

Class Discussion: The Path of Awakening—The Journey of the Ahlulbayt

I. The Immediate Aftermath: Karbala to Kufa

The tragedy did not end on the afternoon of Ashura. After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions, the Umayyad army **looted and burned the tents** of the Prophet's family, stripping the martyrs of their belongings and severing their heads. While the bodies of the martyrs lay unburied in the desert, the head of Imam Husayn was immediately dispatched to Kufa by Khawli ibn Yazeed Asbahi.

- **The Head at Khawli's House:** When Khawli reached Kufa at night, he found the palace closed and hid the head under a **laundry drum** in his home. When his wife discovered the identity of the head, she cursed him and refused to remain with him.
- **The Entry into Kufa:** The surviving family, including the ailing **Imam Zayn al-Abidin**, were forced onto unsaddled camels and paraded through Kufa's markets. To prevent an uprising in a city that had once been Imam Ali's capital, the governor Ibn Ziyad deployed thousands of soldiers and **banned citizens from carrying even walking sticks**.
- **The Confrontation:** As residents began to wail, Imam Zayn al-Abidin rebuked them, asking, **"You weep and lament for us, then who killed us (except you)?"**. In the court, when Ibn Ziyad mocked the family's fate, Lady Zaynab famously responded, **"I saw nothing but beauty,"** asserting that true disgrace belonged only to the wicked.

II. The Northern Route: Signs and Christian Solidarity

Fearing attacks from tribes sympathetic to the Imam, the guards avoided main roads, traveling instead along lesser-used, arduous routes toward Mosul.

- **The Miraculous Writing:** At their first stop, a hand reportedly appeared from a wall and wrote in blood, questioning how a nation that killed Husayn could hope for the **Prophet's intercession** on Judgment Day.
- **Tikrit:** When the soldiers lied to the residents of Tikrit, claiming the head belonged to a "Kharijite," a local recognized it as Imam Husayn's. The shocked **Christian population** rang their church bells in mourning and expressed disgust at the crime, forcing the convoy to flee the city.
- **The Boulder of Mosul:** Near Mosul, the residents resisted the convoy's entry, with 4,000 people reportedly preparing to seize the head for an honorable burial. Outside the city, the head was placed on a boulder; historical accounts state a **drop of blood** fell on the stone, which would luego bleed every year on the Day of Ashura.

III. Through Northern Syria: The Uprising at Nusaybin

- **Nusaybin:** At this border city, the horse carrying the head **repeatedly refused to move forward**. When the head eventually fell to the ground, a man named Ibrahim al-Mawsili recognized it, leading to a local uprising where the townspeople killed the soldier carrying the head and refused to allow it into the city.
- **Mount Jawshan:** On the outskirts of Aleppo, one of the Imam's wives suffered a **miscarriage** (at a site now called *Mashhad al-Saqtah*) after being refused bread and water and insulted by the locals. Another site here, *Mashhad al-Nuqtah*, marks where blood from the Imam's head fell on a stone and reportedly emerged fresh every Ashura.
- **Aleppo:** The captives spent a sleepless night in a **ruined lodging** while the soldiers feasted.

IV. Central Syria: The Rise of Resistance

As the caravan moved south, the Umayyad narrative of "victory" completely collapsed.

- **Qansareen:** A Christian monk saw a beam of light rising from the Imam's head and paid the soldiers **10,000 dirhams** to keep it for one night to honor it. Some sources report he converted to Islam after a miraculous conversation with the head; the money he gave later turned into **stones**.
- **Towns of Defiance:** Residents of **Shayzar and Kafre Taab** shut their doors and refused to provide water, telling the soldiers, "**You killed Husayn and his companions while they were thirsty!**".
- **Saibur and Homs:** In Saibur, the youth **demolished a bridge** to block the convoy, leading to a deadly clash. In Homs, the residents barred the gates and **pelted the soldiers with stones**, crying, "No disbelief after faith!".
- **Baalbek:** In contrast, Baalbek held a celebratory parade, leading Lady Umm Kulthum to **curse the town** for the humiliation inflicted on the Prophet's family.

V. Damascus: The Final Confrontation

After three weeks of travel, the caravan reached the capital. To maximize public humiliation, Shimr ignored Lady Umm Kulthum's plea for a private entrance and led them through **Bab al-Sa'at** (the Gate of the Hours), the city's busiest gate, through festive crowds.

- **The Court of Yazid:** In the palace, Yazid publicly desecrated the Imam's head, striking the lips with a staff. This act was so offensive that the Prophet's companion, **Abu Barzah al-Aslami**, openly rebuked Yazid, reminding the court that he had seen the Messenger of Allah kiss those very lips.
- **The Khutba (Sermon) of Imam Zayn al-Abidin:** When given the chance to speak, the Imam delivered a pivotal address that dismantled the state's propaganda. He introduced himself not as a nameless rebel, but by **recounting the virtues and lofty status of the Ahlulbayt**, identifying the captives as the direct family of the Prophet. His words made the reality of the tragedy undeniable, causing public sympathy to grow and criticism of Yazid to intensify.

Conclusion: The Legacy of the Journey

The journey intended to legitimize Yazid's rule instead ensured the **Umayyads' political defeat**. Facing mounting pressure, Yazid eventually attempted to shift the blame to Ibn Ziyad and ordered the release of the family. According to widely accepted Shi'i accounts, the heads were returned to Imam Zayn al-Abidin, who reunited them with the bodies of the martyrs at **Karbala**. The path of the captives became one of history's most enduring testimonies of resistance against oppression.