

HISTORY  
of  
ISLAM

The Age of The Rightly-Guided Caliphs:  
AL-Khulafaar-Rashidun

Biography of  
Ibn Sufiyan Muawiyah  
his successor son Yazid & the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali

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MA,D. ED(London)



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# **The Biography Of Muawiyah Ibn Sufiyan**

His successor son Yazid and the Martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali

A Reader's Series

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Written By: Maulvi Abdul Aziz

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# Publisher's Note

*In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful*

For many years, I have been looking for textbooks on the History of Islam for English-speaking students, yet I have found very few. Most did not overcome a common problem: they did not go beyond the era of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Bearing this in mind, we, at Darussalam, have resolved to present the entire History of Islam to our youth in language that appeals to them, in a simple yet lucid manner. The first four volumes in this series explore Islamic history during the period of the first Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs.

This is the fifth volume in this series, which deals with the life and rule of Amir Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. He is a crucial figure in the history of Islam. When Mu'awiyah became the Caliph in 41 AH./661 CE, he put an end to a period of destructive and war and established the Umyyad dynasty which lasted for roughly ninety years until it was overthrown by the Abbasids.

This volume also throws light on the brief rule of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah who became caliph after the death of Mu'awiyah. Along with Yazid, this volume also discusses the crucial event at Karbala. The martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali is of great significance in the history of Islam.

We would like to thank the author Maulvi Abdul Aziz, the editor and the designer Mr. Shahzad Ahmed for their diligent efforts in preparing this volume. We hope this work will inspire our youth to form a personal relationship with Umar ibn al-Khattab and encourage them to commit their lives sincerely to the mission of

'Al-Faruq', that is, discerning truth from falsehood, which he has left behind as our common heritage.

**Abdul Malik Mujahid**

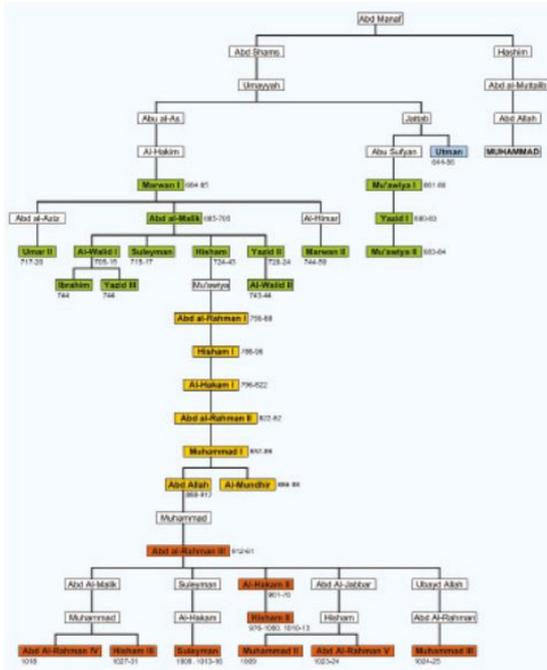
Shawwal 20, 1433

Darussalam, Riyadh - September 07, 2012

# The Umayyads

After the Rightly-Guided Caliphate, we now turn to the Caliphate of Banu Umayyah. Banu Umayyah [literally, the Children of Umayyah] were one of the leading merchant families of Makkah. Mu'awiyah ibn Sufyan came from the noble family of the Umayyads, and the name has passed to the dynasty which he founded. Dynasty means a series of rulers who all belong to the same family. In the case of Mu'awiyah, he became the first Caliph from the household of Banu Umayyah.

The period of the first two Rightly-Guided Caliphs was the best. The second half [the Period of Uthman and Ali] compared to the first half may be called a period of turmoil. Though it was certainly better than the Caliphates that followed because the Prophet's Companions were the rulers and many of his Companions were still alive.



As for the Caliphate of Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, it became validly established after the death of Ali, from the moment when Hasan ibn Ali gave up his own right to the Caliphate and transferred it to Mu'awiyah.

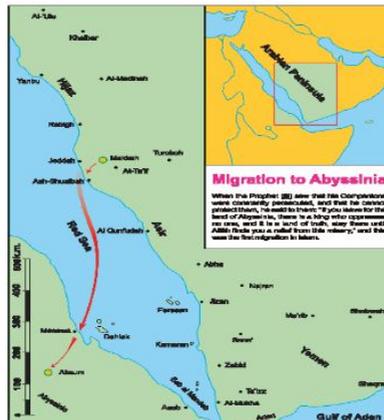
Hasan was moved by his genuine concern for the common welfare, which he hoped to secure by sparing the Muslims any further bloodshed. This also represented the fulfillment of something that the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) had foretold. He (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) had once said about Hasan, 'This [grand] son of mine is a chieftain [Sayyid] who will bring about reconciliation between two hugely powerful factions.' Mu'awiyah's leadership [Imamah] was thus made completely rightful by Hasan's commitment to him. The year in which he succeeded to the Caliphate was called the Year of the reunion [Aam

al-Jama'ah] or the Year of the Gathering; the Year of the Restoration of Muslim Unity. This was because it marked the ending of discord among all members of the Islamic Community, and their general agreement to follow the rule of Mu'awiyah. There was no third rival for the Caliphate.

After the murder of Uthman, the situation within the Muslim Community fell apart into disorder and civil war. Outward expansion almost stopped. People formed factions. The situation was terrible. Into this disorder stepped the governor of Syria, the Companion and Scribe of the Messenger of Allah and his brother-in-law, Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. In Mu'awiyah we have a master statesman and diplomat who set about developing a form that would work. It was in fact a miracle and a proof of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him), because it was the fulfillment of the supplication which the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) had made for Mu'awiyah, 'O Allah! Make him a guide who is rightly guided and guide others by him! Guide him!'

# The Early Life of Mu'awiyah

Mu'awiyah was the son of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb. His mother was Hind bint Utbah. Mu'awiyah was born in Makkah about five years before the prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) first received Revelation. His sister Umm Habibah accepted Islam early. Her full name was Ramlah bint Abi Sufyan. She was first married to Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh and migrated with him to Ethiopia. There Ubaydullah embraced Christianity, but Umm Habibah refused to follow him and remained faithful to Islam. Shortly after Ubaydullah's death, the prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) demanded her in marriage by letter. The ceremony was performed by the Negus himself. 'Negus' was the title of the Kings of Ethiopia. Later Umm Habibah came to Madinah together with the other Companions who had migrated to Ethiopia. Thus, Mu'awiyah was the brother-in-law of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him).



Mu'awiyah's father Abu Sufyan was a prominent and wealthy merchant of Makkah. His full name was Sakhr ibn Harb ibn Umayyah. He was a few years older than the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He was a rich and respected trader of Makkah. He repeatedly led the Makkan trade caravans. He led the opposition to the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) and conducted some of the military campaigns against him. His wife Hind was also one of the fiercest enemies of Islam. But she and Abu Sufyan embraced Islam when Makkah was finally conquered by the Muslim in the year 8 AH/ 629 CE. When the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) conquered Makkah, he made the House of Allah and the house of Abu Sufyan equal as places of refuge. It was a rare honour for Abu Sufyan. Later, Abu Sufyan accompanied the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) on his Campaign at Hunayn [Saturday, 19th of Shawwal, 8 AH; nineteen days after the Messenger of Allah entered Makkah]. He lost one eye at the siege of Ta'if when the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) was besieging it.

Allah's Messenger also made Abu Sufyan governor of Najran in South-west Arabia. Abu Sufyan lost his other eye at the battle of Yarmuk. The battle of Yarmuk was fought in the year 13 AH/ 634 CE. He was well-advanced in age at that time. Hind, his wife, was also there. Mu'awiyah was also in command. Thus we see the total commitment of Abu Sufyan and his family to the cause of Islam.

It was the descendants of Abu Sufyan who formed the first dynasty, the Umayyads. The Umayyads or Banu Umayyah ruled the Islamic Empire after the death of the Four-Rightly Guided Caliphs: al-Khulafa ar-Rashidun. After the Rightly-Guided Caliphs Banu Umayyah [the Umayyads] made Damascus their capital and ruled over the whole Islamic world for ninety years. For several hundred years, their caliphate and rule continued in Spain.

# **Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan: A Companion of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him)**



Mu'awiyah accepted Islam in the year of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah [6 AH/ 628 CE] But he concealed his Islam from his father. When Makkah was conquered, his father, mother, and older brother Yazid became Muslim. Thus Mu'awiyah also made his Islam public and was welcomed by the Messenger of Allah. He was about twenty-five years old at that time.

After the Conquest of Makkah, Mu'awiyah remained with the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) until the latter's death. He accompanied him on the expedition of Hunayn and the siege of Ta'if also. Mu'awiyah then came to Madinah.

Allah's Messenger (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed him as one of the recorders or scribes of the Revelation [Katib, plural Kuttab]. It was his job to write down the Revelation and write out letters for the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) to the tribes. Sometimes he was sent on various errands by the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him), who was supplicated for him,

*'O Allah! Make him a guide who is rightly-guided and guide others by him! Guide him!'*

Allah's Messenger also said,

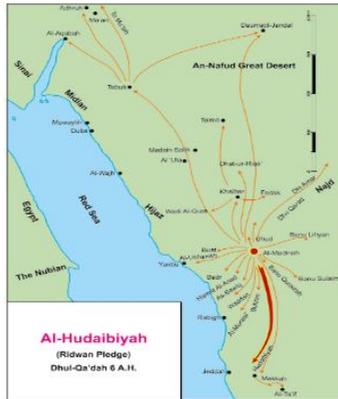
*'O Allah! Endow him with the knowledge of the Qur'an and grant him leadership of the lands.'*

In his later speeches and sermons, when he was governor and later Caliph, Mu'awiyah was known to use a lot of Qur'an. Mu'awiyah was also one of those who used to bring the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) his Wudhu water. It was in the course of this service that Allah's Messenger (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) gave him his shirt. When Mu'awiyah died, he was buried in it.

Mu'awiyah himself says, 'I used to bring Wudhu water to the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He said, "Shall I not clothe you in a shirt?" I answered, "Yes, indeed." Thereupon the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) removed the shirt he had on and clothed me in it.'" Mu'awiyah kept that shirt for his burial. Abu Hurayrah the famous Companion of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, 'Once I visited the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) when Mu'awiyah was pouring water on the hands of the Prophet who was performing Wudhu. When he completed it, he took two handfuls of water and sprinkled it on the face of Mu'awiyah, saying, "O son of Abu Sufyan! It is as if I see you in the Garden.'" The Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) once said, 'Consult Mu'awiyah in your affairs. He is trustworthy and reliable.'

Right from his childhood, Mu'awiyah had some signs of the future of which he was called the Caesar [Kisra] of the Arabs. He was known for his wisdom, good management, love of peace and moderation. He was tall, fair-complexioned, handsome, and strongly built. He was tall, very handsome, and imposing. When the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) saw him, he said, 'This is the Caesar of Arabia.'

Apart from recording the Revelation, Mu'awiyah on behalf of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him), he used to entertain and made arrangements for the meals and accommodation of foreign delegates.



Mu'awiyah had an exciting youth, but even so he avoided quarrels and foul language. He also avoided wine even before it was forbidden. During Abu Bakr's Caliphate, four armies were sent out to conquer Syria. One of them was led by Mu'awiyah's brother Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan. Yazid gave Mu'awiyah a division and put him in charge of supplying aid to him. In his Syrian expedition, his performance was extremely marvelous. Later, Umar ibn al-Khattab made him the permanent administrator of Damascus. Jordon and other regions were included in it. When Umar visited Jerusalem, Mu'awiyah accorded a reception for him and accompanied him.

# Mu'awiyah during the Caliphate of Uthman and the Formation of the Navy



Navy is the part of a country's armed forces that fight at sea, and the ships that it uses. Once during the Caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab, Mu'awiyah asked for permission for carrying out a naval attack on Constantinople and the capture of the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. But Umar did not allow him to do so. When Uthman ibn Affan became a Caliph, after the death of Umar ibn al-Khattab, he continued Mu'awiyah to remain the governor of Syria and all the adjoining regions. He allowed him to prepare a navy and extend his power. Mu'awiyah captured Syria and greatly strengthened the Islamic rule there. He kept the Roman emperor in terror and awe of him. He did not give the Romans a chance to attack the Islamic territories.

# Mu'awiyah as Governor of Syria

Syria was the economic centre of the Mediterranean. It, therefore, occupied an important position. The Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) used to make a supplication: 'Bless us in our Syria.' Syria here was ash-Sham or Greater Syria of those days. It consisted of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Syria had also a great key importance. It was extremely important to have a united defense against the Romans, who were always on the lookout for weaknesses on the part of the Muslims.

*Mu'awiyah was very cautious about justice. He was generous and fair to people of all classes.*



Before becoming Caliph, Mu'awiyah remained governor of Syria for twenty years. During Mu'awiyah's twenty years as governor, Syria became an ideal province, under his capable rule. He put into practice the advice that the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) had given him, 'When you rule, do it well.' He was very cautious about justice. He was generous and fair to people of all classes. He appreciated and honored people who had ability and talent. He helped them to advance their talents. He showed great patience towards the rashness of ignorant men. He showed large-heartedness towards the grabbing. He made the judgments of the

Shar'iah or Divine Law a binding on people. He guided them in their gathering. He led them in their Prayers. He led them in their wars. In short, Mu'awiyah proved an ideal ruler.

Under Mu'awiyah's governorship, the Syrian army became a major military force. He chose the best leaders from different tribes. He personally saw to the comfort and equipment of the troops. He increased their pay. He kept the northern border safe. He embarked on a sea expedition. He conquered Rhodes and raided Cyprus in 29 AH. This was the first time the Muslim shad sailed in the Mediterranean. Mu'awiyah was an excellent governor. None of the later rulers of Islam were better than Mu'awiyah.

Mu'awiyah was a learned man. He has narrated 163 Ahadith or Traditions of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). Mu'awiyah was a man of patience and common sense. He knew how to join hearts and that strengthened his rule. He did not take part in the Battle of the Camel. He was most famous for his self-control. He used to say: 'I do not use my sword where my whip suffices. I do not use my whip where my tongue suffices. When people pull, I loosen. If they loosen, I pull.'

What took place between him and Ali ibn Abi Talib, after the martyrdom of Uthman ibn Affan has already been discussed in the biography of Ali. There was a peace treaty between Mu'awiyah and Hasan ibn Ali. Hasan had given up his claim to the Caliphate after the martyrdom of Ali. Ali died as a martyr on 21 Ramadan 40 AH/ 28 Jan 661 CE.



After Ali's murder, Iraq declared Hasan ibn Ali as the Caliph. He remained Caliph for six months. But as the situation slipped into disorder, he soon realized that the only man capable of putting an end to the turmoil was Mu'awiyah. Hasan did not want any further bloodshed. He, therefore, sought peace. So he offered his allegiance to Mu'awiyah, and accepted him as the Caliph. The year in which this took place [41 AH/ 661 CE] is called the Year of Reunion. Till the end of the month of Rabi' ath-Thani 41 AH/ 661 CE, the entire Islamic world took the pledge of allegiance at the hands of Mu'awiyah. Up to that time, Mu'awiyah had been the governor of Syria for twenty years.

After becoming the Caliph of the entire Islamic world, he remained alive for another twenty years. The total period of his rule was forty years. In the first half of the forty years, he was a governor; and in the second half, he ruled as Caliph. When Mu'awiyah assumed the position of Caliph, he said,

'O people! I am not the best of you. Those who are better than me include Abdullah ibn Umar and other excellent men. But it may be that I am the one who will be the most useful in ruling for you, the most harmful of you to your enemy, and the one to give you the most plentifulness.'

# **Mu'awiyah as the Caliph of the Entire Muslim World**

Once peace was established, Mu'awiyah made peace with many of the Muslims who had been fighting each other by his generosity and fairness. Soon he resumed the conquests of Islam, which had been broken off by civil wars. During his rule, Mu'awiyah had no rivals. This was a situation which would not prevail again. He was extremely generous and diplomatic. Even the most obstinate of opponents would melt under his big-heartedness and glad-handling. He was an able and intelligent ruler. He treated his subjects with kindness and love. He never punished anyone will he was forced to do so. Due to his tact and far-sightedness, once again there was peace in the country. It was after quite some time that Muslims came under one banner.

Mu'awiyah knew how to use sometimes soft-heartedness and sometimes strictness. He would strike a balance between the two. But he never forgot people's association with the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He would forgive or reward merely on the ground of somebody's previous connection with the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). Marwan ibn al-Hakam was one of the governors. He was a prominent Umayyad. Mu'awiyah came to know that Marwan had discontinued a person to Suhayb, the client of Abdullah ibn Abbas. Mu'awiyah told him, 'You remembered what his father did in the matter of Uthman, but forgot his previous relationship with the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). So he re-fixed his pension, honored him, and treated him well.

Mu'awiyah in fact was a balancer or equalizer. His character was molded by his being in constant company of the Messenger of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He followed the ideal example of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). His inspiration always came from the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He followed in the footsteps of his predecessors. Once, in a sermon, which he delivered to the people, he said,

'O people! By Allah! It is easier to move mountains than to follow Abu Bakr and Umar in their conduct. But I have followed their way of behavior falling short of those before me. But more after me will equal me in it.'

There was freedom of expression during his rule. He allowed people to speak their mind. People always could speak out against something and be sure of a hearing in the presence of the Caliph. He was, however, aware of the risks hidden in total freedom of expression.

Once, Mu'awiyah sent a sum of 500 Dinars to an Ansari. The Ansari thought the amount too small. He asked his son to go and throw it into the face of the Caliph. The young man came and told Mu'awiyah what he had been asked by father to do. Mu'awiyah covered his face with his hands and said, 'Come on young man! Obey your father, but do not be too hard on your uncle.' The young man threw the coins on the ground and Mu'awiyah doubled the amount.

Mu'awiyah used to say, 'Intelligence and patience are the best things given to mankind. If someone is reminded, he should take heed. If someone is given something, he should be thankful. If someone is tested, he should control it. If someone gains power over another, he should forgive. If someone does wrong, he should seek forgiveness. If someone makes a promise, he should fulfill it.'

Thus, he was only imitating the Prophet's (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) behavior.

# Political Skills of Mu'awiyah



Mu'awiyah was known for his patience, self-control and political skills. He was an excellent orator. His decisions were firm. He possessed a fertile imagination. He had the rare ability of foreseeing future turn of events. He knew how to deal with people. He knew how to appeal and move people's hearts. He easily turned his enemies into his allies. Mu'awiyah was reckoned to be one of the best orators of his time. He used to say: 'I have achieved more success than Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan has with his sword.'



He was very diplomatic. He was wise and insightful. He won over his opponents by giving them generous gifts and by tolerance.

When people around him expressed amazement at the vastness of his gifts to his opponents, he remarked, 'A war costs limitlessly more.' This tact of Mu'awiyah proved very effective with the disorderly Bedouins. Mu'awiyah possessed a noble character. His doors were open for his subjects even at mealtimes. He honored all professions. But he did not like slave-traders and musicians. He was famous for his impartiality and justice. He was always good-natured. He honored Hasan ibn Abi Ali greatly. His love for the Messenger of Allah was profound. He was very worshipful. He spent a great deal of his time in Prayer and reciting the Qur'an, in spite of his responsibility of running a vast empire.

Mu'awiyah's behavior with the people was the best behavior of any ruler. His people loved him. His companions had access to him. They shared in consultations on matters of moment. Once, Umar ibn al-Khattab said, 'Do not mention Mu'awiyah with anything but good. I have heard Allah's Messenger say: "O Allah! Guide him."'

The fact of the matter is after Hasan had surrendered his claim to the Caliphate, Mu'awiyah reigned without a rival. He did not lose any of the conquests of Islam.

## **Achievements of Mu'awiyah**

Mu'awiyah never claimed that his rule could be compared to the Rightly-Guided Caliphate of the first three Caliphs. He, of course, claimed to be a ruler and administrator, but he often used to say, 'People will think back of me when they see the marked difference between my method of administration and of those who would hold the reins of power in future.'

## **A Day with Mu'awiyah**

During his reign, Mu'awiyah had set aside five times a day when anybody could see him. Having offered the dawn Prayer, he used to sit and listen to the happenings and events of the previous day. Thereafter, he went to his house, recited a portion of the Qur'an, gave necessary instructions to the officials and then performed four cycles of Prayer. The nobles and courtiers presented themselves to him for consultation of state affairs. Then he took breakfast at his house, but returned after a short while. A chair was placed for him in the mosque where he would listen to the complaints of anyone: Bedouins, women, children, or any other person with a complaint. He would then command his officials to make necessary inquiries and set right the wrong. When no complaint remained, he would ask the people around him: 'Let me know the problems and needs of those who cannot come to me. This is the honor which Allah (SWT) has bestowed on you.' This was his usual routine every day.

# Military Achievements of Mu'awiyah

There is no denying the fact that Muslim army achieved many victories during the reign of Mu'awiyah and extended the Islamic empire. He continued to invade the neighboring countries and the Muslims made new conquests through land and sea. His rule was extended to the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. The governor of Egypt occupied Sudan. A well-equipped fleet consisting of some 1700 warships was organized, which succeeded in conquering many of the islands like Cyprus, Rhodes, etc.

Mu'awiyah had divided the army into two parts: once was called ash-Shitawi. It was equipped with outfit and supplies to carry on warfare during winter. Similarly, the other wing known as Sawa'if fought during the summer season. The arrangement had ensured a constant vigil of the borders of Islamic regions. Mu'awiyah's Syrian army was fiercely loyal to him. It was ready to obey immediately. If the Caliph indicated it, the Syrian soldier would mount his horse with his provisions hanging from his saddle. According to Ali ibn Abi Talib, sometimes they even 'marched forth without provisions, without asking for wages. At the call of Mu'awiyah, they would present themselves for campaign twice or thrice in year, not bothering where he wanted to take them.' This was the only army competent of such faithfulness at that time.

Mu'awiyah paid his soldiers a regular salary. When they were on dangerous and prolonged missions, he comforted their families and provided for them. He relieved his troops regularly from distant outposts to prevent boredom and discontent. When he observed bravery in a soldier, he would reward him and encourage him. He built a very strong navy, which kept the Romans in constant fear. This was a task on which he was interested from the very

beginning. There were regular naval expeditions against the Romans or Byzantines. The Muslim fleet had now bases in still usable parts once used by the Romans in Syria and Egypt.

Thus, the expansion of the Islamic State, which had stopped during the Caliphate of Ali owing to internal troubles, began again once Mu'awiyah had established himself. It continued at even space for the most of the rest of the Umayyad Caliphate or rule.

From the death of Uthman [18 Dhul Hijjah 35 AH/ 28 Jan 661 CE], Mu'awiyah was the independent ruler of the West. From the surrender of Hasan, till his death, that is, for nearly twenty years, Mu'awiyah was undisputed Caliph of the entire Islamic World. During this long reign, there was prosperity and peace as a rule at home. It was disturbed only by occasional outbursts of Khawarij rebels. These rebels were easily suppressed by the strong arm of the Caliph and his able governors.

Abroad, his rule was equally successful, and extended the boundaries of Islam in all directions. Asia Minor was invaded repeatedly, almost every summer, and the walls of Constantinople [Istanbul] were reached twice. But a combined land and sea attack against the city failed, because of the defeat of the land forces.

# Trouble in Iraq and Appointment of Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan as Governor

In Iraq, however, there was trouble every now and then. Initially, Mu'awiyah wanted to sort out this problem without use of force. But as many allowances were given to them, they created more problems.

The inhabitants of Basra and the neighbouring regions had grown much undisciplined. Theft, robbery, and revolt were rife everywhere.

When nothing worked to straighten them, Mu'awiyah appointed Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan as governor of Basra in addition to his Persian command. During the Caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab, he had appointed Ziyad the governor of Persia [today's Iran]. Ali had also deputed him in Persia.



Ziyad resembled his father Abu Sufyan. He was known for his intelligence all over Arabia and had ruled over Persia very

successfully. Mu'awiyah instructed Ziyad to set and keep the people of Basra on the right path. Having arrived, Ziyad assembled the inhabitants of Basra in the Central Mosque and made a grand and impressive speech. He spoke to them in a tough tone. He said, 'People should stop their family members from wrong doings. If they do not, innocent people would too be punished for the crimes of the criminals. Those present at the spot of the crime would be punished for the crimes of those who committed them and fled. Those found roaming around in the night would be slain. One who will burn other's houses, I will burn him alive. One who will commit theft, after opening a locked door; I shall open his heart with my own sword. Oppressors will be burnt alive in a pit. If anyone is caught talking ignorance, I will chop off his tongue. But those who obey orders would be treated fairly. For needy people my door is always open. They can approach me any time they feel and I am prepared to fulfill their needs.'

Ziyad fully acted on what he said. His strong hand fell heavily on the population of that troubled city. None might venture abroad at night on pain of death. The others were ruthless. The supremacy of law, an experience new to Basra, suppressed disorder. It effectually enforced order where strife and conflict had here-to-fore prevailed. Within a few days, the troubles subsided. Doors of shops and houses remained open, but no one dared to peep in. Lost articles remained in their places in the streets. The strength of the Khawarij also diminished. Ziyad inflicted repeated defeats on the dangerous Khawarij, forcing them to retreat into the Persian highlands. But from there, they still threatened Iraq with constant advances.

Ziyad was a man of great efficiency. He cleverly bound his efficiency to his interest. He knew how to hold his province, which had been singularly hard hit by disorder, in a tight rein. Ziyad proved a pillar of strength for Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah had already given the governorship of Egypt to Amr ibn al-Aas. After taking the oath of allegiance, Mu'awiyah had made Mughirah ibn Shu'ba the governor

of Kufah. Mu'awiyah extended Ziyad's authority up to Persia, Jazirah, the northern section of the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and Sajistan. By including all these places in the power of the governor of Basra, he had put an end to all possible revolt in the eastern territories. The Khawarij used to raise their heads off and on in revolt in Iraq and Persia. But Ziyad and Mughirah together stamped them out very boldly and efficiently and did not allow any critical to be created. Ziyad used not only strong measures in his region, but also behaved mildly as the situation demanded. He averted any further danger very wisely. Ziyad died in the year 53 AH/ 672 CE. His death dealt a hard blow to Mu'awiyah. Ziyad died in Kufah.

# Invasion of Constantinople [Today's Istanbul]



Several battles were fought against the Romans in which Muslim forces were victorious. In the year 48 AH/ 668 CE, after taking stock of the Roman emperor's power, Mu'awiyah thought it necessary to launch a naval attack on the Roman capital of Constantinople. He wanted to put an end to the air of might they enjoyed. He resolved to shatter the future ambitions of the Romans in such a way that they would not dare to even look towards the Islamic borders. He, therefore, made up his mind to attack Constantinople. He made his declaration in Makkah and Madinah. The Companions knew the Prophet's (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) Tradition or Hadith, 'The first army that attacks the city of the Roman emperor will be forgiven. Therefore, the prominent Companions of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) like Abdullah ibn Umar, Abdullah ibn Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Husayn ibn Abi and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari gladly participated in the hope of gaining forgiveness in the Hereafter. A large army was prepared. Mu'awiyah sent it to Constantinople under the command of Sufyan ibn Awf. A part of the army was commanded by Mu'awiyah's son

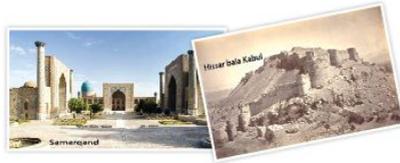
Yazid, who was an officer of the summer forces. This army proceeded by sea.

Another part moved towards Constantinople by the land route. The Muslims laid siege to the city. The siege and the attack turned out to be unsuccessful. The mighty land walls and the location of the city were extremely strong. A few great and lion-hearted men from the Muslims were martyred. Abu Ayyub al-Ansari died during the siege and was buried under the city's high walls. Due to severe cold and natural obstacles, the Muslims returned without conquering the city.



Although the attack was a failure and the city could not be brought under the control of the Muslims, the results of the attack achieved an important objective. The Romans stopped attacking the Islamic borders. The Roman emperor and his army considered themselves lucky to avoid conquest. They did not want to arouse another attack and put themselves in danger. Finally, all the provinces under dispute between the Muslims and the Romans fell under the control of the Muslims.

## Conquests in the East



Great progress was made by Mu'awiyah in extending his rule eastward. Heart was stormed in 41 AH, and two years later Kabul also was besieged for several months, and taken after the walls had been breached by catapults. Similar operations took place against strongholds. In the year 54 AH, one of Ziyad's son's crossing the Oxus and mountain range, took Bukhara, and two years later another son, Uthman, beak back the Turkish mobs and gained possession of Samarqand and Tirmidhi. In addition to the territories in the far north and east, all the countries in the south up to the banks of the Indus fell under the Muslim rule.

# Conquests in Africa



In the year 50 AH/ 670 CE, Mu'awiyah made Uqba ibn Nafi Commander in Egypt, Bukhara, and Sudan. Later he sent ten thousand additional soldiers and instructed the Commander to advance westward and capture all of North Africa.

The Berbers used to obey the Muslims whenever the Islamic army arrived there, but as soon as they found the Muslims relaxed and engaged somewhere else, they rebelled and asserted their freedom. Uqba ibn Nafi passed through Egypt and Burqah and invaded Tunis and Tripoli. After capturing all these territories, he advanced towards Tlemcen in the north-western part of modern day Algeria and Morocco. Uqba's efforts brought almost all Berber territories under Muslim rule. Uqba also founded the settlement of Qayrawan to the south of Tunisia [modern Tunisia] and strongly fortified it against the Berbers.

The Berbers, shortly afterwards, embraced Islam. From Qayrawan, the present-day Algeria and Morocco were occupied and, finally, the Atlantic Ocean reached. Uqba's bravery and courage can well be imagined from the fact that after conquering territory after territory, when he reached the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, he threw his horse into the water and staring at the ocean's currents,

said, 'O Allah! This ocean stopped me; otherwise, I would have fought to the end of this earth; for the Glory of Your name.'

In the same year [50 AH/ 670 CE], Abdullah ibn Sawar, the administrator of Makran [the coastal area of modern-day Iran and Pakistan] and Baluchistan attacked Sindh, south-eastern province of present-day Pakistan. Abdullah ibn Sawar was martyred in the battle. But Mahlab ibn Abi Safra was victorious and he captured a large part of Sindh.

# Mu'awiyah's Achievements as a Statesman

Mu'awiyah was undoubtedly a devoted Muslim and a well-wisher of Islam. He wanted to maintain the Islamic character of his empire. He was far-sighted. He was intelligent. He was an efficient administrator. He did not allow his personal ambitions to interfere when the honor of Islam or Muslims was in danger. This is shown by an event, which is recorded by a number of historians.

'Terribly beaten on several occasions by the Syrian forces the Roman Emperor was scared of Mu'awiyah. When the Emperor came to know of the war between Mu'awiyah and Ali, he came to the Syrian border with a huge army and offered to help Mu'awiyah against Ali. Mu'awiyah wrote back to him, 'By Allah! If you do not stop your raids and do not go back to your country, I will unite with my cousin Ali and unseat and expel you from your own country and make the wide expanse of world very difficult for you.' The Roman Emperor was so frightened by Mu'awiyah's reply that he appealed for ceasefire and peace. Mu'awiyah said, 'I longed to become a Caliph ever since I was told by the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him), "O Mu'awiyah! Rule justly if you come to hold the reins of authority."'



Mu'awiyah was an efficient statesman. He was the first to build and lead the naval expedition during the Caliphate of Uthman. He was extremely trustworthy. He was honest enough to admit: 'I am not a Caliph, but the first king in Islam. But the people would learn what the kings are like when I am gone.' He is also reported to have said, 'I am the first of the kings and the last of the Caliphs.' His was rather a strange kind of kingship. This indicates that Mu'awiyah was aware of the fact that he was unable to carry on his rule on the pattern of earlier Caliphs. This was because the circumstances had changed. The empire was very vast. Administrative problems had become very complicated. A new policy was, therefore, needed to solve them.

Anyone who cares to take note of the changed conditions would not blame Mu'awiyah for choosing a different policy for his administration. Mu'awiyah was extremely careful about the well-being of his subjects. He made changes gradually. He kept a close watch on his governors and his relatives. He would dismiss it. In this way, he prevented outright revolts. His most important early governor was Mughirah ibn Shu'bah. He was perfectly suitable for a post.

Mughirah was very intelligent. He was called Mughirah ar-Ra'y: Mughirah of the sound opinion. Mughirah went to the Prophet and

embraced Islam. He stayed with him, thus Mughirah took part in the minor pilgrimage or Umrah of al-Hudaybiyyah of the year 6 AH/ 628 CE. Mughirah had been an extremely tall man and one-eyed. He had lost it in the battle of Yarmuk. He had woolly, curled hair, in which he used to make four partings. He had a big head, broken front teeth, thick arms and broad shoulders. Mughirah was well-known to Mu'awiyah.

Mughirah died in Kufah in the year 50 AH/ 670 CE, during the Caliphate of Mu'awiyah, at the age of seventy. Mu'awiyah knew well the importance of having men like Mughirah in control of unruly provinces.

# **Financial Administration and Mu'awiyah**

Mu'awiyah also arranged the financial administration of his empire. He made good use of natural resources. He paid a lot of attention to agriculture. Hijaz was the centre of his attention. He saw to it that uncultivated land was brought into cultivation. During the long rule of Mu'awiyah, there was prosperity and peace. He carried out several irrigation works. He sank and built dams in Ta'if, Makkah, and Madinah.

Under the Umayyad rule, Syria made great progress. It was one of the most beautiful, thriving and prosperous regions of the Islamic empire. Its roads were busy with merchants. Its stores were well-stocked. Its crops flourished.

# **Mu'awiyah Nominates Yazid as his Successor**

Mu'awiyah had first named Hasan ibn Ali for the Caliphate after him. However, with the death of Hasan, the situation changed. Hasan died on the 5th Rabi' al-Awwal, in the year 50 AH/ April 2, 670 CE.

During the same year, 50 AH, Mughirah ibn Shu'bah left Kufah and came to Damascus and told Mu'awiyah: 'I think it is proper that you should nominate your son, Yazid, to be Caliph after you and in it lies the security and welfare of the Muslims.' This took place before the death of Mughirah. In fact, Mu'awiyah had never planned to make his son the Caliph. But, Mughirah's words turned his attention to it and gave him this idea. He asked Mughirah: 'Is it possible that people would swear allegiance for the Caliphate of my son?' Mughirah assured him, 'This is quite possible. I will persuade the people of Kufah. Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan will convince the people of Basra and in Makkah and Madinah their governors will make the people do so. As far as Syria is concerned, there is no possibility of any opposition.' Thus it was Mughirah ibn Shu'bah who was responsible in persuading Mu'awiyah for the idea of making his son the future caliph. It led to it becoming the custom of the reign of succession among the Muslims that the son succeeded his father or king. The practice of selection by consultation was abandoned.

Just as Mughirah played an important role in getting Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah nominated as the future Caliph, he also did his best to supervise this effort to that end.



Mu'awiyah was silent to the resentment expressed by the people of Madinah and the Hijaz. Several elderly and prominent Companions did not approve of Mu'awiyah's decision for there were still plenty of people, better than Yazid for the position: Husayn ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Umar, Abdur Rahman ibn Abu Bakr, and Abdullah ibn Abbas were competent men. They were opposed to the idea. They feared it would destroy the democratic spirit of Islam and sow the seeds of kingship.

At this point, it may be pointed out that before the coming of Islam, the method of government was quite different. There used to be a king in a country and he governed according to his notion and imagination. Islam changed the whole system of government. In the Islamic system of government, a ruler was an elected representative of the people. His rule bore the consent of the people. For a person to become a ruler there was no need for him to be a son or grandson of a ruler. A person having best knowledge, character and ability used to be chosen by the people and was thus rightly called Caliph. The benefit of this system was that the administration of the country remained in the hands of able and proficient men. As a result, a wrong person had little chance of grabbing the power. After the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) passed away, this remained the method of selection of Caliphate.

However, from the time of Yazid's succession, the method changed and individual kingship was introduced among Muslims. Consequently, the Muslim strength weakened and soon the masses became unimportant. This was the reason why Husayn and other Companions were opposed to it. Undoubtedly, the opinion of these people was right. Thus, Mu'awiyah found that the proposal was received unfavorably by the people. Both Yazid and Mu'awiyah at first refrained from pursuing the matter, because of the unfavorable reaction of the people.

But in the beginning of the year 56 AH/ 765 CE, Mu'awiyah started making arrangements for obtaining the oath of allegiance for Yazid. He wrote to the provincial governors who persuaded the people to accept the proposal. Mu'awiyah went to perform the shorter pilgrimage [Umrah] to Makkah and while passing through Madinah on his return journey, asked the people in a speech to accept Yazid as his successor. Most of the people were frightened into swearing allegiance to Yazid; but Husayn ibn Ali, Abdur Rahman ibn Abi Bakr, Abdullah ibn Abbas who were sitting near the pulpit, kept quiet. They neither took the oath nor opposed it. Thus with the general acceptance of Yazid's nomination, deputations from different regions of the empire made haste to congratulate him. This action of Mu'awiyah was an opening to the establishment of a permanent dynastic rule: a series of rulers who all belong to the same family. It was quite clear that the democratic system of Islam, which had within a short period of time changed the map of the world and made the Bedouins of Arabia master of Caesar's throne, was about to vanish forever. Husayn and his Companions understood this danger very well. This was the reason why Husayn opposed Mu'awiyah's proposal and ultimately sacrificed his life at Karbala to uphold this truth, of which more hereafter.

# The Death of Ai'shah the Prophet's Wife



Ai'shah died on Tuesday night, the 17th of Ramadan in the year 58 AH/ July 13 678. She died after the night Prayer. She was then about sixty-six years old. She had ordered that she should be buried the same night. The people gathered and attended the funeral and no other night was ever seen that was more crowded than that one. Even the people of the villages outside Madinah came. Abu Hurayrah performed the funeral over her. She was buried in al-Baqi. Her death was during the rule of Mu'awiyah.

Abu Hurayrah himself died in the year 59 AH. Abu Hurayrah used to supplicate: 'O Allah! I seek your protection against the rule of young boys.' His Prayer was accepted. He died before the year 60 AH.

## **A Word about Mu'awiyah Nomination of his Son Yazid**

Allah's Messenger himself named no one as his successor. Abu Bakr was chosen by general approval. He, again, on his deathbed, chose Umar ibn al-Khattab as successor. And yet Umar established yet another unique practice. He placed the choice in the hands of electors. At the fourth succession, the election of Ali resembled the popular election of the first Caliph: Abu Bakr. On the death of Ali, who refused to nominate a successor, his son Hasan was elected by the citizens of. And finally, we have the first example of giving up, when Hasan resigned his rights into the hands of Mu'awiyah, which made him the sole Caliph of Islam.

Mu'awiyah was fully aware of what followed between him and Ali, after the latter's election. The civil wars had put the fortunes of Islam in grave danger. Mu'awiyah had seen the effects of civil wars and was keen to avoid another opportunity to the Roman emperor, with whom he had made a truce. But if a similar opportunity again offered, Mu'awiyah knew that the enemies of Islam might inflict a fatal wound on the empire.

There was more than one possible contender for leadership at that time. There was not only Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him), but several others. Abdullah ibn Zubayr had a large following in the Hijaz. Abdullah ibn Umar could also have made a claim, but he was more interested in matters of the religion. Mu'awiyah was wise. He wanted to solve the problems in a practical and sensible manner. He was conscious of the fact that the other two men had better character and reputation, but he also knew that Yazid had the army

of Syria behind him, which could enforce law and order and prevent civil strife. He also advised Yazid, who was devoted to hunting and other similar diversions to amend his ways in preparation for the throne.

He also counseled Yazid to avoid bloodshed as much as possible. When criticized for making people offer their allegiance to Yazid in advance, Mu'awiyah argued that Abu Bakr had named Umar as his successor before his death. He also pointed out that disquiet involved in an election might lead to another civil strife, which would involve Muslim blood being shed. Besides, it would offer an opportunity to the enemies of Islam to attack.

Influenced by such considerations and also no doubt by the desire of maintaining the Caliphate in his line, Mu'awiyah was led to have people swear their allegiance to his son while he was alive. But it is important to realize that Mu'awiyah was also prompted by the desire to maintain peace and avoid civil war. By securing thus an oath of allegiance throughout the Muslim world, Mu'awiyah hoped to prevent the danger of a contested election. Ziyad was favorable to the scheme, but he advised caution. He also counseled Yazid to change and show before the people a character more fitted for the high dignity of the post. Mughirah, likewise, was favorable to the project. But both these counselors passed away one after the other. Mughirah died in Kufah in the year 51 AH/ 670 CE, while Ziyad died in the year 53 AH/ 672 CE. Mu'awiyah was, however, determined to proceed with his plan. So, as soon as Mu'awiyah felt secure of adequate support, deputations from the provinces and chief cities began to present themselves at Damascus. Accordingly, the oath of allegiance was taken by all present to Yazid as the next successor.

When Husayn ibn Ali, Abdur Rahman ibn Abi Bakr, Abdullah ibn Umar and Abdullah ibn Zubayr came to know about it, they expressed great resentment. They said, 'This selection has been made not for the welfare of the Muslims, but for their utter

destruction. Because, by this way, the Islamic Caliphate will resemble the Roman and Persian Empires in which the son succeeds his father to the throne. This selection is against the spirit of Islam.'

Mu'awiyah might have had the confidence that Yazid's nomination was really beneficial to the world of Islam, but its harmful aspect or side remained hidden from him.

By the end of the year 56 AH/ 676 CE, almost all the people of the Islamic World took the oath of allegiance to Yazid. Only four persons, Husayn ibn Ali, Abdullah ibn Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdullah ibn Abbas did not take the oath. Mu'awiyah left them on their own. He did not think it proper to force them. People other than these great souls were forced in one way or the other to pledge support to Yazid.

# The Death of Mu'awiyah

After a long and prosperous reign, Mu'awiyah came to die, some eighty years of age. Mu'awiyah fell ill on the beginning of Rajab 60 AH/ April 679 CE. The nomination of Yazid as successor was sure to meet with opposition when he was gone. From his deathbed, therefore, he sent a message to Yazid, who was away at his hunting-place outside of Damascus. When Yazid arrived he told him, 'O my son! Listen to my words attentively and answer my questions. The time of my death has come. Tell me, how do you want to treat the Muslims?'

Yazid said, 'I shall follow the Book of Allah (SWT) and the Sunnah of the Prophet.'

Mu'awiyah said, 'You should also follow the Sunnah of Abu Bakr, who fought with the apostates and died such a death that people were pleased with him.'

Yazid remarked, 'No, I shall follow the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet.'

Mu'awiyah said again, 'O my son! Follow the conduct of Umar ibn al-Khattab. He populated cities. He improved the capability of the army and distributed the spoils among the soldiers.' Yazid said, 'No, following the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet is enough.'

Mu'awiyah said, 'O my son! Follow the way of Uthman ibn Affan. He did good to the people during his lifetime and was generous.'

Yazid said, 'No, the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet are enough for me.'

When Mu'awiyah heard him, he said, 'O my son! Your talk has convinced me that you will not follow my advice. You will go against my will. O Yazid, do not be proud that I have made you my successor and the people have taken the oath of allegiance for your succession. You have no danger from Abdullah ibn Umar, because he is weary of this world. The Iraqis will certainly put Husayn ibn Ali against you. If you gain victory over him do not slay him; and give due regard for kinship.

'O my son! Look to the people of Hijaz. They are your root. Be generous to those who come to you and attend to those of them who are not present with you. Look to the people of Iraq. If they ask you to dismiss their governor, then do it. It is easier for you to dismiss them than to have a hundred swords drawn against you. Look to the people of Syria. They are your help and support. They are your storehouse of confidence. If you fear some enemy, then use their support against them.'

Yazid then left and re-joined the hunting party. Mu'awiyah's condition began to decline. His two daughters, Ramlah and Hind, remained with him, looking after him during his final illness. As he felt the end approach, he brought forth a box, carefully kept, with some hair and parings of the Prophet's nails. Of these, he bade them place on his eyes and into his mouth. He also asked them to bury him in the garment given to him by the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He had preserved it for the day. He said, 'Allah might show mercy to me by their barakah or blessedness.' His parting words to the members of his family were, 'Remain conscious of Allah (SWT), the Mighty and Majestic. Allah protects whoever fears Him. There is no protector for one who does not fear Allah.' Then he died on Thursday, 22 Rajab, 60 AH/ April 679 CE.

He was buried at the Bab as-Saghir graveyard in Damascus where his tomb still survives. Mu'awiyah was eighty years old at the time of his death.

## **Mu'awiyah's Family and Children**

Mu'awiyah married a few women during his lifetime. His first wife was Katwa or Kanur, the daughter of Qazara. She died on the naval expedition to Cyprus. She bore him a daughter, Ramlah, whom he named after his sister. He later married Fakhita, Katwa's sister. Fakhita bore him Abdur Rahman, who died very young, and Abdullah; and a daughter called Hind. He was also married to Mulaykah, the former wife of Umar ibn al-Khattab, and Ai'shah bint Abdur Rahman.

But his most important wife was Maysun. She bore him Yazid. He had proposed to Uthman's widow Nailah, but she refused his proposal.

## **A Glance at Mu'awiyah's Caliphate**

Mu'awiyah's caliphate extended over a period of nearly twenty years – from Rabi' al-Awwal 41 AH/ June 661 CE, to Rajab 60 AH/ April 679 CE. This twenty year long reign of Mu'awiyah must be called successful. This is because during this period none of the claimants to the caliphate or his rivals dared to rise against him. During his reign, the Islamic territory expanded in all the four directions. No rebellion of any importance broke out. No robberies and disorder existed any more. There had been peace throughout the empire. Wise, brave, and patient, he held the dangerous elements around him in check. He made strong and extended the already vast area of Islam. He cared for trade, commerce, and peace, so that they greatly flourished in his rule. Mu'awiyah was an able and bold ruler. He possessed the ability to win over people to his side. He knew how to retain them. He knew how to make them work for him. This was a unique skill in his leadership. He could bridle people without letting them sense the control. He was extremely efficient. People would not hesitate to approach him with a complaint even while he was delivering a sermon on the pulpit.

Mu'awiyah appointed able men as governors. He also kept a close watch on them. He appointed Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan governor of Basra. He dealt with the people severely. But his tough measures bore results. Soon the condition of lawlessness changed into that of peace. The people felt safe with one another. If someone dropped something, no-one would touch it until its rightful owner would come and pick it up. People spent nights without locking their doors. Ziyad also looked after the safety and security of the roads and the travelers. He used to say, 'If a rope should be lost between here and Khurasan, I would know who took it.' He looked for Companions of the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah

be upon him) to appoint them in charge of judgment. This was because they had the best knowledge of how the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) had acted.

Mu'awiyah's governors considered themselves protectors and servants of the people. Their doors were open. They were always available to anyone who had a need or a complaint. People could approach them even at night. Once some people came to Mu'awiyah and complained that one of his governors had cut off somebody's hand on mere suspicion without clear proof. Mu'awiyah paid them the blood money for the hand and dismissed the governor involved. He asked them whom they would like to be appointed as governor instead. Mu'awiyah always looked for men of experience and sound judgment. He always gave preference to Companions of the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him).

It is important to realize that Mu'awiyah himself was a Companion of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). He has narrated many Traditions or Hadith of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). Mu'awiyah had been the Prophet's scribe. He had seen how the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) behaved. Once, Mu'awiyah said from the pulpit or mimbar, 'O people! Nothing keeps away what Allah gives and nothing gives what Allah keeps away. The earnestness of the earnest does not profit him. When Allah (SWT) desires good for him, he gives him understanding in the religion or Dîn.' Then Mu'awiyah added, 'I heard these words from the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) which he uttered from these very blocks of wood.' It is related that Mu'awiyah cut the hair of the Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him), during the Hajj or pilgrimage, with a broad arrowhead.

## **Mu'awiyah's Other Rare Achievements**

Mu'awiyah built up a navy and the Muslims began fighting naval battles. Even the Romans admitted their superiority as a naval force. It was he who appointed postmen and establishment a system and organization and called it the postal department.

Mu'awiyah was the first to invent the system of putting a seal on orders and keeping a copy of every order preserved in the Caliph's office. Until his time, the cover of the Ka'bah was put on top of the previous covers. He had all the old covers removed and gave instructions that whenever a new cover was put on, the old cover should be removed. He was the first in Islam to introduce the system of keeping watchmen and door keepers. He was also the first to establish a registry department: a place where registers are maintained. He was the first to have built ships.

# Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah

Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah was born in the year 25 AH/ 645 CE. He was born when his father Mu'awiyah was the governor of the whole of Syria. His mother's name was Maysun.

Yazid was fat. His body was covered with a thick growth of hair. He was born into kingship and wealth. Mu'awiyah was a very careful and far-sighted man. He paid special attention to Yazid's upbringing and education. He sent him for Hajj as Hajj group leader once or twice and gave him the command of an army. He was commander of a part of the army at the time of the attack and siege of Syria. He was very fond of hunting. At the time of Mu'awiyah's death he was not present in Damascus. He was called by Mu'awiyah during the latter's final illness. Yazid, however, failed to realize the seriousness of Mu'awiyah's illness and went back to his hunting expedition. He returned after several days and offered the funeral Prayer at his father's grave. Oath of allegiance was taken for him during the lifetime of Mu'awiyah and Yazid was declared as his successor. But most of the people were unhappy about it. Some very important persons had even refused to take the oath of loyalty.

# **Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah's Assuming Office of Kingship**

When Mu'awiyah died in Rajab 60 AH/ April 679 CE, the oath of allegiance for him was renewed. Yazid was then about the thirty-five years old. The Syrians took the oath of allegiance at the hands of Yazid without any hesitation. The people of other provinces also followed their officials. They dared not refuse for fear of the authority. Soon after taking the reins of power in his hands, Yazid wrote to the officials of all the provinces to take the pledge from the people in his name. Thus the first concern on assuming the Caliphate or kingship was to require those who had before refused to swear allegiance, now to take the oath. On that occasion, Madinah and Kufah were governed by Walid ibn Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan and Nu'man ibn Bashir respectively. Both of them were noble-minded. They were peace-loving persons compared to other officials. They were not strict.

When Yazid's instructions arrived in Madinah, Walid ibn Utbah called the prominent people of Madinah and read Yazid's letter to them. Walid was Yazid's cousin. Husayn ibn Ali Talib heard of Mu'awiyah's death and expressed his grief and prayed for his forgiveness. He asked Walid not to make haste in taking his oath of allegiance. He said, 'I shall think it over and then decide.' Marwan ibn Hakam, the former governor of Madinah and advisor to Walid ibn Utbah encouraged Walid to take Husayn's allegiance there and then. He asked him not to let him go. But Walid did not agree with Marwan's advice and postponed it to the next day.

## **Abdullah ibn Zubayr did not come to take the Oath**

Abdullah ibn Zubayr did not come to swear allegiance for Yazid. He was called but he refused to come. He asked to be given time for one night. Walid, the governor of Madinah, allowed him. Abdullah ibn Zubayr was a son of Zubayr ibn al-Awwam. His mother was Asma, Abu Bakr's daughter. Abdullah's father Zubayr ibn al-Awwam was killed in the valley of as-Siba on Thursday 10 Jamada ath-Thaniyah 36 AH/ December 5, 656 CE, while returning to Madinah from the battle of the Camel and was buried there. Abdullah ibn Zubayr realized that he would be forced to do something by threats, which he did not want to do. He, therefore, departed from Madinah along with his family. He avoided the main route and set out along a little known road. The next day Marwan and Walid took thirty armed men with them and marched to arrest Abdullah ibn Zubayr. No-one thought of Husayn ibn Ali. He also left Madinah the following night along with his family. When the news of Husayn's departure broke out, Walid said, 'I will not chase Husayn. It is possible he might take up arms. And I do not want to stain my hands with his blood.'

After the departure of these two important men Walid took the pledge of the people of Madinah. So far as Abdullah ibn Umar was concerned, there was no danger from him. He never desired to become a Caliph. Yazid also issued instructions that if Abdullah ibn Umar refused to take the oath, he should not be forced. Hence, no-one asked him to swear the allegation to Yazid. Then Abdullah ibn Umar and Abdullah ibn Abbas went to Makkah after a few days. Yazid had already sent Harith ibn Khalid as an official to Makkah.

Abdullah ibn Zubayr and Husayn ibn Ali entered Makkah at the same time.

Abdullah ibn Safwan ibn Umayyah was one of the nobles of Makkah. Immediately, he swore allegiance to Abdullah ibn Zubayr. Then about two thousand noble men and influential people followed in the footsteps of Abdullah ibn Safwan and took the oath of allegiance at Abdullah ibn Zubayr's hand. Abdullah ibn Zubayr put Harith ibn Khalid into house arrest and took over the rule of Makkah. Husayn ibn Ali was also present in Makkah. He neither took the oath of allegiance for Abdullah nor did Abdullah swear allegiance at the hands of Husayn. Actually, Abdullah ibn Zubayr did not wish to take the oath from any one of the members of Husayn's family. When Abdullah ibn Umar and Abdullah ibn Abbas arrived in Makkah, Abdullah ibn Zubayr did not wish them to swear allegiance at his hand. Abdullah Ibn Zubayr spent most of his time praying at the Ka'bah. Except for these few persons, the whole of Makkah took the oath of allegiance at the hand of Abdullah ibn Zubayr.

Abdullah ibn Zubayr often met Husayn ibn Ali, the Prophet's (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) grandson. It appears that Abdullah ibn Zubayr did not take the oath of allegiance for becoming a Caliph. He actually took the oath from the people of Makah with the intention that Yazid might not be accepted as Caliph as long as the caliph was not elected by the common consent of the people of the Islamic World. But Husayn did not like Abdullah ibn Zubayr in power in Makkah. Therefore, he and the members of his family did not join him when he led the Prayer.

## **Marwan ibn Hakam Writes to Yazid about the Condition**

Keeping an eye on these conditions, Marwan wrote to Yazid. He informed him how Abdullah ibn Zubayr and Husayn ibn Ali had left Madinah and that the people of Madinah took the oath of allegiance. He immediately dismissed Walid ibn Utbah and sent Amr ibn Sa'id as the governor of Madinah. Amr ibn Sa'id arrived and took control of Madinah. Walid ibn Utbah left Madinah and went to Yazid. As we have noted above, Harith ibn Khalid, Yazid's official was present in Makkah. But he did not attempt to come out of his house. But somehow he managed to send details concerning the capture of Makkah by Abdullah ibn Zubayr and his own house arrest. Becoming aware of the situation prevailing in Makkah, Yazid wrote to Amr ibn Sa'id, 'Go forth to Makkah and arrest Abdullah ibn Zubayr. Send him to me in chains.'

There was a fight and Abdullah ibn Zubayr was victorious. The commander of the Madinah troops was caught and arrested.

## The Situation at Kufah in Iraq

The inhabitants of Kufa, on the other hand, turned eagerly to Husayn ibn Ali. The people of Kufah, since the time of Mu'awiyah, used to write to Husayn repeatedly to visit Kufah. Promises of support poured in upon him. He would but appear at Kufah and the people would take the oath for his caliphate. Mu'awiyah knew the habits and the nature of the people of Kufah. He had warned Yazid that the inhabitants of Kufah would certainly encourage Husayn to rise against him. Mu'awiyah had told Yazid, at the time of his death, as part of his last will not to be cheated by the people of Kufah. If such a situation took place and he got the better of Husayn, he should treat him respectfully and tenderly: Mu'awiyah had commanded Yazid.

At that moment Nu'man ibn Bashir was the governor of Kufah. He received Yazid's letter, in which he informed him about Mu'awiyah's death. The news of Mu'awiyah's death spread and the supporters of Banu Umayyah in that region swore allegiance with Nu'man ibn Bashir for Yazid. But the supporters of the martyred Ali and Husayn hesitated to take the oath. In fact, they were trying to bring Husayn to Kufah. They, therefore, gathered together in the house of Sulayman ibn Sard. All of them agreed that Yazid should not be recognized as the Caliph and Husayn should be brought to Kufah.

They knew about the situation that had taken place in Makkah. They also knew that Husayn was in Makkah. They wanted to make Husayn their Caliph. They wrote to him as many as one hundred and fifty strong letters inviting him to move to Kufah. In one such letter, they wrote, 'We are your father's admirers and opponents of Banu Umayyah. We fought Talhah and Zubayr in support of your

father. Now we are prepared to fight along with you too. Leave for Kufah as soon as you read this letter. One hundred thousand fighters are present in Kufah. All of them are ready to take the oath of allegiance at your hand. We believe that you are the rightful and worthy Caliph. Yazid does not deserve to be Caliph in comparison with you. This is the time. Do not delay at all. We want to make you Caliph of the entire Islamic world by removing Yazid. Our elders have stopped standing in Prayer behind Yazid's governor, Nu'man ibn Bashir. This is because we consider you and your deputies to be worthy of leadership.'

Husayn was not only opposed to Yazid's succession, he rather considered it an exact opposite of Islam and its principles. He, however, did not know how to save the Muslim nation from the evil of the dynastic rule: son succeeding father. When news of the opposition of the inhabitants of Kufah against Yazid's rule began to come, Husayn thought it was proper to take action. He thought it was proper to act in order to re-establish true Islamic government. But he was doubtful at the people of Kufah for he vividly remembered their dishonest behavior with Ali. He, therefore, sent his cousin Muslim to Kufah to find out the truth. Muslim was the son of Aqil, Ali's brother and grandson of Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle. Soon after Muslim's arrival in Kufah, twelve thousand people took pledge at his hand. He sent report to Husayn urging him to come over. He wrote to Husayn, 'When you come and start taking the oath openly, hundreds of thousands of people will swear the oath for your caliphate.'

No doubt remained in Husayn's mind after Muslim's letter reached him. He decided to march towards Kufah. In the meantime, the news of Muslim ibn Aqil's arrival in Kufah and people taking oath for Husayn spread.

Abdullah ibn Muslim al-Hadhrami came to Nu'man ibn bashir, the governor of Kufah, and told him, 'You should not show slowness in

the Caliph's matters. Muslim has been in Kufah for several days and he is taking oath of allegiance for Husayn ibn Ali. You should kill Muslim ibn Aqil or arrest him and send him to Yazid. You should punish those who have taken the pledge.' Nu'man ibn Bashir said in reply, 'I shall not attack them unless they come out for a fight.' Hearing this, Abdullah wrote the following letter to Yazid:

'Muslim ibn Aqil has arrived in Kufah. He has been taking oath of allegiance for Husayn ibn Ali. The people have been responding favorably. Husayn is also expected to come. Nu'man ibn Bashir is showing weakness in this matter. If you want to keep Kufah under your control, send some strict governor to Kufah so that he might kill Muslim ibn Aqil, suppress the oath-taking and stop Husayn from entering Kufah. If you delay, then consider Kufah to have gone out of your control.'

This made Yazid disturbed, 'It made him thoughtful. There was a man named Sarjun. He was a freed slave of the Caliph Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah used to seek his advice on some difficult and complicated matters. His advice often proved useful. Yazid called him. He showed him the letter sent by Abdullah ibn al-Hadhrami and sought his opinion. Sarjun said, 'At this point Iraq is about to go out of your hands. If you want to save Iraq, only Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad can help you. I know you would not like my advice. But whoever other than Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad you send to Kufah as governor, he will not be able to save it. Moreover, just as Mu'awiyah had given the governorship of Both Basra and Kufah together; similarly you should also give him the dual charge and you need not select any other governor for Basra.'

Yazid hesitated for a moment after hearing this advice. But he wrote to Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, giving him instructions, 'I give you the governorship of Kufah along with that of Basra. You should place someone as your deputy in Basra and proceed to Kufah immediately. There Muslim ibn Aqil is taking the oath for Husayn

ibn Ali. Make him a captive or kill him. Those who have taken the oath for Husayn, kill them if they refuse to take back their allegiance. In this way, we would be able to ward off all further dangers.'

## **Who was Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad?**

Ubaydullah was the son of Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan. Thus, Ubaydullah was the grandson of Abu Sufyan and a cousin of Yazid. He was the governor of Basra and his rule there was stern as had been his father's.

## Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad Takes Over Kufah's Governorship

Obedient to the command of Yazid, Ubaydullah left his brother Uthman ibn Ziyad in his place in Basra, and set out for Kufah the next day. Meanwhile, a messenger sent by Husayn ibn Ali had been taking oath of allegiance for him secretly.

Upon arrival of Kufah, Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad deceitfully arrested Husayn's messenger and the next day collected the people and said to them, 'Husayn ibn Ali's messenger has come to Basra with his letters to a number of people here. I have arrested all of them. I have also prepared a list of those who have taken the oath of allegiance for Husayn. You know I am Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan's son. Muslim ibn Aqil is in Kufah. I am going to him. I will kill all those who have taken the oath at his hands. If the whole of Kufah has taken the oath, I shall leave no-one.' Saying this he brought Husayn's messenger and killed him in front of all of them.

No one raised any objection. People were frightened. Ubaydullah showed two sides of his character: one that will give his opponents hope and another that will strike fear in their hearts. Satisfied with this, Ubaydullah left. Husayn ibn Ali, sitting at Makkah thought that the people in Basra were taking the oath of allegiance for him, but instead his messenger was killed.

## **Muslim ibn Aqil Comes to Know of the Arrival of Ubaydullah**

Soon Muslim ibn Aqil was informed of the arrival of Ubaydullah and his army. He left the house where he had been staying. This was because the house was known to the people. He took shelter in Hani ibn Urwa's house. By this time, the number of people who had taken the oath at his hand rose to eighteen thousand.

Ubaydullah soon found out that Muslim ibn Aqil had been hiding in the house of Hani; Ubaydullah called Hani and inquired about Muslims whereabouts. He admitted, 'Muslim has taken refuge in my house. But I cannot bear the insult of handing him over to you.'

Ubaydullah arrested Hani then and there. The news spread in the city that Ubaydullah killed Hani. Hani's womenfolk started lamenting. When Muslim ibn Aqil saw all this, he could not bear it. He came out with a sword in his hand and called all those who had taken the oath. Only four thousand people out of eighteen thousand collected. He called the rest also but each one of them said, 'At the time of the oath, it was agreed that we would not fight until Husayn ibn Ali had arrived. You should also wait and watch until he comes.' As Muslim ibn Aqil had come out, he could not go back into hiding again. He surrounded Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad with the four thousand men who had responded to his call. Ubaydullah was at the governor's headquarters with thirty or forty people. They all climbed on the roof and started showering arrows on those who had surrounded the place. The relatives and friends of Muslim's supporters began to persuade them to stop from their self-destruction. Consequently, all of them parted one after another

until only thirty or four forty supporters, remained with Muslim ibn Aqil.

# Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwa Slain

In this situation, Muslim ran away from the place and took shelter in someone's house in Kufah. Ubaydullah sent Amr ibn Jarir Makhzum to arrest him. Seeing no way out, Muslim drew out his sword. But Amr ibn Jarir Makhzumi said to him, 'Why are you bent on ruining your life needlessly? Just surrender yourself to me. I will take you to Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad and I promise that I shall get you pardoned.' Muslim ibn Aqil laid down the weapon and put his hands into those of Amr. He took him to Ubaydullah.

Ubaydullah imprisoned him in the same cell in which he had imprisoned Hani ibn Urwa. The next day, some ten thousand people who had taken the oath of allegiance for Husayn gathered together and surrounded Ubaydullah's residence. They demanded that Muslim ibn Aqil and Hani ibn Urwa should be set free; otherwise they would take them away by force. Ubaydullah commanded them to be taken to the roof and killed them before their eyes. Both were therefore killed. Seeing the killing, all of them dispersed as if they had collected for the purpose of witnessing their leaders getting killed. Ubaydullah then ordered the gates of the palace to be opened. Their bodies were hung on a wooden post and their heads were carried off to Yazid in Damascus. This took place on Monday, the 3rd of Dhul Hijjah in the year 60 AH/ Sep. 5, 679 CE.

Yazid wrote to Ubaydullah: 'Husayn ibn Ali has set out from Makkah, he is about to reach Kufah. Defend yourself fully. Send the army to stop him on the way so that he may not reach Kufah.'

## Husayn ibn Ali Leaves Makkah

Husayn ibn Ali prepared himself to leave Makkah for Kufah. Soon the news spread that Husayn was going to Kufah. Those who had love and sympathy with him insisted on his giving up the intention. They tried to make him understand that leaving for Kufah was full of dangers. First, Abdur Rahman ibn Harith came to Husayn and requested him not to go to Kufah, because Ubaydulah ibn Ziyad, the governor of Kufah, was present there. He said, 'The inhabitants of Kufah are greedy. It is quite possible that those who called you might come out to fight against you.' Then Abdullah ibn Umar came out and said to him, 'Do not go out of Makkah to take the oath of allegiance.' But Husayn refused to act upon his advice. Then Abdullah ibn Abbas arrived. He said to Husayn, 'Do not be away from the House of Allah. Your respected father chose Kufah to Makkah and Madinah. Don't you know how the inhabitants of Kufah treated him? They martyred him. They grabbed your brother Hasan. You must not trust them. Their oaths of allegiance are not trustworthy. Their promises, their letters, their messages are also not trustworthy.' To this, Husayn replied, 'You are quite justified in what you say. But, Muslim ibn Aqil's letter has come. Twelve thousand people have taken the oath of allegiance. Earlier, one hundred and fifty letters from the noblemen of Kufah have also come. There is no danger now. My visit to that place is the right thing.'

Hearing this, Abdullah ibn Abbas said, 'All right, let this month of Dhul Hijjah end at least. Let the new year begin, then think of undertaking the journey. Now the season of Hajj is approaching. People are coming from distant places to Makkah. It is proper for you to participate in the Hajj. Let the people return after performing Hajj. After that you may set out if you think it is necessary.' Husayn

replied, 'The issue is such that I cannot postpone it. I must set out at once.' Abdullah ibn Abbas appealed, 'Fine, if you do not agree with me, at least do not take the women and children with you. The inhabitants of Kufah are not reliable at all. It was the duty of those twelve thousand people who have taken the oath of allegiance for your Caliphate to have first driven out Yazid's governor. They should have taken the public's treasury in their hands. Then they should have invited you. It seems that they are not capable of doing anything against Yazid's governor in Kufah. At the moment, they have neither the treasury nor the courage to drive the administration out. This administrator might threaten them. He might tempt them. He might use them according to his own will. It is just possible that these people who are calling might turn to Yazid's side to fight against you. Looked from this angle, your life seems to be in danger. If women and children are also with you; then Uthman ibn Affan was slain before the very eyes of a number of his family. Similarly, your family will also have to witness you being killed. There is fear of their becoming slaves and slave-girls after being captured by your enemies.' But Husayn did not accept his advice.

Then, Abdullah ibn Zubayr came. He said to Husayn, 'Do not go to Kufah. Some people are saying that I would be happy if you leave Makkah. There would remain my no rival in Makkah. But this is not true. In order to prove such misguided people wrong, I request you with all sincerity to accept the Kingdom of Makkah. Stretch out your hand so that I may take the oath of allegiance. I am prepared to go into the battlefield to fight obeying your command.' Husayn said, 'I have already informed them. I have already decided to leave. I cannot postpone it.'

Some other prominent Companions of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) like Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Jabir ibn Abdullah, Sa'id al-Musayyab also urged Husayn not to go to Kufah, but he remained firm in his resolve.

# **Husayn Advances towards Kufah Along with the Members of his Household**

Husayn Ibn Ali left Makkah on Monday, the 3rd of the month of Dhul Hijjah 60 AH/ September 5, 679 CE, along with his family. On the same day, Muslim ibn Aqil was slain in Kufah. When Husayn was leaving Makkah, Amr ibn Sa'd ibn al-Aas and other noblemen of Makkah came and wanted to stop him. They said, 'If you do not agree, we will stop you by force and face you.' Husayn said, 'Do whatever is in your power to do. You also fulfil your wish to fight with me.' Hearing this all of them opened the way and departed. At the time of departure, Abdullah ibn Abbas said, 'I would have lain down before your camel so that it could not go ahead without trampling on me, but I know you will not stop. You will not desist from your intention of going there.' On his way to Kufah, Husayn came across Farazdaq, the well-known poet who was coming from Kufah. When Husayn made inquiries about the people of Kufah, he said, 'The heart of the city is with you, but its swords against you.'

Husayn ibn Ali continued his journey to Kufah with the members of his family and seventy others. Husayn was in the impression that the people were taking the oath of allegiance at the hands of Muslim ibn Aqil and the group supporting him was growing bigger and bigger. But the reality was quite different. In Kufah, Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad was busy selecting armed soldiers for his arrest or death.

Husayn continued his journey. He sent Qays ibn Mishar with a letter to the people of Kufah informing that he had reached near and that they should continue waiting for him. But as soon as Qays reached Qadisiyyah, he was arrested by the soldiers of Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad. He was brought with the letter. He ordered Qays to be taken

up to the roof of the palace and thrown down. Qays died on the spot.

When the caravan reached Salba, Husayn came to know that Muslim ibn Aqil had been killed in Kufah. He also learnt that not even a single supporter of Husayn had been left in Kufah. The news threw a pail of glass over the entire caravan. They intended to retrace their steps. There was no benefit in advancing further. They would meet the same fate, which Muslim ibn Aqil had met. Hearing this, Muslim ibn Aqil's son's said, 'We must not go back. We will avenge Muslim ibn Aqil's death or we will die as he died. Moreover, Husayn ibn Ali is not like Muslim ibn Aqil. When the people of Kufah see him, they will join him and arrest Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad.'

The news of the martyrdom had shocked Husayn. But there was still the hope that those who had drawn him by their promises would rally round his person as soon as he appeared. However, after the news spread through the caravan, the people of the tribes who had accompanied Husayn on his way, slowly and gradually began to depart. Seeing the cause to be hopeless, they drew off. Now, Husayn, clearly two or three weeks' journey on his way, was left with nothing but his members of his household: his original following of some thirty horses and seventy foot. The number varies. Some sources put it between seventy or eighty. Other sources claim they were about two hundred and fifty.

## The Misfortune at Karbala

In the meantime, Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad made Amr ibn Sa'd the governor of Rayy. Amr was the son of the famous Companions of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. Sa'd had fought on the Battle of Badr.

Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad gave Amr a battalion of four thousand soldiers to keep a watch and to find out by which route Husayn ibn Ali was arriving and where he was camping. Ubaydullah had established outposts on all the roads leading into Kufah and parties of cavalry were patrolling the roads. Ubaydullah also gave Hurr ibn Yazid Tamimi, an Arab Chieftain, one thousand soldiers and put him on patrol. Hurr combed the area for clues. Amr ibn Sa'd started collecting information from different sources while he camped at Qadisiyah.

Husayn ibn Ali was in difficulty and in that condition he reached Saraf. When he was moving forward, Hurr saw him and blocked his way with one thousand soldiers. Husayn came forward and said to him, 'I have come here at your invitation. If you stick to your promise, I will enter the city; otherwise, I shall go by the way by which I have come.' Hurr said, 'I have been ordered by Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad to stay with you and take you to him in my custody.' Husayn replied, 'It is impossible to bear the insult of going to him in custody.' He then decided to return. But Hurr, out of fear of Ubaydullah, chose to stop him. He stood on the way of his return with his army. Hurr, politely but firmly, refused to let him pass. Hurr said, 'My orders are to bring you to the governor. But if you will not go, then turn to the right, or turn to the left, as you choose.'

So, the little band, leaving Kufah on the right marched to the left. They went around the border of the desert for a day or two along the Western branch of the river Euphrates. In so doing, Husayn had obviously no immediate objective beyond avoiding attack from Kufah. Hurr kept close by, and polite communications still passed between them.

Husayn moved to the north and reached Qadisiyah. He realized that Amr ibn Sa'd was camping there, along with his large army. Hurr followed Husayn. Aware of the situation, Husayn left Qadisiyah and after covering a distance of about fifteen kilometres, halted at Karbala. Amr ibn Sa'd was informed of his arrival. He set out with his army following Husayn. Soon he arrived at Karbala. He pitched his camp on the field of Karbala on the river bank, some thirty-seven kilometers about Kufah.

Amr left his army and came towards Husayn's camp and called for him. After exchanging greetings, Amr ibn Sa'd said, 'Surely, you deserve the Caliphate more than Yazid does. But it appears, it is not the intention of Allah to let both Prophethood and Caliphate come into your family. You have seen the conditions of Ali ibn Ani Talib and Hasan ibn Ali. If you give up the thought of Caliphate and rule, you can easily become free. Otherwise, your life will be in danger. We have been ordered to arrest you.'

Husayn ibn Ali said, 'I place three options before you. You may choose any one of them for me.

*'Allow me to return to the place from where I came, so that I may remain occupied with Prayer in Makkah.*

'If not, then leave my way free. Let me go to Yazid in Damascus. For your satisfaction, you may follow me. I shall go to Yazid. I will place my hand in his hand and speak with him face to face. I will settle my affairs directly with him as my elder brother Hasan did with Mu'awiyah.

[It is important to note that 'I will place my hand in his' does not mean Husayn was prepared to take the oath of allegiance. It was not possible for him to accept Yazid's caliphate. It would have been the exact opposite of what he stood for and clearly against the spirit of Islam. His allegiance would have meant that Yazid's rule was not against the principles and teachings of Islam. He simply wanted to meet Yazid and sort out the matter with him!]

If you [will] do neither of these two things, then send me far away to any border where I shall fight against the enemies of Islam, until I get killed in the way of Allah.'

Amr ibn Sa'd was very pleased to hear what Husayn said, but he replied that he was not in a position to give him a final reply in that matter. He further said that he would inform Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad at once. Amr believed that Ubaydullah would agree to any one of these options. Amr, therefore, wrote to Ubaydullah a detailed account of his meeting with Husayn. This meeting took place on Muharram 2, 61AH/ October 2, 680.

Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad was overjoyed reading Amr ibn Sa'd's letter. He said, 'Husayn has spoken in a way that will put a stop to all wicked disorders. By going to Yazid, he would take the oath of allegiance and there would no longer be any danger.'

Thus, Ubaydullah was willing to allow Husayn to go to Yazid. Shimr ibn Dhul Jawshan was present at that time. He stepped forward and insisted that Husayn must surrender without any conditions. He also pointed out that Amr must not waste time with Husayn and he should bring him to Kufah, dead or alive. He remarked to Ubaydullah, 'O Commander! You have a very good chance now. You may kill Husayn without hesitation. No one will blame you. If he is allowed to go to Yazid, he will enjoy greater respect and status in comparison with you.'

When Ubaydullah heard this, he wrote to Amr, 'None of these three options could be accepted. The only acceptable thing is let Husayn surrender before me. He must take the oath of allegiance to Yazid at my hands as his deputy. Then I will send him to Yazid on my own. ['The History of Islam' by Akbar Shah Najeebabadi; vol. Two, Pg. 72]

## **A Word about Shimr**

Who was Shimr? His name is pronounced in several different ways in history as Shamir, Shamar, or Shimr. He was the son of Dhul Jawshan. He had a sister. Her name was Umm al-Baneen. She was one of the wives of Ali ibn Abi Talib. Thus in a way, he was a brother-in-law of Ali, the father of Husayn. In later days of his life, Shimr was affected by leprosy. Leprosy is a disease that can pass easily from one person to another. Leprosy causes white painful areas on the skin and it can destroy nerves and flesh.

## **Amr ibn Sa'd informs Husayn about Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad's Instruction**

On receiving the letter of Ubaydullah, Amr informed Husayn that he was helpless. He informed him that Ubaydullah did not agree to any of the three options. He insists Husayn must take the oath of allegiance first at Ubaydullah's hand. But Husayn replied that it was better for him to die rather than take the oath of allegiance.

Amr ibn Sa'd tried his best to avoid bloodshed and fighting. He wanted that either Husayn should accept Ubaydullah's conditions or Ubaydullah should allow Husayn to go according to his wish.

During the week long talks of refusal and demand, both Husayn and Amr ibn Sa'd remained camped in the field of Karbala. Husayn's men offered their Prayers with Amr's soldiers. Husayn used to straighten the rows of those praying.

When Ubaydullah came to know of this, he became worried. He thought Amr might secretly plan something with Husayn. He at once called in a messenger named Juwira ibn Tamim. He gave him a letter for Amr ibn Sa'd. The letter read:

'I ordered you to arrest Husayn ibn Ali. It was your duty to arrest him and bring him to me. If you were not able to do so, you should have brought his head to me. I did not order you to join his company and raise friendly relations with him. Now it is better for you that immediately after reading this letter and without hesitation either bring Husayn ibn Ali to me or fight with him. Cut off his head and send it to me. If you hesitate even a little, then I have ordered the bearer of this letter to arrest you and bring you to me. The bearer of this message is a military officer. Meanwhile, the

army would remain camped there. They will wait. I will send another commanded in your place.'

Juwira reached Amr ibn Sa'd with this letter on Thursday Muharram 9, 61 AH/ Oct. 9, 680. Amr was sitting in his camp at that time. As soon as he read the letter, he stood up. He mounted his horse and ordered his army to get ready. He said to Juwira, 'Bear witness that as soon as I have the Commander's order, I have obeyed it.'

Then he set out to place soldiers. He took Juwira along with him and moved forward. He informed Husayn of the fresh orders. Husayn asked him to grant one day's time. This was granted. Amr asked the soldiers to relax because there would not be any fighting on that day. After sending his order through Juwira, another thought crossed Ubaydullah's mind. He thought: If Amr ibn Sa'd showed slowness and Juwira arrested him, the army would be surprised. They would scatter without their commander. They might even join Husayn ibn Ali. In that case, the situation would become very difficult. Husayn would get time to leave for Makkah. He would get out of their reach.

He at once called Shimr Dhul Jawshan to him. He said to him, 'I have sent orders that if Amr ibn Sa'd hesitates, Juwira should arrest him and bring him down to me. But I suspect him. I do not trust him. If Juwira actually arrests Amr, the army will be in the field without a leader. I cannot find anybody else better than you for this work. Therefore, go to Karbala. If Amr is arrested, then take command of the army. Fight with Husayn. Cut off his head and bring it to me. If Amr is not arrested and is slow in starting the fight, go and start it. Finish the work at once.'

Shimr said, 'I have a condition. You know that my sister Umm al-Baneen was Ali ibn Abi Talib's wife. She bore him four sons: Abdullah, Ja'far, Uthman and Abbas. They are present on the field of

Karbala. Give me protection for their lives.’ Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad at once had a paper brought to him. He wrote out a pardon, safety and protection for them. He sealed it and gave it to Shimr. He then set off immediately.

Shimr reached the field of Karbala in the late afternoon on Thursday Muharram 9, 61 AH. Juwira informed him of what had taken place. Shimr pointed out, ‘I would not have given him a single moment.’ He asked Amr ibn Sa’d to get ready at once or hand over the army to him.

Amr rode his horse and took Shimr with him. They went to Husayn. Amr said to Husayn that Ubaydullah had sent yet another messenger. He would not grant him any delay in the battle. Husayn exclaimed, ‘Glory be to Allah! What is the need of granting time to me? The sun is about to set. Would you not put off the fight till tomorrow?’ upon hearing this, Shimr thought it proper to wait until the next morning for the fight to begin. Then both Amr and Shimr returned to their camps.

# **Ubaydullah Orders to Cut off Husayn's Reach to the River Water**

At night, Ubaydullah's another order reached the field of Karbala. It said that if the fighting had not started, the water sources must be captured. Husayn and his companions should be stopped from reaching the water. If the army had come under Shimr's command, this instruction should be obeyed at once.

After receiving the order, Amr ibn Sa'd placed a cavalry of five hundred horsemen under the charge of Amr ibn al-Hajjaj. He posted him near the river Euphrates.

Husayn's companions had not brought and stored any water that day. All their containers were empty. When they went to fill them with water, they realized that the enemy had already occupied the area by the river. Ubaydullah thus hoped that thirst might thus force Husayn to surrender. But Husayn stood firm to his conditions. Husayn sent his brother Abbas ibn Ali along with fifty men to fetch water by force. But the tyrants did not allow them to take it.

## **Husayn's companions prepared to sacrifice their lives**

Now the discomfort caused by the thirst started increasing. That pain was more painful than arrows and swords could cause. Husayn's young son Ali ibn Husayn [Zayn al-Abidin] was ill. He was lying in a tent. He lay sick of a fever. But there was no drop of water to moisten his dry lips. When he and his sister Umm Kulthum, realized that the enemies would attack them in the morning and all the present members of the family would be killed and martyred, they began to cry. Husayn entered their tent and silenced them after a great effort. He came out and said that he was wrong in bringing women and children with him.

Then he called his companions to him and said, 'You may leave. You may go wherever you think best. I allow you to save your lives.' His companions said, 'We will never part with you. We will sacrifice our lives for you. We will not let any harm come to you, as long as we breathe!'

## **An Offer and Husayn's Refusal**

Later that same night, a man called Tarmah ibn Adi who was visiting the neighborhood heard about Husayn's condition. He came to him and said, 'Come along with me alone. I shall take you through such a route that no-one would know you had left. I shall then take you to the tribe of Tayy and give you five thousand soldiers from my tribe. You may use them as you like.' But Husayn said, 'I have just now told my companions to leave me alone and go. They did not accept it. How is it possible to leave them alone, depart, and save my life?' He then sent away the man with thanks!

# **Allah's Protection is better than Ubaydullah's**

The next morning Shimr and Amr ibn Sa'd came onto the field. They had already readied their troops. Husayn also gave necessary instructions to his companions. Shimr called out to his sister's sons Abdullah, Ja'far, Uthman and Abbas. He told them that the governor Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad had given them protection. They said, 'Allah's protection is better than that of Ubaydullah's.' Shimr was left looking sad and helpless.

## **A Poor Defence against the unequal enemy**

On the morning of the fatal tenth of the month of Muharram, Husayn had drawn out his little band for battle. According to some traditions or reports, when the battle was about to start, seventy-two people were present on the side of Husayn. Yet, other traditions fix them at one-hundred and forty. Yet some other reports put them at two hundred and forty. Even then Husayn's companions were only a handful compared to the thousands of strong and well-armed soldiers of their enemies.

## **Husayn's final address to the enemy troops**

Husayn set his Companions in proper positions. He gave them the necessary instructions. Finally, he mounted a camel and went towards the enemy troops alone. He addressed them loudly and made a speech to them. He said, ‘

‘O people of Kufah! At this time, I know quite well that this speech will bring no result. Whatever you have to do, you will not stop from doing it. But I think it necessary to end this by making an appeal to you all, for the sake of Allah! My reasons should also be made clear to you!

‘O people! Let it be known to you all who know me and those of you who do not know me that I am the grandson of the Prophet. I am the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib. Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet, was my mother. Ja’far ibn Abi Talib was my uncle. I have also another pride to my credit. Allah’s Messenger called me the Chief of the Youths of Paradise. If you do not believe what I am saying then you may make it sure. A number of the Prophet’s Companions are still alive.

‘I have never ever broken a promise. Never have I missed a Prayer [Salah]. Neither have I killed a Muslim, nor even done any harm to anyone. If the donkey of the Prophet Isa [Jesus] was still alive, the whole of the Christian world would have busied themselves feeding it and taking care of it, until the Day of Judgment. What sort of Muslims and followers are you who want to kill the grandson of your Prophet? You have neither the fear of Allah nor are you

ashamed on behalf of the Prophet. As I haven't killed anybody, I do not deserve to be killed in revenge of it.

'Tell me how have you considered shedding of my blood to be lawful? I had freed myself from worldly matter and disputes. I was staying in Madinah at the feet of the Prophet. But you did not let me live there. I then engaged in Allah's worship in the House of Allah in Makkah. You people of Kufah, there too you did not let me take rest. You sent letters to me informing me that you want to take the oath for my caliphate. But when I came here in answer to your call, you rose against me. Leave me alone so that I may go back to Makkah or Madinah. I will stay there occupied with Prayer. Allah will judge in this very world who was right and who was wrong.'

There was a deafening silence. No one uttered anything. After a pause, Husayn said, 'Thank Allah! I have pleaded with you. But you did not offer any response.'

Husayn now got down from his camel and prepared for the battle. Someone stepped forward from the enemy troops for single combat. His horse, however, became so frightened that the fighter fell down and died. In the meantime, Hurr ibn Yazid Tamimi, pretending as if he were attacking, came running on his horse towards Husayn. When he came near, he threw away his shield. He said to Husayn, 'I am the man who kept you surrounded and prevented your return. I forced you to camp in this field. Now, in order to repent, I shall fight against the soldiers of Kufah. Pray for my forgiveness.' Husayn was pleased and he prayed for him.

## **The Army Closes in Around Husayn**

The circle of steel formed by the soldiers sent by Ubaydullah, slowly but surely closed in around Husayn. At length, Amr ibn Sa'd shot an arrow from the Kufah side, and, amid the cries of the women and children, the unequal fight began. Arrows flew thick and did their work. One after another, the sons and brothers, nephews and cousins of Husayn were martyred before the arrows of the enemy. No one of the band escaped. Fighting bravely, they left the enemy more than their own dead upon the field. Husayn's companions and members of his family showed courage. They displayed rare loyalty and self-sacrifice. None of them showed weakness. None of them displayed cowardice. Two sons of Husayn were martyred early in the day, and at its close there lay among the dead six of his brothers, sons of Ali ibn Abi Talib; two sons of his brother Hasan, and six other descendants of Abu Talib, Ali's father. Beside the women, the only one left in the tent was the young Zayn al-Abidin. He was not well. Husayn at the end was left alone.

## **The Martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali**

For long, Husayn fought against the enemies bravely. Amr ibn Sa'd and Shimr were saying to each other, 'I have never seen such a brave and courageous man.' Husayn had received forty-five wounds from arrows on his body. But he continued to fight the enemy. He was fighting on horseback. But when the horse was killed, he began to fight on foot. Finally, Shimr took six soldiers along with him and attacked him. As a result, Husayn's left hand was cut off. He fell to the ground. Soon his right hand was also wounded. He could not lift up the sword. Sinan ibn Anas, of the tribe of Nakhla, speared him from behind. The spear passed through his stomach. Sinan drew out the spear. Husayn's soul too was drawn out with it.

## **Husayn's Head sent to Ubaydullah**

Then Shimr himself, or at his suggestion somebody else, cut off Husayn's head from his body. Twelve horsemen were chosen. Following Ubaydullah's order, they trampled his head. Then they returned to the tent and arrested his family. When Shimr saw Zayn al-Abidin, he wanted to kill him, but Amr ibn Sa'd stopped him from doing so. Husayn's head and the members of his family were sent to Ubaydullah. The number of martyrs who lay their lives with Husayn was seventy-two: seventeen of the martyrs were descendants of Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him). The day when the tragedy befell was Friday, Muharram 10, 61 AH/ October 10, 680 CE. Husayn was then 54 years, six and a half months old. For the future of Islam, the martyrdom of Husayn was an event of the greatest moment.

## **In the Court of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah**

Ubaydullah then gave Shimr a division of soldiers. He sent the head of Husayn and the arrested members of his family under his supervision, to Yazid in Damascus. When Ali ibn Husayn [Zayn al-Abidin] and the women of the family of Husayn reached Yazid, and when he saw Husayn's head, Yazid burst into tears in the open court. He cursed Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad. He said that he had never ordered him to kill Husayn. He said, 'I would not have scolded you if you had not killed Husayn.'

Shimr and his supporters expected that Yazid would reward and honor them. But he gave them nothing. He said to the courtiers, 'Husayn's mother was better than mine. His grandfather was better than the other Prophets and is the chief of all Adam's descendants. There was, however, a dispute between his father Ali and my father Mu'awiyah. In the same way, we too fell out. Ali and Husayn used to say "Let one whose father and grandfather was better be the caliph," but they did not think over the Verse of the Qur'an:

O Possessor of the Kingdom! You give the kingdom who whom you will, and you take the kingdom from whom you will" [3: 26] finally, everyone knows whom Allah has favoured.'

Then he set free the captives. He sent them to the palace as honored guests. When the women entered the palace, they found that all the other women were crying. After a few days of royal hospitality, Yazid sent the ruined family back to Madinah. He provided generously for their needs and gave them an escort to Madinah. At Madinah, their return caused a wild outburst of grief and crying.

## **Ubaydullah's Hopes Shattered**

Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad hoped that after the killing of Husayn, Yazid would give him a reward. But he, after the incident of Karbala, appointed Silam ibn Ziyad the governor of Khurasan. Modern Khurasan is the north-eastern section of Iran, but in those days, the term referred to a much vaster area, stretching well into modern Afghanistan and Central Asia. He also put under him some provinces that had been attached with Busrah.

He sent Silam to Kufah with a letter for Ubaydullah. He commanded him to give to Silam six thousand soldiers. Silam himself would choose these soldiers. More than this, there is nothing to show that Yazid scolded or gave any other punishment to Ubaydullah! Soon, Silam left Kufah with his chosen six thousand soldiers for Khurasan. After the incident of Karbala, Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, received nothing in reward but shame and sorrow.

## **Reaction in Madinah in Favor of the House of Ali**

We have noted above that the surviving women and children of the family of Husayn were sent eventually by Yazid with ever comfort and consideration, to their Madinah home. At Madinah, their return caused a natural outburst of grief and pain. Everything around, deepened the calamity. It soon became clear that the devotion of Ubaydullah to suppress the mission of Husayn had overshot the limits.

## **The Three Years of Yazid's Rule**

Yazid soon felt the evil which the tragedy of Karbala had cast upon the throne. He also felt the rebound caused thereby in favor of the House of Ali.

The sacrifice of Husayn for a right cause struck now deep into the hearts of people. A cloud of hatred against Yazid began to gather.

## **Madinah Attacked and Sacked**

Madinah was in turmoil, in a state of great anxiety and grief. The people of Madinah turned against Yazid. They rejected his Caliphate and rule. The people of Madinah began to arrest and imprison people belonging to the house of Umayyah [Banu Umayyah or the children of Umayyah]. As many as one thousand people of the house of Umayyah living in and around Madinah were put under imprisonment. They were allowed to leave the city only after their swearing that they would not help the enemy.

We already know that Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr was also opposed to Yazid. Abdullah was the son of the prominent Companion al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and Asma bint Abi Bakr, daughter of the first Caliph. Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr had been the first Muslim child to be born in Madinah after the Hijrah or emigration. He was very pious and worshipful. After Husayn's mission was crushed, Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr emerged as the strongest rival to the Umayyads. After weighing the situation, he left Madinah for Makkah. Yazid had always sensed danger from him. But now even the residents of Madinah revolted against Yazid. Hence, after the martyrdom of Husayn, Yazid turned his attention to residents of Madinah and Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr.

## **Madinah under Attack**

Yazid sent Muslim ibn Uqbah, with one- thousand-strong army, to attack Madinah. He attacked the city from the side called Harrah. This took place in the year 63 AH/ 682 CE. The reason behind this attack was that the people of Madinah had abandoned their obedience to Yazid. They had distanced themselves from him. The people of the city fought against the invading army, bravely. But due to Muslim's courage and experience, the people of Madinah were defeated. Yazid's army killed many prominent people and leaders of Madinah.

Muslim continued a general slaughter with plundering and fire-setting for three days. One thousand people were killed in this battle, which involved three hundred noblemen of the Quraysh and the Ansar or Helpers. He stopped the killing on the fourth day and ordered the people of Madinah to take the oath of allegiance for Yazid. Those who took the oath at Muslim ibn Uqbah's hands were allowed to go and those who refused were killed.

It was on 27 Dhul Hijjah, 63 AH that Muslim ibn Uqbah entered Madinah as victor and issued orders for a general killing. On that very day, a son was born to Abdullah ibn Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib. He was named Muhammad. He is popularly known as Muhammad Abul Abbas as-Saffah. He is regarded as the first caliph of the Abbasids or the House of Abbas. The term as-Saffah means the Shedder of Blood or Blood-thirsty: the blood of the Umayyads. You will learn about this in detail later, InshaAllah!

In short, the people of Madinah were defeated. For three days, such cruelties were let loose that words lack description. The city was virtually destroyed. All important people were killed. After forcing

the citizens, at the point of the sword, again to swear allegiance to Yazid, the army continued its march on Makkah.

# The Siege of Makkah and Yazid's Death

After the destruction of Madinah, the army of Yazid advanced towards Makkah to force Abdullah ibn Zubayr to obedience. That year all the people of Hijaz [region in West Arabia, on the Red Sea coast] had taken the oath for the caliphate of Abdullah ibn Zubayr. He, therefore, declared himself caliph and took control of Makkah early in the year 64 AH/ 683 CE.

Freed from Madinah, Muslim ibn Utbah marched towards Makkah with his army. Muslim was ill. On the way to Makkah, his condition became worse. But when his condition turned serious at the place called Abwa, he summoned Husayn ibn Numayr and made him commander-in-chief of the army in his place. Shortly afterwards Muslim died. The army, under the command of Husayn ibn Numayr, reached Makkah on Muharram 26, in the year 64 AH.

Husayn, the commander of the army, sent a message to Abdullah ibn Zubayr to obey Yazid, otherwise, he would attack Makkah. Abdullah was a brave man. He made preparation for battle. In the beginning, Abdullah's army killed several Syrians and then full-fledged battle started. It continued until the evening, without any clear results. The battle had started on 27 Muharram 64 AH/ 683 CE.

The next day, Husayn ibn Numayr set up a catapult or slingshot on Mount Qubays and started targeting the Ka'bah and laid siege to Makkah. The siege and stone-firing continued until 3 Rabi al-Awwal, 64 AH. On the third of Rabi al-Awwal, the Syrian forces made bullet-like objects of cotton and sulphur. They set them on fire and began to shower them on Makkans. They burnt the Ka'bah cover and blackened its walls. Two catapults were constantly

launching stones and bullet-like burning objects. It was difficult for the people of Makkah to come out of their houses. The fired stones broke the walls of the Ka'bah and its roof caved in.

The Syrian army, after reinforcements, was five thousand strong. The army was continuing to rain stones on the House of Allah and the city, while on 10 Rabi al-Awwal, Yazid died at Hawarin at the age of 38 or 39, after ruling for a period of three years and eight months. The news of the death of Yazid first reached Abdullah ibn Zubayr. He shouted loudly to the Syrians, 'O unfortunate ones! Why are you fighting? Your leader, who had gone astray, is dead.'

Husayn ibn Numayr was not prepared to believe it. However, on the third day, Thabit ibn Qays an-Nakhai came from Kufah and informed him of Yazid's death. He at once ordered the army to raise the siege and march.

## **Husayn Willing to Accept Abdullah as Caliph**

Before leaving Makkah, Husayn ibn Numayr sent a message to Abdullah ibn Zubayr expressing his desire to see him at a place called Bat'ha. Abdullah agreed. He took ten persons with him and similarly ten persons accompanied Husayn ibn Numayr. This was in keeping with the agreement. Husayn said to Abdullah, 'I am ready to accept you as caliph and wear oath of allegiance at your hands. I have five thousand Syrian warriors with me. They will also follow me in this act. Come along with me to Syria. I will persuade all the Syrians to swear allegiance to you. The people of Hijaz have already taken oath at your hands. After the Syrians, the whole Islamic world will accept you as the caliph.'

But, Abdullah thought he was being tricked, so he refused. He said that so long as he did not take revenge against the Syrians, he would never forgive them. Consequently, Husayn returned to his army with his men and ordered it to march. On his way to Syria, he met Ali ibn Husayn [Zayn al-Abidin]. Husayn said to him, 'Yazid is dead. There is no leader of the world of Islam at present. Accompany me to Syria, I shall persuade the whole world to take oath for your caliphate. The Syrians will never deceive you. They will not harm you.'

Ali ibn Husayn said, 'I have made a pledge with Allah that I shall never accept oath of allegiance in my lifetime. Leave me alone. Find someone else for the caliphate.' Having said this, he parted from Husayn. Husayn returned to his army and marched to Syria.

## **A Glance at Yazid and his Caliphate**

Yazid ruled for about three years and eight months. His name was Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan Sakhr ibn Harb ibn Umayyah. He received the pledge of allegiance as the successor to the caliphate during his father's lifetime. He assumed the caliphate after the death of his father, in mid-Rajab 60 AH. He was about thirty-five years old at that time.

Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah had a fleshy body, large physique, lots of hair, a big head, and he was tall in stature and good-looking. He had broad fingers that had visible chicken-pox marks on them.

In the year 48 AH, Amir Mu'awiyah made up his mind to invade Constantinople [Istanbul] and made a declaration in Makkah and Madinah that the Muslims were going to attack Constantinople. Since the Companions knew the Prophet's (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon him) tradition, 'The first army among my followers that will invade the city of the Roman emperor will be forgiven their sins,' many prominent Companions like Abdullah ibn Umar, Abdullah ibn Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Husayn ibn Ali, and Abu Ayyub Ansari participated in it. A part of this army was commanded by Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. This army had marched by sea.

Yazid possessed praise-worthy qualities in terms of his respect, insight and understanding and eloquent speech, ability to write poetry and sound opinion. He was handsome and showed good social skills. But he was weak in the face of temptation. He would sometimes be neglectful of offering his Prayers on time and so often offered them late. It is said that Yazid rejoiced when the news of Husayn's death first reached him, though he later regretted it.

Amir Mu'awiyah had named Yazid at the instance of Mughirah ibn Shu'bah. Mughirah was the governor of Kufah at that time. It was thus Mughirah who was the first to introduce that idea of son succeeding father. Amir Mu'awiyah would never have thought of making his son the caliph after him. Such proposal or idea was entirely against the tradition of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. It was totally against the spirit of Islamic democracy. This was the reason why opposition started against it at once in Madinah.

Commenting on it, Abdur Rahman, Abu Bakr's son, said, 'The style which Amir Mu'awiyah has chosen in selecting the caliph is that of Roman and Iranian emperors. It is not acceptable to us.' Husayn ibn Ali also said, 'This selection is not meant for the betterment, but for the utter destruction of the Muslims. This is because by this way the Islamic caliphate will be like that practiced by the Romans and the Persians: i.e. the son will succeed his father as king.'

In short, people in general did not like Yazid's caliphate. But he did become the caliph of the Islamic world. However, Yazid, after taking over the reign failed to prove himself fit for the caliphate. During his lifetime, many outstanding Companions of the Prophet were alive. Yazid did not take advantage of their presence. On the contrary, he issued orders to all his governors to take oath of allegiance from all the elders present in Madinah and Makkah. When Imam [literally leader] Husayn received the message, how could he, a man of such high position, take oath for Yazid? Yazid's selection as caliph was not lawful. Moreover, Yazid was always engaged in amusement, fun, touring and hunting. He participated in singing and dancing parties openly. How could Husayn accept such a person as caliph and take the oath at his hand? These were the reasons that forced Imam Husayn ibn Ali to oppose the wrongful system of Yazid's reign. These were the causes that brought Imam Husayn to Karbala. His decision was apt. He stood for truth. While uttering the words of truth, he and his family were martyred in their attempt to remove an unlawful system.

Yazid did not show any merit in administration and politics. The model of practical life that Yazid presented before people was also questionable. It was because of this that, as we have pointed out above, Husayn ibn Numayr wanted Abdullah ibn Zubayr to be the Caliph. However, after the death of Yazid, Banu Umayyah strengthened the idea of succession [son becoming king after father]. Finally this evil practice took such a deep root that until today the Muslims have not been able to get rid of it.

## **Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah's Children**

Yazid died in Huwwarin, a town in Damascus on Thursday 14 Rabi al-Awwal, 64 AH. He was about 38 years old then. His body was carried to Damascus where he was buried in the Babb us-Saghir graveyard.

Among his children was the son Mu'awiyah ibn Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. Another son of his was Khalid ibn Yazid. It is said he was knowledgeable in the field of chemistry. There was also Abdullah ibn Yazid. He was very proficient in archery. He was one of the most efficient archers among the Arabs. Yazid had other sons also: Abdullah al-Asghar, Abu Bakr, Utbah, Abdur Rahman, ar-Rabi and Muhammad. All of them were from his different wives. Yazid made his son Mu'awiyah his successor.

Although Yazid was a patron of learning and himself a good poet, he is only remembered for the tragic scene of Karbala and disrespectful attack upon Madinah and Makkah. No progress was made during his rule to extend Islam. On the contrary, there were serious setbacks in the north of Africa! Of which more in the next volume, InshaAllah!