila kāna zahūqā

"And say, "The Truth has come and falsehood has vanished.
Surely falsehood is forever bound to vanish."
(Sūrah al-ʾIsrāʾ 17:81)

What had happened in essence was that from the time of the death of the Prophet ﷺ, the old forces of the *jahiliyyah* were emboldened and had once again come to the fore.

Both the message and the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ was threated at every level by the forces of reaction in the form of cynicism, political opportunism, personal ambition and wrangling, petty jealousies, deceits, corruption and just plain business as usual. The world of *quid pro quo* in which I get mine and you get yours and it's every man for himself and big dogs eat first, was back. Under Yazīd it had reached a point where, unless the forces of reaction were stopped cold, countered by an irresitable act, business as usual would become the order of the day for the rest of time and nothing would or could counter it or stand out against it.

For example, to understand the level of reactionary conciousness that came to the forefront during the reign of Muʿāwīya, Yazīd once came to Madinah during the time of Ḥajj drunk on wine. Ibn ʾAbbās ﷺ and al-Ḥusayn ﷺ happened to pass by him and Yazīd called his slave and ordered him to serve wine to al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, who, needless to say, refused and left immediately.

How then, when this same Yazīd had usurped, by the appointement of his father, Muʿāwīya, the station of the *ʾAmir al Muʾminīn* and the *kẖalīfah* of the ʾummah of Muhammad ﷺ, could al-Ḥusayn ﷺ ever even imagine putting his hand in the hand of Yazīd in the sacred act of *bayʾah* mentioned by Allāh ﷻ in Sūrah al-Fatḥ?

Unthinkable – how could he ever imagine doing such a thing?

Again we emphasize – political machinations, military action, war would never solve the problem, for all of those solutions, even had they been possible – and given the people of veniality and deceit of his supporters in Kufa and Basrah that was clearly impossible – any move of that level would have been just one more event in the downward spiral of events that was infecting the entire ʾummah.

Something else was called for and what was called for was this selfless sacrifice on the plains of Karbalāʾ – an act which was and is totally counter to the forces of entropy and disintegration – which persists in the present as a permanent proof of how the forces of corruption, expediency and mendacity *can* be overcome.

Understanding that sacrifice and achievement is what prompts us not just to mourn for al-Ḥusayn ﷺ and his family ﷺ but, rather, to exult in what he and they did which was to perform the precise necessary action which stands as a clear shining example for all time of how indeed Truth comes and how falsehood vanishes.

It is in this light we should understand al-Ḥusayn ﷺ and his replies to his well-wishers who urged him not to go to Kufa and it also explains why he took his family, including women and children, with him. He knew full well the brutal nature of the people he was up against. He knew they would not be content merely to kill him and his men, but would take the women with him captive, and he saw that they would be paraded before the people and they would

become a caravan of captives, but that caravan and all in it would force the ʾummah to reflect deeply – that it would awaken their consciousness both in his time and in ours and the times to come.

Had he not done what he did at Karbalāʾ, the way of life of Yazīd (and the all too many Yazīds who have followed him in the present , and one glance at the so-called Muslim world will reveal just how many Yazīds sit on seats of power in how many lands) would have been the norm and the accepted standard of behavior for Muslims.

If al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, the grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, had put his blessed hand in the hand of Yazīd, then surely little would be left of truth, of honor, of nobility, of chivalry, of selflessness, of decency and grace. The Qurʾān would have been stood on it's head and the *bāṭil* would be seen to have overcome the *ḥaqq*.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

ʾinnamā yurīdu-llāhu li-yudẖhiba ᶜankumu-r-rijåsa ʾahla-l-bayti wa yuṭahirakum taṭhīrā

Allāh only wishes to remove impurity from you
oh People of the House
and to purify you with a thorough purification.
(Sūrah al-ʾAḥzāb 33:33)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "*Ḥusaynun minni wa ana min Ḥusayn*" (Ḥusayn is from me and I am from Ḥusayn). That al-Ḥusayn ﷺ is from the Prophet ﷺ can be understood. However, what exactly does "*ana min Ḥusayn*" (I am from Ḥusayn ﷺ) mean?

Scholars have offered different interpretations for the tradition. One important meaning is the spiritual harmony between the Prophet ﷺ and al-Ḥusayn ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ is telling the people that I am the like of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ; I am the same kind of person. The preposition "*min*" can convey this meaning. In simple words "Ḥusayn and I are in spiritual harmony". Hence if you see al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, it is as if you have seen me; if you have seem me you have seen al-Ḥusayn ﷺ. In truth the struggle of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ is the struggle of the Prophet ﷺ and those who killed al-Ḥusayn ﷺ are the same ones who sought (and make no mistake about it – still seek) to kill the Prophet ﷺ, one way or another, and his sublime message of mercy to all beings.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā ʾarsalnāka ʾillā raḫmatal-li-l-ᶜālamīn

"and We have not sent you save as a Mercy (*raḥmah*) for all creation."
(Sūrah al-ʾAmbiyāāʾ 21:107)



The events of Karbala reflect the collision of good with evil, the virtuous versus the wicked, the collision of ʾImām al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, the head of virtue with Yazīd, the head of impiety. al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was a righteous man, the religious and spiritual authority and a recognised leader of the Muslim Ummah.

As the representative of his grandfather ﷺ and his father ﷺ, the main concern of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was to safeguard and protect ʾIslām and guide his fellow Muslims. On the other hand, the control of the those who had usurped power and authority, Muᶜāwīya ibn ʾAbī Sufyān and his profligate son Yazīd, depended on the might of the sword augmented by calculating political manipulation and machinations. Neither the father nor the son had any hesitation in using brute force or subtle coercion to rule over the Muslims even by resorting to illicit means. This is not all unexpected given that Muᶜāwīya was the son of ʾAbī Sufyān and Hind who spent their lives trying to destroy the Prophet ﷺ and his message. They came to ʾIslām only at the time of the Opening of Makkah when there was little or not choice if they were to continue to live in Makkah.

al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was quick to realize that giving allegiance of loyalty to Yazīd would serve no purpose but would in fact jeopardize the survival of the message and way of the Prophet ﷺ and left Madinah and then Makkah to avoid having to give the *bayᶜah* and with a group of 72 followers, mainly from his family, he decided to go to Kufa where his father still had many followers and the poeple had invited him professing their allegiance to him and his family

But on the way to Kufa he found that, due to the threats by Yazīd against the people of Kufa, they had, for the most part, turned their back on him and the support he had counted on had disappeared or gone so far underground that it could not be counted upon.

At that point he was in the postion of being able neither to go forward or back and eventually found himself ﷺ and his family ﷺ and followers ﷺ in a place in the desert called Karbalāʾ as had been foretold by the Prophet ﷺ at the time of of Zaynab's ﷺ birth.

Since Yazid had ordered his commanders to seize the allegiance of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ at any cost, even by force, they had assembled a large army and surrounded the camp of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ and so it was that al-Ḥusayn ﷺ found himself with seventy two members of his family and friends in an open space, in the desert, without vegetation or water and fully aware of what the outcome of this would be, saying "O Allāh! Here is the place where our blood will be shed. Here is the place where our graves will be."

The army of Yazīd then cut off all supplies to the camp, including access to water and proceeded to make war on al-Ḥusayn ﷺ and his family ﷺ and followers ﷺ and brutally killed every man and male child with one exception and took all the women prisoner.

The Battle at Karbalāʾ was a clash of truth versus falsehood, right versus wrong, belief versus disbelief, the oppressed versus the oppressor, faith against brute force. Karbalāʾ, at the very least, was about having the courage to stand for truth and goodness in the face of oppression (*ḍẖulm*/ظلم) no matter the cost or consequences.

At Karbalāʾ, al-Ḥusayn ﷺ the 57 year old grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, sacrificed his life and all that he had in order that truth might triumph over falsehood for even if it appears he lost, in truth, he was victorious.

In truth when we study the events of Karbalāʾ and all that led up to them as a whole we see that from the very beginning al-Ḥusayn ﷺ had in mind to carry out an action which would counter the great changes that were taking place in the *ʾummah*. In truth from the very beginning of the standoff with Yazīd, Sayyidina al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was planning to carry out and perform an act that would force the *ʾummah* to finally recognize what actually had happend since the death of the Prophet ﷺ. and he accomplished that brilliantly.

What al-Ḥusayn ﷺ wanted to do was to bring about a complete transformation in peoples' minds – what is called a paradigm shift.

And he ﷺ wanted to be sure that such an event would resonate in the religious consciousness of the Muslims both then and, now.

When we look at how everything unfolded we can see, can sense, can understand that he knew and understood that military strength and political dominance is always temporal and never lasts.

On the other hand a victory that is attained by suffering and sacrifice leaves permanent imprints on the consciousness of human beings. They never forget and the act is always remembered and so it is that the sacrifice of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ is remembered until now.

As Allāh ﷻ says,

فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلِأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ

fa-lā takẖsẖowhum wa ʾakẖsẖownī wa li-ʾutimma niʿmatī ʿalaykum

And do not fear them but fear Me,
so that I may perfect My blessing upon you.
(al-Baqarah 2:150)

When Zaynab ﷺ learnt of the proposed journey to Kufa she begged her husband to give her leave to accompany her brother ﷺ he pointed out that such a journey was fraught with difficulties and hardship. Zaynab ﷺ insisted, saying, "My mother did not leave me behind to watch from afar the day when my brother is all alone, surrounded by enemies with no friend or supporter. You know that for fifty-five years my brother and I have never been separated. Now is the time of our old age and the closing period of our lives. If I leave him now, how shall I be able to face my mother, who at the time of her death told me, "Zaynab, after me you are both mother and sister for al-Ḥusayn ﷺ? It is obligatory for me to stay with you, but if I do not go with him at this time, I shall not be able to bear the separation." Her husband, Abdullāh, himself had wanted to accompany al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, but since he had been weakened by illness, he gave her permission to go on this destined journey. With her he sent two of their sons. In truth Zaynab ﷺ had been prepared all her life for what was written for her and her brother. She preferred to face the trials of Karbalāʾ with him than to ever be separated from him.

Having decided to leave, al-Ḥusayn ﷺ ordered that litters be prepared for the ladies of his family. Abu-l-Fadl ʿAbbās, his half-brother (for they shared the same father), helped Zaynab ﷺ and her daughter, Umm Kulṯum into their litter followed by two young girls, Fatima Kubra and Sakina, daughters of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ.

After the first day of their journey, the party camped at a place called Khuzaymiyyah for the night. While Zaynab ﷺ was seeing to the needs and comfort her brother ﷺ, he said to her, "What will come to pass has long since been decreed."

When later on their journey, they reached Ruhayma, they found their way blocked by Hurr ibn Yazid Riyahi. Sakinah saw what had happened and when she told Zaynab ﷺ who wept and said to her, "Would that the enemy killed all of us rather than slay my brother."

When al-Ḥusayn ﷺ heard of his sister's distress, he went to her tent and she said to him, "O my brother, talk to them. Tell them about your nearness to the Prophet ﷺ and of your kinship with him" al-Ḥusayn ﷺ replied, "'O sister! I have spoken to them at length. I tried to convince them but they are so immersed in misguidance and obsessed with greed that they cannot set aside their evil intentions. They will not rest till they have killed me and seen me soaked in my blood. Oh my dear sister, I advise you to patiently endure the forthcoming troubles. Our grandfather, the Prophet ﷺ, had told me of my martyrdom, and his prophecy cannot be untrue."

The caravan of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ reached Karbala on the second of Muḥarram and it was here that he found out that those who had originally invited him to Kufa were no longer his to command.

For, as we mentioned earlier, having got wind of their intentions, Yazīd appointed Ibn Ziyād, governor of Kufa, to carry out his orders to subvert the plans of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, and this they had achieved successfully. With the allies of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ cunningly eliminated, forces were sent to meet him near Karbalāʾ.

The tents were pitched and at night al-Ḥusayn ﷺ sat cleaning his sword and reciting couplets forecasting his doom. His son Zayn ul-ʿAbidīn ﷺ listened quietly in sorrow but when Zaynab ﷺ heard him she could not restrain her hot burning tears.

She went to her brother and prayed that death would overtake her. al-Ḥusayn ﷺ urged her not to let the *sẖayṭān* deprive her of the power of fortitude. She asked whether she might be killed in his place, and when she heard his negative reply she fainted. When she came to, her brother said, "Everything is mortal. The final word lies with Allāh ﷻ and to Him is the return. My father and grandfather were better men than I but where are they now? Their example is the standard for me and for all Muslims."

So saying he bade her be patient and not to weep over his death or shed tears or beat her cheeks. or breast. He then took her to the tent of Zayn ul-ʿAbidīn ﷺ and left her there. But Zaynab ﷺ was not to be consoled, and from this time came to be known as *Bākkiyah* or the one who weeps.

Finally on the eve of the tenth day of Muḥarram, ʾImām al-Ḥusayn ﷺ addressed his followers among his ʾAnṣar and Bani Hasẖim. It had become clear that this was to be a battle unto death. He therefore released them from any obligation to remain by his side, and let them know that no grudge would be held against them were they to turn away from the coming decisive battle and return to safety.

There was now no doubt about the slaughter that was to come. Despite the heavy burden of knowing this insurmountable fact, Zaynab ﷺ maintained her tranquility through this timne by constant prayer and her remembrance of the ultimate cause for which their lives were to be sacrificed.

Later that night when Zaynab ﷺ heard the battle-cries of their approaching troops she ran to her brother's tent and found that he had fallen asleep while cleaning his sword. She stood there quietly for a moment. He woke up, and seeing her said that he had just had a dream in which he saw his grandfather, the Prophet ﷺ, his father Ali ﷺ, his mother Fatimah ﷺ, and his brother al-Ḥasan ﷺ telling him that he would soon join them.

Seeing how distressed Zaynab ﷺ was on hearing these words, he said to her, "The blessings of Allāh ﷻ are upon you. Do not worry about the troubles these wretched people will cause."



ʿAsẖūrāʾ (عـاشـوراء), the tenth day of Muḥarram, dawned. Before going into battle al-Ḥusayn ﷺ went into the tent of his son Zaynu-l-ʿAbidīn ﷺ who was lying feverishly ill on a sheepskin, too sick to join his father in battle. He was being tended to by his aunt Zaynab ﷺ. and here al-Ḥusayn ﷺ bade him farewell, saying, "My son, you are the best and purest of my children. After me you will be my successor and deputy. Take care of the women and children during captivity and the rigors of travel. Console them. My son, convey to my friends my salāms and tell them their ʾImām has been killed away from his home and that they should mourn for me."

Sighing deeply, he turned to Zaynab ﷺ and the other women of the Bani Hasẖim and said, "Take heed and remember that this, my son, is my successor and the future ʾImām and is to be obeyed by all alike." To Zaynab ﷺ he said, "After killing me my enemies will strip the clothes from my body. Therefore please bring me some old tattered clothes to wear so that they might not strip me of my robes and leave me naked." Zaynab ﷺ did as he requested.

That morning Zaynab ﷺ brought to al-Ḥusayn ﷺ her two sons ʿAun and Muḥammed and said to him, "O my brother, if women were permitted to fight I would have courted death to save you. But it is not allowed. Accept therefore the sacrifice of my two sons."

The bloody battle raged all day. One by one the sons, kinsmen and supporters of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ were butchered on the battlefield. When the sons of Zaynab ﷺ were killed she bore their death with fortitude. She did not come out of her tent, nor did she loudly lament for she did not wish to cause grief or bring shame to her brother. But when the corpse of ʿAli Akbar ﷺ, the son of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was brought to the tents of the women Zaynab ﷺ was distraught. Oblivious of her veil she came out of her tent and clasped the body saying, "Would that I had become blind, or had been buried beneath the ground so as not to have seen this day."

Their enemies did not even give them access to any water that might soothe their parched throats. Their water supplies had long since been finished. When the al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was taking his final leave of the women, Zaynab ﷺ asked that he try to get a little water for his infant son ʿAlī Asgẖar ﷺ who was so very thirsty.

The ʾImām ﷺ took him in his arms and went to beseech the enemy commander, ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, for water for the innocent child. But his request fell on deaf ears and stone hearts. Instead, an arrow pierced the child's neck, killing him instantly. ʾImām al-Ḥusayn ﷺ returned with the child still in his arms, himself spattered with his blood of his son. Zaynab ﷺ took the small corpse from her brother and pressing it close to her chest lamenting the cruelty of their ennemy that even one so young and innocent should be murdered.

The fateful day wore on and al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was wounded so many times that eventually he fell off his horse whereupon his enemies encompassed him and attacked him with swords and spears. When Zaynab ﷺ saw his agony from her tent door she went on to the field of battle and approaching the al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, she said, "Oh my brother, my master, would that the sky fell down on the earth and the mountains toppled to the ground." Then she turned to ʿUmar ibn Saʿd and saying, "Oh Saʿd, al-Ḥusayn ﷺ is being butchered and you just watch." His eyes filled with tears, but he made no reply.

Then Zaynab ﷺ addressed the others of the army: "Is there no Muslim among you who could help the grandson of the Prophet ﷺ?" And then the fighting came to an end. Seventy-three brave men had faced four thousand, and after the bloody encounter was over none of the supporters of the ʾImām ﷺ were left alive. The the body of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was trampled into the earth by the horses of his enemies, his head was severed, and even the old tattered clothes with which he had hoped to preserve his modesty were stripped from him.

At the moment of the death of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ the Angel Jibraʾīl ﷺ called: "Know! al-Ḥusayn ﷺ has just been murdered in Karbalāʾ."

Upon hearing this Zaynab ﷺ rushed to Zayn-l-ʿAbidīn ﷺ and told him of the tragedy that had just occurred. At his request she raised the curtain of the tent door for him and looking towards the battlefield, he exclaimed: "Oh my Aunt, my father has been killed, and with him the spring of generosity and honour too has come to an end. Inform the women and ask them to conduct themselves with patience and forbearance and tell them to be prepared to be robbed, plundered and taken captive."

Now the enemy came to the tents of the women and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd gave the order to loot which they did with a vengance. Barging in, they plundered what they could and set the tents on fire. They beat the women with their swords and snatched away their head coverings and veils. The bedding of Zaynu-l-ʿAbidīn ﵇ was ripped from beneath him and he was left lying feverish, weak and unable to move. The earrings of Faṭimah and Sakinah were ripped from their ears, making them bleed and as the tents burned, Zaynab ﵂ gathered the young women and went to find Zaynu-l-ʿAbidīn ﵇. Finding that he had not been killed, Sẖimr ibn Dhi'l-Jawsh, who had personally beheaded al-Ḥusayn ﵇ now came to behead Zaynu-l-ʿAbidīn ﵇ but Zaynab ﵂ threw herself on her sick nephew to protect him and Sẖimr was stopped from carrying out his evil intention.

Most of the women and the children had fled into the open in terror. As night fell Zaynab ﵂ collected them all together, but could not find Sakinah anywhere. She was greatly perturbed and called on her dead brother to tell her where the girl was. A voice replied, "Oh my sister, my daughter is with me." Sakinah had slipped away to where the body of her dead father lay and Zaynab ﵂ found her there clinging to his body and brought the orphaned child back to the rest.

The women and children of the Ahlu-l-Bayt ﵈ were then rounded up, and the next morning brought before the governor of Kufa, ʿAbīdullāh Ibn Ziyād (عبيد الله بن زياد). Sayyidah Zaynab ﵂ was unveiled, wearing torn clothes and was surrounded by her female relatives also disheveled and unveiled. Ibn Ziyād inquired as to whom she was, but no one responded. When he inquired for the third time, a maid servant replied, "She is Zaynab bint Fāṭimah ﵂."

Thereupon Ibn Ziyād shouted: "Praise be to Allāh who has disgraced and destroyed you and brought dishonor to your name." Sayyidah Zainab ﵂ replied: "All praise is due to the Almighty Allāh ﷻ Who honored us by raising the Nabi Muhammad ﷺ amongst us and purified us. Only the wicked and vicious are disgraced." Ibn Ziyād said again, "Don't you see how Allāh has treated your family?" Sayyidah Zainab ﵂ replied, "Death was their fate, so they met with death. Allāh ﷻ will gather you and them together very soon and then you can cross examine each other in *His* Court."

Ibn Ziyād said: "Allāh has given me joy in the death of your arrogant brother and the rebels of your family." Zaynab ﷺ tried to restrain herself but could not suppress her tears and said: "By Allāh, you have killed my brother and my leader (*ʾimām*), destroyed my family, slashed my branches, and cut off my roots.

"If this makes your heart rejoice then you are welcome to rejoice."

Ibn Ziyād smiled and said: "Bravo! This is heroism. Your father was a poet as well as a hero.

Zaynab ﷺ replied: "What does a woman have to do with heroism? My misfortune had made me unmindful of heroism. What I say comes out of my mouth from a burning heart." Ibn Ziyād was enraged but his advisor ʿUmar bin Harith̦ said: "May Allāh ennoble the Amir! She is but a woman and the words of a woman should be taken lightly."

Then the heads were brought before ibn Ziyād. Ḥamid bin Muslim who accompanied Kholi bin Yazīd while carrying the head of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ to Kufa reported that when the head of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was placed before Ibn Ziyād, he repeatedly struck the lips of the ʾImām with his stick. Seeing this, Zayd bin Arqām ﷺ stood up and admonished him not to do so, as he had seen the Prophet ﷺ kiss those very lips. He then began to weep bitterly. Ibn Ziyād got annoyed with him and said: "May Allāh make you weep more! Had you not been old and decrepit I would certainly have put you to death." Zayd bin Arqam ﷺ left the meeting, saying:

"Oh Arabs! Henceforth you are all slaves. You have killed the son of Fāṭimah ﷺ and you have appointed Ibn Marjana (another name of Ibn Ziyād) as your ruler.

"He puts your noble men to death and enslaves your pious persons. You have chosen humiliation. May Allāh ﷻ destroy those who accept humiliation."

After this incident Ibn Ziyād instructed the citizens to assemble in the main Masjid and delivered a sermon before the assembly in which he said the following:

"All praise is due to Allāh Who has made the truth manifest!

He has granted victory to the followers of truth. Yazīd bin Muᶜāwīya, the Commander of the faithful (*amiru-l-muʾminīn*) and his party became victorious and defeated Ḥusayn bin ᶜAlī and his companions, the liars."

On hearing this, ᶜAbdullāh bin Afīf Azdi, a well-known companion of ᶜAlī ﷺ who had lost his eye-sight in the battles of Jamal and Siffin, stood up and shouted for all to hear.

"By Allāh! Ibn Marjana, it is *you* who are a liar and the son of a liar, and not Ḥusayn bin ᶜAlī ﷺ." Ibn Ziyād became enraged and immediately put him to death. Just like that! Just like that!

Soon after the brutal forces of the army took the survivors of Kufa to Yazīd in Damascus, the capital and stronghold of Bani Umayyad power. The ladies and children were forced to ride on the bare backs of the camels roped together without their head coverings (*ḥijāb*). The young ᶜAli Zaynu-l-ᶜAbidīn ﷺ, though still feverish and sick, was put in heavy chains with iron rings round his neck and his ankles, and was made to walk barefooted behind the caravan on the plains from Karbalāʾ to Damascus and Zaynab ﷺ, in anguish due to the death of her brother Husayn ﷺ and her sons Muḥammad and ᶜAun ﷺ, was forced to march unveiled in front of the line of camels bearing the other ladies and children, an indignity designed to humilate the granddaughter of the Prophet ﷺ after her speech in Kufa.

When they reached the outskirts of Damascus they were made to halt and kept waiting in the burning sun while Yazīd was informed of their arrival and fixed the time for their entry into the city.

Finally, the members of the family of the Prophet ﷺ were paraded before the assembled crowds into the city of Damascus tied with ropes and herded like sheep and goats. If anyone stumbled they were whipped – ladies and children. The city streets had been decorated and the sound of music filled the air. The people of Damascus came out in throngs wearing festive clothes and rejoiced when they saw the procession, preceded as always by the heads of the martyrs ﷺ on lances. Bearing themselves with dignity and self-respect, the prisoners were paraded through Damascus.

Zaynab ﷺ even refused the offerings of food that some of the onlookers offered them out of compassion. She did this because in one of his speeches, al-Ḥusayn ﷺ had said that the authorities in Kufa had given him only two options – humiliation or death – and went on to say, "And we do not accept the husks and morsels of humiliation."

The son of an old enemy of the Prophet ﷺ who had waged war with ʾImām ʿAlī ﷺ was in the crowds. When he saw the young ʿAli Zayn ul-Abidīn ﷺ he jeeringly asked him who was now victorious. In reply Zayn ul-Abidīn ﷺ said: "If you wish to find out who has been victorious, do so when it is time for prayer and the *ʾadẖan* and *ʾiqamah* are recited."

In this manner the captives were paraded through the streets and alleys of Damascus until the afternoon came abd they reached the palace of Yazīd. There he was seated on his throne and was much pleased when he saw the forty-four bound captives arrive.

The head of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ was brought to him on a golden tray and he too struck the teeth of al-Ḥusayn ﷺ with his stick saying: "Oh Husayn! Now you have truly paid the price for your revolt."

When Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ and her companions saw this show of arrogance they burst into tears, and there were many present from the people of Damscus who were deeply ashamed and wept.

But Yazīd carried on gloating over his victory. He said to his subjects: "Don;t weep. My ancestors who were killed at Badr have been avenged today. Now it is clear that all of this was just a play staged on the part of Bani Hasẖim to gain power, and there was neither prophet nor was there any divine revelation."

Given these actions, given these words Is there really anyone who can really doubt who Yazīd was – and is – for he is still with us?

It was under such emotionally charged circumstances that Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ, the courageous daughter of a courageous father ﷺ and the corageous sister of a corageous brother ﷺ, stood up and gave this very moving speech in response to Yazīd's statements.

"Oh Yazīd, play any trick you like and do anything that you think would make ʾIslām vanish, but you should know that you can not eradicate our message, path and memory. You should know that our memory will never die."

Then Zaynu-l-ʿAbdīn ﷺ spoke out: "O son of Muʿāwīya, Hind and Abu Sufyan! Revelation and *nubuwwa* came to our house long before you were born. In the battles of Badr, Uhud and ʾAḥzāb the flag of Rasulullāh ﷺ was in the hands of my grandfather Alī ﷺ and the flag of the *kuffār* was in the hands of your father and grandfather. If you understood what shameful acts you have committed, you would run into the mountains and cry out 'Woe to me!' I warn you of tomorrow's regret."

Then Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ began to speak again.

"Praise be to Allāh, Lord of all the worlds and blessings be upon my grandfather ﷺ the seal of all the Prophets ﷺ. Oh Yazīd, know that Allāh says,

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا السُّوأَىٰ
أَنْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

tḫumma kāna ʿaqibata-l-ladḫīna ʾasāāʾu-s-sūūʾāā
ʾan kadḫdḫabū bi-ʾāyāti-llāhi wa kānu bihā tastahziʿūn

Then evil was the end of those who dealt in evil
because they denied the Signs of Allāh and mocked them.
(Sūrat ar-Rūm 30:10)

"Oh Yazīd! Do you really believe that you have made our life miserable and our existence impossible? That we are powerless just because we are standing in front of you tied and that you have gained power over us?

"Do you believe that we have been disgraced and that you instead have been honored by Allāh?

"Do you really believe that your position is safe and secure now that your crooked affairs have been smoothed out, and that you are the master of this ʾummah and our ruler?

"Wait! Wait! And wait again. Have you forgotten Allāh ﷻ says:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ
إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

wa lā yaḥsabanna-l-ladḫīna kafarūū
ʾannamā numlī lahum kẖayru-li-ʾañfusihim
ʾinnamā numlī lahum li-yazdādūū ʾitḫma – wa lahum ʿadḫābum-muhīn

And let not those who cover up [the Truth]
think that Our putting off punishment is something good for them.
We put it off that they may increase their evil deeds!
And a shameful suffering awaits them.
(Sūrah ʾĀl ʿImrān 3:178)

"Is this your justice that the women of your house sit veiled in their *hijab* whilst we, the daughters of the Prophet ﷺ are imprisoned and paraded from place to place unveiled? Your men have taken us from town to town where all sorts of people have been looking at us — rich and poor, young and old, honourable ones and those of disrepute; all gaze at us from far and near, and we have no one to come to our aid.

"Oh Yazīd! Whatever you have done proves your arrogance in the Face of Allāh ﷻ and your denial of His Prophet ﷺ and of the Holy Book and the Sunnah (practices) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent down to him ﷺ by Allāh ﷻ.

"Your deeds should not cause amazement because one whose ancestors chewed the livers of the martyrs and whose flesh grew from the bodies of virtuous people and who fought the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ and who mobilized parties for fighting against him — it is only natural that the descendants of such people like you should be most prominent amongst the Arabs in unbelief, sinfulness, cruelty — and cause conflicts (*fiṭnah*) and act against Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ.

"Remember that the evil deeds and sinful actions that you have committed are the result of unbelief and old grudges you bear because of your ancestors who were killed at Badr.

"One who casts his glance of enmity, malice, and rancor upon us does not lag behind in practising enmity against us.

"He proves it with his disbelief (*kufr*) and denial of the Prophet ﷺ proclaiming with pride and joy and jubilantly announcing from the rooftops 'I, Yazīd, have slaughtered and butchered the sons of the Prophet ﷺ and imprisoned his family members!' and wishes only that his ancestors had lived to see his accomplishment

"Oh Yazīd! You are striking the lips of ʾAbu ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥusayn ﷺ with your stick.

"Do you not know that these are the lips that were kissed so often by the Prophet ﷺ and yet your face reflects pleasure?

"May Allāh ﷻ avenge those who have oppressed us!

"Oh Yazīd! If you thought over what you have done to your yourself you would surely wish your arms were paralysed and severed from your elbow and you would wish that your parents had not given birth to you because you would know that Allāh ﷻ is angry with you and the Prophet ﷺ is now your enemy.

"Oh Yazīd! remember that you have cut your own skin and flesh to pieces. Soon you will be brought before Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ!

"If you have gained something today by shedding blood, you will certainly be a loser on the Day of Judgment. On that day nothing but your deeds will count. On that day you will curse Ibn Marjāna and he will curse you. On that day you and your followers will quarrel with one another by the side of the Divine scale of Justice. On that day you will see that the best provision which your father made for you was that he enabled you to kill the children of the Prophet ﷺ. I swear by Allāh ﷻ that I do not fear anyone except Him and do not complain to anyone else.

You may employ your deceit and cunning efforts, but I swear by Allāh ﷻ that the shame and disgrace which you have earned by the treatment meted out to us cannot be eradicated.

"I thank Allāh ﷻ Who has concluded the task of the Leaders of the Youths of Paradise ﷺ with prosperity and forgiveness and has bade them welcome and accommodated them in that Garden. I pray to Allāh ﷻ that He may elevate their ranks and favor them more with His kindness, for Allāh *is* Omnipotent.

"Oh Yazīd! On the day when Allāh ﷻ will be the Judge and Muḥammad ﷺ will be the petitioner, and your limbs will give evidence against you, and your father, who made you the ruler of the Muslims, will receive His punishment.

"Oh Yazīd! Do not feel joyous on killing the family of the Prophet ﷺ for remember that Allāh ﷻ has said:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا
بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

wa lā taḥsabanna-l-ladẖīna qutilū fī sabīli-llāhi amwatā:
bal ʾaḥyāʿun ʿinda rabbihim yurzaqūna
fariḥīna bimāā ʾatāhumu-llāhu miñ faḍlihi

Do not think that those
who have been killed in the Way of Allāh are dead!
No! They are alive and with their Lord is their provision
—jubilant—because of what Allāh in HIs Grace has given them.
(Sūrah ʾĀl ʿImrān 2:169-170)

"Allāh ﷻ is sufficent to deal with you. The Messenger ﷺ is your enemy and Jibrīl ﷺ is our support and help against you.

"Those who have made you the head of state and burdened the Muslims with your leadership will soon find out what awaits them. The end of all tyrants is agony.

"Oh Yazīd! I speak about the severe punishment that lies in store for you not for the sake that you might regret and repent at what you did because that would be a fantasy — your heart has hardened — your soul (*nafs*) is rebellious — your body is busy in disobedience.

"You are one of those whose heart is the nest of the devil in which he lays his evil eggs. Truly your character is itself an ugly creation of the devil.

"One wonders how virtuous people, sons of Prophets ﷺ and their successors should be butchered by such evildoers and sinners.

"Our blood is shed by their hands and our flesh drips from their lips.

"We feel grieved to think of those whose sacred and pure bodies are lying on the sands of the burning desert, shot through with arrows, abandoned without burial.

"Oh Yazīd! if you consider our defeat as your achievement then you will have to pay it's price. Allāh ﷻ commits no injustice to His servants. Only in Him do we put our trust and faith.

"He alone will deliver us and in Him alone do we seek safety and with Him do our hopes rest.

"I swear by Allāh ﷻ who sent upon our household His Book and Prophet ﷺ that you will never reach our station. Neither will you ever be able to destroy our station or extinguish our light, nor will you ever be able to wipe out your shame and dishonor.

"Your word is weak and your days are surely numbered.

"Beware of the Day when the Announcer will announce the curse of Allāh ﷻ on the oppressors (*ḍẖālimīn*) and the unjust!

"All Praise is for Allāh ﷻ who appoints a peaceful place for His friends and grants them success in their aims, and thereafter calls them back to His Mercy, Pleasure and Bliss. We pray to Allāh ﷻ to favor us with full payment.

"Surely Allāh ﷻ is Kind and Merciful to His creatures."



Looking at the merits and circumstances of Sayyida Zaynab ﷻ can anybody say that the stations she passed and the obstacles she overcame were any more difficult that the stations crossed over by the companions of the Prince of Martyrs ﷻ? Having observed the historical conditions, can any person claim that in those trying moments her tongue had any knots? That her heart was in any way intimidated? That she faced any fear or dread?

She *is* the voice of truth in the face of all tyranny and tyranical governate and oppresive sultanate. Can there be any doubt that her words were more brutal for Yazīd than the wounds wrought by thousands of swords and spears? Can it be refuted that this sermon and others like it, some reaching us through history and others not, were such powerful weapons that they overturned the throne of Yazīd and his like and rendered them, in the end, non-existant.

As the *dḫakir* at-Turabi said,

"When Makkah was conquered the Prophet ﷺ gave a kẖutbah
now when Sẖam is conquered Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ gave a kẖutbah."

The Prophet ﷺ in his kẖutbah freed ʾAbu Sufyan, the grandfather of Yazīd, who could easily have become part of the booty won by the Prophet ﷺ. Now Sayyidah Zaynab ﷺ reminds Yazīd of that freedom just as she implicates him in his attempt to destroy ʾIslām. She exposes the hypocrisy that had assumed power and underscores the insignificance of such power. — and the wrath that awaits those who ride the steeds of wealth and arrogance and tyranny.

Her grandfather ﷺ confronted the ruling power of his time just as her mother ﷺ and father ﷺ confronted the ruling authority of their time. Her brother ﷺ sacrificed his life and his family to preserve the Message of Allāh ﷻ. All of these deeds had to be brought to light and for that Allāh ﷻ chose Sayyidah Zaynab ﷺ.

Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ is her mother's ﷺ daughter and her mother ﷺ is the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ. In a sense it does not matter that no son of the Prophet ﷺ survived because Fāṭimah ﷺ survived and she is truly the *warith* of the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ and, indeed, all the Prophets, Messengers and Awakeners ﷺ.

Her blessed daughter Sayyida Zaynab ﷺ carries the benefaction of all the Messengers ﷺ and Friends ﷺ of Allāh ﷻ, of her parents ﷺ, and of her brothers ﷺ; a blessing of true virtue, justice, patience, motherhood, sisterhood, sacrifice, nobility, love, swordless war, dishonored honor and so much more. This is the Legacy of Sayyidah Zaynab ﷺ. She ﷺ *is* the Lady of the Garden, a realm in which the glories of this world fade into non-being. Though she deserved the title and honor in this world it was not her destiny, but ultimately, all of that is nothing compared to the glory that is hers ﷺ.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

ʾinnamā yurīdu-llāhu li-yudẖhiba ʿankumu-r-rijåsa
ʾahla-l-bayti wa yuṭahhirakum taṭåhīrā

Allāh only wishes to remove impurity from you
oh People of the House
and to purify you with a thorough purification.

(Sūrah al-ʾAḥzāb 33:33)

Reflecting on the speech of Sayyidah Zaynab ﷺ in the very house and the court of the killer we see that due to her words people came to know of the events of Karbalāʾ and the hearts of the people were stirred and the tragic events of Karbalāʾ became, and continue to become, more widely known throughout the Muslim world.

But when we try to see or understand what this recounting has led to for the generality of Muslims on the most part we find that it comes down to tears and recriminations for what has happened in a lost past rather than impacting the present and changing the future.

People no doubt are moved, many weep and more but when we look closely at the world around us, especially our Muslim world, we find that in fact Yazīd won and continues to win and, in fact, we find his forces are everywhere ensconced in the halls of power and government not to mention often among the erstwhile ʿulemāʾ.

Look closely from one end of the Muslim world to the other – from West Africa all the way through the Middle East, the Jazeera, and Central and South Asia down to and through the Muslim Archipelego of the South China Seas and see corruption, graft, coercion, murder, rape, drukenesss, both the production of drugs and the taking of drugs and all kinds of indecent behavior and acts — in short the entire filthy panopoly of dirty living practiced by Yazīd

Where in the entire Muslim world is there a truly Muslim country?

Yes there are countries that have flags with the Sẖahadah or the Takbīr boldly written on them for all to see but so what — in truth it's just words on cloth not deeds in action.

Many of these countries host so-called ʾIslāmic conferences and one of them even hosts the annual pilgrimage but look more closely at what really goes on in all these countries and one is very hard put to find anything, aside from, *alḥamdulillāh*, the many pious and upstanding individual Muslims scattered throughout these lands, that really represent the values that al-Ḥusayn ﷺ laid down his life to uphold and that his sister, Zaynab ﷺ spoke of so eloquently.

But in the end it is these scattered indiviudals and not the governments or, even, established ʿulema who are the defenders of Truth.

What does it really mean when Sayyidah Zaynab ﵂ addresses Yazid and says to forthrightly to him,

"Those who have made you the head of state and burdened the Muslims with your leadership will soon find out what awaits them. The end of all tyrants is agony.

"Oh Yazīd! I speak about the severe punishment that lies in store for you not for the sake that you might regret and repent at what you did because that would be a fantasy — your heart has hardened — your soul (*nafs*) is rebellious — your body is busy in disobedience.

"You are one of those whose heart is the nest of the devil in which he lays his evil eggs. Truly your character is itself an ugly creation of the sẖayṭān."

How many so-called leaders of the present day Muslim world, how many of the ʿulemaʿ and, even sadly to say, many who claim to be among the ʾawliyāʾ, could these words be easily addressed to?

Eeverywhere we hear talk of the Qurʾān and Sunnah but who in truth is upholding the Qurʾān and Sunnah and who is it that merely uses these word to hide behind while robbing the people blind.

In the time of the Prophet ﷺ there was no permanent Baytu-l-Mal or public treasury. Whatever revenues or other amounts were received were distributed immediately. There were no salaries to be paid, and there was no state expenditure. Hence the need for the treasury at public level was not felt. In the time of Abu Bakr ﵁ as well there was not treasury. Instead a house was set aside where all money was kept on receipt. As all money was distributed immediately so that the treasury remained generally locked. Upon the death of Abu Bakr ﵁ there was only *one* dirham in the public treasury.

In the time Umar ﵁ as the community grew and more money became available he designated a Baytu-l-Mal and simultaneously equality and equity was extended to all citizens, even to the kẖalifah, as Umar ﵁ believed "no one, no matter how important, should live in a way that would distinguish him from the rest of the people." He himself lived "a simple life detached from worldly luxuries," and wore "old sandals and was usually clad in patched garments," and, indeedn often slept "on the bare floor of the masjid."

Limitations on wealth were also set for governors and officials, who would often be dismissed if they showed any outward signs of pride or wealth which might distinguish them from the people and he made sure that the public treasury was not wasted on unnecessary luxuries as he believed that "the money would be better spent on the welfare of the people rather than towards lifeless bricks."

I want you to look at this picture to realise the truth of what I say that, alas, those times are gone and Yazīd remains firmly in control.



Allāh ﷻ says to the Muslims

فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ

fa-ʾayna tadẖhabūn

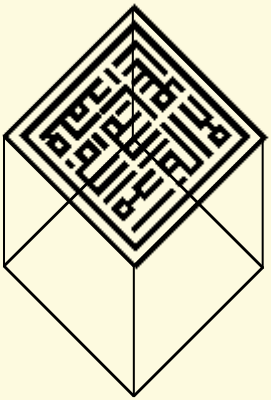
So where are you going?

(Sūrah Takwīr 81:26)





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