

(Along with Imam Husain (AS), from Medina to Karbala (3

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As we said yesterday, after leaving Medina, Imam Husain (AS) arrived in Mecca, and stayed for four months in this city which houses the sanctuary of God. The news spread throughout Arabia that the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) was in Mecca, and as the season for the annual Hajj pilgrimage drew near, more and more people became eager to visit the holy city.

They were tired of the tyranny of the rule of Mu'awiyah and were even more disturbed that a Godless libertine like Yazid had taken power. Many notable people corresponded with Imam Husain (AS) and expressed their support and sympathy for him. A flood of letters began to flow, especially from Iraq and particularly from the city of Kufa, inviting the Imam to come and deliver them from oppression by rebuilding the Islamic state. Naturally such situation was dangerous for Yazid. The stay of Imam Husain (AS) in Mecca continued until the season of pilgrimage when Muslims from all over the Islamic world came to Mecca to perform the Hajj.

From Mecca, the Imam sent his cousin, Muslim Ibn Aqeel to Kufa to assess the situation. In late Ramadhan, Muslim started for Iraq. Muslim entered Kufa on the fifth of the month of Shawwal. According to the narration of Tabari, he resided at the house of Mukhtar bin Abi Ubaydah and the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt came to visit him. Then when a group of people gathered, he read the letter of Imam Husain (AS) to them, hearing which they started weeping. Then Abess Ibn Abi Shabeeb Shakiri arose and after Praising and Glorifying Allah said, "Now then! I do not speak for the people, nor am I aware as to what is concealed in their hearts, and thus I do not want to deceive you. By Allah! I only say that which is in my heart. By Allah! I shall respond to you whenever you call out, and shall fight your enemies by your side. And in your presence I shall strike them with the sword until I meet Allah, and I do not intend anything except Allah's favor (in lieu of all this)."

Then Habib Ibn Mazaher stood up and said, "May Allah's blessings be upon you! You have revealed concisely whatever you had in your mind. I swear by Allah, besides Whom there is no other Deity, that I too am of the same belief as of this man (referring to Abis who preceded him)", and then he repeated what Abess had said.

According to Shaikh Mufid in the book al-Irshad, eighteen thousand men swore the oath of allegiance to Muslim and hence he wrote to Imam Husain (AS) informing him about their oath, and invited him to come to Kufa. This letter was written by Muslim some twenty seven days before his martyrdom.

During these days, the Imam learned that Yazid had sent assassins disguised as pilgrims, with weapons concealed in their Ahraam, to kill him. Realizing the sanctity of the divinely inviolable status of the Ka'ba and its environs he decided to leave Mecca. Moreover, he knew that his martyrdom among the pilgrims would not serve any purpose. When asked the reason for the mysterious departure, Imam Husain (AS) said that he would perform this year's pilgrimage in the desert of Karbala, offering the sacrifice of not any animals, but himself and his family and friends. Giving a short speech in the vast crowd of people, he announced that he was setting for Iraq, and said he would be martyred. He asked people to join him in attaining the goal of offering their lives in the path of God. Some of outstanding people of Mecca stood in the way of Imam Husain and warned him the danger of the move he was making, according to their own thinking. But he answered that he refused to pay allegiance and to give his approval to an unjust regime based on tyranny. He added that wherever he would go, he would be killed, so he would leave Mecca in order to preserve the respect for the House of God, and not to allow this respect be destroyed by letting his blood spilled there. Abdullah Ibn Zubayr, who has also sought refuge in Mecca from Yazid, was happy that the Prophet's grandson was leaving the holy city. He was jealous of the Ahl al-Bayt and knew that as long as Imam Husain (AS) was in their midst, people will never pay any attention to him.

While on the way of Kufa, the Imam received the sad news that under the pressure of Yazid's agents, after the tyrannical Omayyad governor of Basra, Obaidollah Ibn Ziyad had been appointed governor of Kufa as well, the Kufans had deserted his representative. Because of threats and bribes some of the people of weak faith had joined the Yazid's army against him. He learned of the tragic martyrdom of Muslim Ibn Aqeel in Kufa. There was no way for Imam to turn back from martyrdom for the sake of God and humanitarian values. Leaving Mecca from the plain of Arafaat on the 8th of Zilhijja, just one day before the Hajj, the Imam left a letter for the people. The letter read:

"I have not risen to stir emotions, to play with oppression. I want to bring the Ummah back to the path of Amr-bi'l-Marouf & Nahi An'il Munkar. I want to lead them to the path of my Grandfather and my father Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

After leaving Makkah there were 14 places mentioned in history books where Imam either stayed or met people or gave sermons, of which we will speak in our next article; until then .goodbye