



The Story of Kerbala:

Part 2: Muawiya and Yazeed (Ia)

We should try to understand the state of affairs at the time of Hussein (a). It had been about 50 years since his blessed grandfather (s) had passed away, years that had seen much conflict. The Umayyads had worked their way into positions of power through the reigns of the last few caliphs. Uthman ibn Affan made Mu'awiya one of his governors, and Mu'awiya, corrupted by power and seduced by luxury, started living a life of ease and comfort at the expense of the Muslims he taxed. Not long before the end of Uthman's caliphate, Mu'awiya was only putting on an act of Islam.

We look forward a few years. The caliphate had been assumed by Mu'awiya, son of Hind, eater of the kidneys of Hamzah (as), and was contested by Hasan, son of Ali and Fatima, daughter of Rasoolullah (s). The teachings of Islam were fading from the hearts of the Muslims, with all the relatives of Mu'awiya in positions of power, using the treasury to line their own pockets, and oppressing anyone who dared oppose them. The government were supposedly implementing the laws of Islam, but were in fact slowly corrupting them to suit themselves; gradually wearing down ideals and morals, and the message of Islam; gradually introducing vice and corruption into the society, trying to make it seem acceptable and even in accordance with Islam. With all the leaders at all the mosques in their pockets, who was to say different? There would be whole generations who could grow up knowing nothing of Islam except what they had been told by these.

Hasan (a) had attempted to act against the injustices, and lead a tremendous army only to find that the hearts of his followers had been eaten away by weakness and disharmony.

It wasn't long before all the hidden ills came to the surface, in the forms of disunity, frailty, sedition, chaos and conspiracy against the leadership itself. All but abandoned, Imam Hasan (a) was forced to sign a treaty with Mu'awiya.

Imam Hasan (a) was narrated to have said:

By Allah, if I had fought Mu'awiya, they would have taken hold of my neck and handed me peacefully over to him. By Allah, making peace with him with nobility, is more loveable to me than being killed by him as a captive, or set free, which would be a stain for the tribe of Hashim.

I am by no means humiliating the faithful, but honouring them. By making peace I only wanted to spare you death, when I saw my followers lingering and refraining from going to war.

I feared lest the Muslims should be uprooted from the surface of the earth. I wanted the faith to have men who call to it.

Mu'awiya entered the city of Kufa only a few days after signing the peace treaty with imam Hasan (a). His army encircled it, and he addressed the people.

Mu'awiya addressed the people:

O people of Kufa! Do you think that I have fought you for the sake of prayer, poor-rate and hajj, whilst I know you offer your prayers, give the poor rate and perform hajj? Nay, I fought you so as to be your ruler and seize control of your lives. Allah granted any property plundered or any blood shed in this sedition is irretrievable. Any promise I have given is trampled under these two feet of mine...

Mu'awiya is supposed to have said, to his officers:

... kill anyone you come across who does not hold the same views as you hold, and attack every town you pass by. And plunder property, as plundering is tantamount to killing and it is more hurting to the heart...

The terms of the treaty were that when Mu'awiya died, the caliphate would be passed on to imam Hasan (a).

Mu'awiya, son of Hind, eater of the kidneys, passed away... leaving the caliphate to his son Yazeed.

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32:18 Is he who is a believer like him who is a transgressor? They are not equal. ○

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Yazeed was much worse than his father. Where a treaty may have initially been acceptable with Mu'awiya, who committed many dishonourable acts, yet still allowed people to practice Islam, there was no such option with Yazeed. As soon as Yazeed had assumed power, he immediately attempted to eliminate all opposing forces. They were hunted down, and every means of oppression and terror used to silence them.

Muhammad al Baqir (a), son of Ali, son of Hussein, son of the daughter of rasoolullah (s) is narrated to have said:

Our true followers were killed in every city. Hands and legs were cut off at the slightest suspicion. Whoever was reported to love us or had any contact with us would either be imprisoned or robbed of his property or his house destroyed. Oppression increased in volume and became unduly harsh, till the time of Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, the murderer of Hussein (as).

Ziyad appointed Sumra as governor of Basra. Abu Sawari Adwi is narrated to have said:

Sumra had killed, during a single day, 47 of my companions. All of them had memorised the Quran.

Yazid himself has been described by the historian, Baladiri:

Yazid had a monkey named Abi Qais... that he would bring along with him to where he and his associates would drink wine. He would place a pillow for his monkey which was very vile. He would carry it on a wild she-ass, which had been tamed, with a saddle and reign. Abi Qais would take part in competitions against horses on a fixed day.

Ibn Atheer said:

It is narrated that Yazeed was well known for playing stringed instruments, drinking wine, singing, hunting, occupying himself with lads, female singers and dogs. He used to make rams, bears and monkeys to fight each other. No day passed unless he was drunkered. He also used to strap a monkey to a horse having a saddle and make it ride and make the monkey wear caps of gold and, likewise, the lads he associated with. When a monkey died, he expressed his sorrow for it. It was said that the reason for his death was that once he carried a young monkey and made it dance and it bit him.

Mas'oodi has written:

Yazids governors and officials were influenced by his corruption. During his rule, singing spread throughout Mecca and Medina. Musical instruments were used. People began to drink wine in public.

Yazeed had no respect for Islam. He was a drunk, a gambler, a pervert, a tyrant and an oppressor.

And the governors he appointed terrorised, oppressed and tortured anyone who was known to be loyal to imams Hasan and Hussein (a), or anyone who dared to breathe a word against the tyranny.

17:60 And when We said to you: Surely your Lord encompasses men; and We did not make the vision which We showed you but a trial for men and the cursed tree in the Quran as well; and We cause them to fear, but it only adds to their great inordinacy. ○

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