

TAREEKH SYLLABUS - CLASS 10

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LESSON 1 : PROPHET LUT (A)

Prophet Lut (A) was the cousin of Prophet Ibrahim (A). Their mothers were sisters and Prophet Lut's (A) own sister, Sarah, was Prophet Ibrahim's (A) first wife. The two Prophets (A) migrated together to Palestine, but later Prophet Lut (A) settled in the district of Sodom in Jordan.

The people of Sodom were unsociable and treated strangers disgracefully. Anybody who passed through their area would be robbed of all his possessions. Their life was full of singing, merry-making and gambling. But by far the worst vice in their community was homosexuality, which was openly practised. The word sodomy is in fact a reference to the people of Sodom, who were the first to commit this act. To guide these people, Allah sent Prophet Lut (A) to them. Prophet Lut (A) did his utmost to teach the people about the evil of their ways. He preached to them the message of Allah and begged them to give up their evil customs.

However, after 30 years of guidance, only a handful of people had accepted his teaching while the rest remained engrossed in their sinful habits. The Holy Qur'an says:

And (We sent) Lut, when he said to his people, "Why do you commit such indecent acts that have never been committed before by anyone in any of the worlds? Verily, you come to men in lust instead of women. Indeed you are a people who are guilty of excess." And they had no answer except that they said, "Turn him out of our town, he and his people seek to purify (themselves)."

Surah al-A'raaf, 7:80-82

While Prophet Lut (A) increased his efforts to try and guide the people, they wanted to expel him and his followers from the town. When he warned the people to fear the Wrath of Allah for their indecent behaviour, they laughed and said that they did not care about it.

Prophet Lut (A) despaired of ever guiding the people. He was deeply ashamed when they forced travellers passing through the town to indulge in their vile acts, and prayed to Allah to deliver him and his family from the people of Sodom.

Finally, the punishment of Allah descended on these wretched people. Allah sent down a group of His angels, including Jibraeel (A), to teach the people of Sodom a terrible lesson.

The angels came down in human form and first visited Prophet Ibrahim (A). He thought they were travellers who were passing by his house, so he welcomed them and prepared a roasted calf for them.

However, they did not touch their meals and their strange behaviour frightened Prophet Ibrahim (A). At this point, the angels introduced themselves and said that they were on their way to punish the people of Lut. However, they also informed him of the good news that he would soon be blessed them with a son, (Prophet) Ishaq (A), and a grandson, (Prophet) Ya'qub (A).

Prophet Ibrahim (A) had not been able to have a child with his wife Sarah and the news delighted them. Then, he remembered their other purpose. The Holy Qur'an says:

And when Ibrahim recovered from his awe and had received the good news, he began pleading with Us for Lut's people. Verily, Ibrahim was indeed forbearing, compassionate and often turned to Allah. (Allah said), "O Ibrahim, Forsake this (argument)! Indeed the decree of your Lord has already come to pass, and verily, they are about to receive a torment (which is) irreversible."

Hud, 11:74-76

The angels then changed themselves into young men and left for Sodom. When they reached the town, they knocked at the door of Prophet Lut's (A) house. Prophet Lut (A) was very worried when he saw that he had guests who were handsome youths, because he knew very well what the habits of his people were. However, he could not turn them away and so he welcomed them to his house. The Holy Qur'an says:

And when Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved for them and felt himself powerless (to protect them) and they said, "Do not fear or grieve, we will deliver you and your people, except your wife. She shall be of those who stay behind. Verily, we are bringing upon the people of this town a punishment for their sins." And indeed We have left a clear sign of it for a people who understand.

Ankabut, 29:33-35

No sooner had the guests arrived than Prophet Lut's (A) immoral wife signalled to the people that there were young men in her house.

The Holy Qur'an says:

And his people came rushing to him, those who had done evil deeds in the past. He (Lut) said, "O my people, here are my daughters (to marry) - they are purer for you, so guard against (the punishment of) Allah, and do not disgrace me about my guests. Is there not amongst you a single right minded man?" They said, "Indeed you know that that we do not need your daughters and you very well know what we intend."

Hud, 11:78,79

As the people surged towards the house, determined to satisfy their evil desires, Jibraeel (A) waved his arm at them and turned them blind. He then asked Prophet Lut (A) to leave in the night with his family and the few virtuous people, but to leave his wife behind. As soon as they were safe, the angels brought the punishment of Allah on the town. The Holy Qur'an says:

So the (violent) Blast seized them (while) entering upon dawn. Thus did We turn it (the town) upside down and rained down on them stones of baked clay. Verily, in this are signs for those who are heedful.

Hijr, 15:73-75

LESSON 2: PROPHET YA'QUB (A)

Allah says the following about Prophet Ibrahim (A) in the Holy Qur'an:

And We bestowed on him Ishaq, and Ya'qub as an additional gift, and made them righteous. And We made them leaders to guide (the people) by Our command; and We inspired them to perform good deeds and observe their moral obligations and pay Zakaat; and they obeyed Us.

Anbiya, 21:72,73

Prophet Ishaq (A) was the younger son of Prophet Ibrahim (A), by his wife Sarah. Prophet Ishaq (A) married his uncle's daughter Rafqa, and they were blessed with twin sons, Isu and Prophet Ya'qub (A).

Prophet Ya'qub (A) was much loved by his parents and this made his twin brother jealous. To prevent trouble between the brothers, Prophet Ishaq (A) advised Prophet Ya'qub (A) to migrate from their home in Palestine to Fidaan Aram, where his maternal uncle Labaan lived. In Fidaan Aram he went into the service of his uncle. He later married his uncle's daughter Lay'ah.

After the period of service was over, Prophet Ya'qub (A) left with his family and property to return to Palestine. In Palestine, Prophet Ya'qub (A) sent presents to his brother to indicate good-will, and his brother accepted them and welcomed him warmly. In time, the grudge between the brothers was forgotten.

Prophet Ya'qub (A) decided to make his home in the land of Kanaan and Allah blessed him with twelve sons. His twelve sons became famously known as the "Grandchildren of Ishaq"

His second wife, Raheel died early and therefore Prophet Ya'qub (A) always regarded her sons Binyameen and especially Prophet Yusuf (A) with particular affection. His love for Prophet Yusuf (A) was later to become a source of jealousy for his older sons who determined to do away with their younger brother.

But Allah chose Prophet Yusuf (A) to be His Messenger and protected him from the evil intentions of his brothers.

LESSON 3: PROPHET YUSUF (A) - PART 1

1. Introduction

Prophet Yusuf (A) was the son of Prophet Ya'qub (A). In the Bible he is referred to as Joseph son of Jacob. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned his story in a beautiful chapter entitled "Surah Yusuf". Prophet Yusuf (A) had 11 brothers. He was one of the youngest and possessed excellent character and manners. His father loved him dearly.

Prophet Yusuf (A) once dreamt that eleven stars and the sun and moon were prostrating to him. He related the dream to his father. Prophet Ya'qub (A) realised that the dream outlined his son's destiny and greatness and cautioned him not to tell his brothers about the dream.

His brothers were jealous of the favour that he enjoyed in their father's eyes and planned to somehow get rid of him. Whenever they took their goats out for grazing they would ask their father if Yusuf (A) could accompany them. Prophet Ya'qub (A) always refused, saying that the boy was too young. When Prophet Yusuf (A) reached the age of 16, his brothers insisted that he was now old enough to accompany them. With reluctance, their father agreed to let them take him with them.

As soon as they were far enough from home, they began to plot about how to dispose of Prophet Yusuf (A). Then, they came across a dry well. They removed Prophet Yusuf's (A) shirt, and threw him into the well. Ignoring their young brother's pleas, they heartlessly left him to die of hunger. On the way back, they slaughtered a goat and stained Prophet Yusuf's (A) shirt with its blood. They arrived home weeping and told their father that while they were grazing their sheep, a wolf came and ate their brother. He did not believe their story and could do nothing but remain patient and wait for Allah to reunite him with his beloved son.

Meanwhile a caravan of traders passing by the well stopped to draw some water. They were surprised to see Prophet Yusuf (A) come up holding the bucket. They hid him with their merchandise and sold him to some slave traders for a few pieces of silver.

2. Prophet Yusuf (A) in Egypt

Thus, Prophet Yusuf (A) arrived in Egypt. At the slave market the buyers were all attracted by him, because he was a very handsome young man. News of this remarkable youth swept through the city. The Aziz (Governor of Egypt and Chief Officer of the King), whose name was Fotifaar, offered a price that none could match. He brought Prophet Yusuf (A) home and told his wife Zuleikha that they would adopt him as their son.

Zuleikha, however, was so taken by Prophet Yusuf's (A) beauty that she sought to have an illegal association with him. A Prophet of Allah could never be part of such an evil deed and Prophet Yusuf (A) backed away from the advances of Zuleikha. As he raced for the door she ripped his shirt from behind. At the door they met the Aziz. On seeing her husband, Zuleikha tried to blame Yusuf (A) by claiming that he had tried to lay a hand on her. Before the Aziz could vent his fury on Prophet Yusuf (A), a baby spoke up from the cradle, and the Holy Qur'an says:

And a witness from her own household testified, "If his shirt is torn from the front, then she speaks the truth and he is of the liars. And if his shirt is torn from behind, then she lies and he is of the truthful ones.

Yusuf, 12:26,27

The shirt was, of course, torn from behind, and the Aziz was extremely angry with his wife for attempting such an act of indecency. The women of the city heard about Zuleikha's actions and began to gossip and make fun of her. To explain her attraction she decided to let them see Prophet Yusuf (A) themselves.

She called forty of them to the palace for a meal. As soon as they all had a knife to cut some fruit, she called Prophet Yusuf (A) into the room on some excuse. So dazzled were they by his beauty and presence, that they cut their fingers in their distraction and exclaimed, "This is not a human being - he must be an angel!"

Zuleikha was furious with Prophet Yusuf (A) because he had caused her to be ridiculed. In her anger and frustration, she caused him to be imprisoned on false charges of assault.

LESSON 4: PROPHET YUSUF (A) - PART 2

1. Prophet Yusuf (A) in Prison

Due to continued pressure from his wife Zuleikha, the Aziz of Egypt decided to imprison Prophet Yusuf (A), despite his innocence. The reason he gave was that people would forget the actions of his wife while Prophet Yusuf (A) lay in prison, and her dignity would be restored.

On the same day that Prophet Yusuf (A) was put into prison, two other men were also imprisoned. One used to serve the king wine, while the other was the royal cook. Both men had been accused of trying to poison the king. On the following day, the wine-server said to Prophet Yusuf (A), "I saw in a dream that I was crushing grapes to make wine for the king". The cook said, "I dreamt that I was carrying some bread in a basket on my head and birds were pecking at the bread".

Both men saw that Prophet Yusuf (A) was a noble and pious person and asked him if he could interpret their dreams. Prophet Yusuf (A) took this opportunity to preach the religion of Allah to his prison-mates. He promised to tell them the meaning of their dreams and informed them that this was a special power given to him by Allah. Before he did so, however, he explained to them how senseless it was to believe in various gods and explained to them about the Oneness of Allah and the Day of Resurrection. Finally he said, "O my prison-mates! The man who dreamt that he was crushing grapes will soon be released from here and will go back to his previous post. The second one, who carried the bread on his head in the dream, will be executed and the birds will start to eat his brain."

Prophet Yusuf (A) thought of getting himself released from prison through the wine-server, and told him to remind the king of his innocence when he saw him. The dreams of both men came true just as he had foretold. One of the captives was released while the other was hanged. Unfortunately, the wine-server forgot all that Prophet Yusuf (A) had told him to convey to the king.

2. Prophet Yusuf's (A) Release From Prison

The Holy Qur'an says:

The king dreamt that seven lean cows were eating seven fat ones and that there were seven green ears of corn and seven dry ones. He asked the nobles to tell him the meaning of his dream if they were able to. They replied, "It is a confused dream and we do not know the meaning of such dreams."

Yusuf, 12:43,44

The king was very concerned about the meaning of his dream and even though his wise men thought over it seriously, they could not make sense of it. The king's dream became a means of the liberation of Prophet Yusuf (A) from prison. As soon as the wine-server heard about the dream he was reminded of his time in prison and remembered the powers of his cell-mate. He also remembered that Prophet Yusuf (A) had asked him to tell the king of his innocence. He approached the king and got his permission to see Prophet Yusuf (A).

Prophet Yusuf (A) interpreted the dream by the power given to him by Allah . He said, "For seven years the crops will yield abundant food-grain for the people of Egypt. After that there will be a famine for seven years during which all the food-grain lying in the storehouses will be finished and people will starve. Therefore, the people should try to grow as much extra grain as possible so that it would stand them in good stead during the time of famine".

On hearing this very reasonable and sensible interpretation of his dream from the wine-server, the king was delighted. He ordered that Prophet Yusuf (A) be brought before him so he could make good use of his wisdom in solving his problems.

Although he had been in the dark dungeon for so long, Prophet Yusuf (A) refused to leave the prison until he proved his innocence. He said to the courtiers, "I will not come out of the prison until the king makes enquiries about my case. Tell the king to ask the wives of the noble men about the time when they cut their fingers on seeing me".

The courtiers passed on this message to the king who called the concerned women to him for an explanation. They all confessed the truth and Zuleikha, the wife of the Aziz, also testified that Prophet Yusuf (A) was innocent of any guilt. Thus, Prophet Yusuf (A) was released from the prison with his dignity and honour restored.

LESSON 5: PROPHET YUSUF (A) - PART 3

1. Prophet Yusuf (A) in the Royal Court

The Holy Qur'an says:

The king ordered his men to bring Yusuf before him; he wanted to grant him a high office. The king said to him, "From now on you will be an honoured and trusted person amongst us." Yusuf said, "Put me in charge of the treasuries of the land, I know how to manage them."

Yusuf, 12:54,55

When the king met Prophet Yusuf (A), he found him to be a wise and broad-minded man. In response to the request of Prophet Yusuf (A) as related in the verse above, the king made him in charge of finance and food and ordered his ministers and officials to treat Prophet Yusuf's (A) commands as his own.

Prophet Yusuf (A) thus became the Aziz of Egypt and began his new duties without delay. He was determined that when the famine arrived, nobody should starve.

The river Nile flooded its banks regularly to provide fertile soil for the growth of food grain and Prophet Yusuf (A) was aware that the famine would be caused by the decrease of the water in this river. He decided to make a brief tour of Egypt to assess the best locations where intensive cultivation could be carried out. He allocated extra money to the farmers in the most fertile areas of the Nile, so that they would be able to grow the maximum amount of grain. He also ordered the construction of huge storehouses (granaries), capable of storing several hundred tons of the surplus grain.

During the first seven years, he supplied grain to the people according to their minimum needs, and stored the rest in the newly-built granaries. By the time the seven years were over, the granaries were full. The water level of the Nile fell tremendously and the country was hit by a severe drought. However, due to his foresight and planning, the country did not face a shortage of food.

The famine also extended to the lands of Palestine and Kanaan where Prophet Ya'qub (A) lived with his sons. One day he called them and said, "My sons! We are in great distress due to the famine. You may go to the Aziz of Egypt whose reputation as a kind and just person has spread everywhere in the country. Leave Binyameen with me for company so that I may not be lonely." As commanded by their father, the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (A) set off for Egypt to purchase grain and bring it back to Kanaan.

2. Prophet Yusuf's (A) Brothers in Egypt

When his brothers arrived in Egypt, Prophet Yusuf (A) was very pleased to see them. They did not recognise him at all, never expecting that he was alive. Prophet Yusuf (A) was disappointed not to see his full brother, Binyameen, and asked his brothers to tell him about themselves. They introduced themselves and told him about their father and mother. Prophet Yusuf (A) was relieved to hear that Prophet Ya'qub (A) was alive, and he welcomed his brothers sincerely. He provided them with enough wheat for their needs and had their money put back in their bags secretly. He also asked them to bring their other brother the next time as proof that they were speaking the truth about their family. The Holy Qur'an narrates this episode in the following words:

Yusuf's brothers came to him and when they entered his court, he recognised them. They did not know him. And when he gave them the provisions, he said, "Next time, bring me your other brother from your father. As you can see, I give each of you a certain amount of grain, I am a polite host. If you do not bring him, do not come to us for we shall not give you any more grain.

Yusuf, 12:58- 60

On their return home, the brothers related their experiences to their father, praising the generosity and hospitality of Prophet Yusuf (A). When they opened their bags they were delighted to see that their money had been returned. Soon they were out of grain and were impatient to go back to Egypt to get more. However, they could not go back without Binyameen, so they tried to convince their father to let him come with them. Prophet Ya'qub (A) refused to let them take Binyameen, saying that they would do the same thing with him as they did with Prophet Yusuf (A). After repeated promises the brothers finally convinced him that they would sincerely look after Binyameen, so he let him accompany them to Egypt.

When they reached Egypt, the brothers proceeded to the court of Prophet Yusuf (A) and presented their brother Binyameen to him. Prophet Yusuf (A) was extremely happy to see his younger brother and invited all of them to dine with him. Later he gave them all accommodation at his own house, and asked Binyameen to sleep in his room.

During the night, Prophet Yusuf (A) revealed his identity to Binyameen. He explained how he had been raised from a lowly slave to a position of great power by the Grace of Allah. However, he asked Binyameen not to tell their brothers anything of their conversation.

LESSON 6: PROPHET YUSUF (A) - PART 4

1. Prophet Yusuf's (A) Plan to Detain Binyameen

After they had received their requirement of wheat, the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (A) began to prepare for their journey home. Meanwhile, according to the command of Allah, Prophet Yusuf (A) put into action a plan to detain his full brother Binyameen. He ordered his men to put a gold cup belonging to the king in Binyameen's baggage. The Holy Qur'an describes the incident in the following words:

When he (Yusuf) had furnished them with provisions, (someone) placed the (king's) drinking cup in his brother's baggage. Then someone shouted, "People of the caravan, you are most surely thieves."

Yusuf, 12:70

The brothers of Prophet Yusuf (A) had not gone very far when they were stopped and accused of stealing. They denied this, and said that if anyone of them was found guilty of theft, he could be held as a slave by Prophet Yusuf (A). The caravan was searched, and the cup was found in the bag of Binyameen.

When the brothers were brought before Prophet Yusuf (A), he said, "According to your own words, we will now detain Binyameen with us." They replied, "O Aziz of Egypt! Our father is old and weak. You may detain any of us, but not Binyameen." However, Prophet Yusuf (A) said that he could not detain anyone who was not guilty. The brothers had no choice but to leave for Kanaan. The eldest brother, Yahuda, refused to return without Binyameen. He remained behind in Egypt, rather than face his father.

2. The Reunion of the family of Prophet Ya'qub (A)

When the brothers returned to Kanaan and told Prophet Ya'qub (A) what had happened, he was heartbroken. He had already lost his eyesight crying for his beloved son Prophet Yusuf (A), and this second loss was almost too much for him to bear. He now recalled the memory of his lost sons and wept.

He asked his sons to immediately return to Egypt to look for both Prophet Yusuf (A) and Binyameen. According to their father's instructions, the brothers came to the Aziz of Egypt for the third time, and pleaded for the release of Binyameen as well as some grain for food.

Prophet Yusuf (A) reminded them of how badly they had treated their brother Yusuf, and caused separation between him and his father. The brothers were amazed to hear their secret from the Aziz, who now spoke in the language of the people of Kanaan. They asked him, "Are you Yusuf?"

He replied, "Yes, I am Yusuf, and this is my brother. Allah has been gracious to me. One who is pious and patient against hardships is always rewarded by Allah for his virtues."

On hearing this, the brothers hung their heads in shame and asked him for his forgiveness. He said, "You need not be frightened of me. Allah may forgive you your sins. Now take my shirt and cover my father's face with it, so that he may regain his lost sight. Then return to me with all your family."

The Holy Qur'an says:

When the caravan had left the town (from Egypt), their father (in Kanaan) said, "I smell Yusuf's fragrance. I hope you will not think that I am weak in judgement (due to my love for him). They said, "By Allah ! You are still making the same old error. When someone brought him the glad news, Yusuf's shirt was placed on his face and his eyesight was restored. He said, "Did I not tell you that I know about Allah that which you do not know?"

Yusuf, 12:94-96

After getting his eyesight back and hearing the good news of his son, Prophet Ya'qub (A) decided to proceed to Egypt immediately. Prophet Yusuf (A) was delighted to meet them and embraced his father and mother.

As a token of their gratitude to Allah at this reunion, his parents and brothers prostrated themselves on the ground.

Thus Allah made true the dream of Prophet Yusuf (A), when he had seen eleven stars and the sun and the moon in prostration in front of him. After many trials, Allah raised him from the position of a slave to the highest rank in the land.

At the request of his son, Prophet Ya'qub (A) settled in Egypt with his family, and their clan came to be known as the Bani Israa'il.

Prophet Ya'qub (A) lived in Egypt for 17 years and died at the age of 147. Prophet Yusuf (A) breathed his last some years later at the age of 110 years, and his kingdom passed into the hands of rulers whose titles were Fir'aun.

LESSON 7: PROPHET YUSUF (A) - PART 5

Moral Lessons from the Story of Prophet Yusuf (A)

Allah says the following about the story of Prophet Yusuf (A) in the Holy Qur'an:

We narrate unto you (O Muhammad) the most excellent of the stories (by which) We have revealed unto you this Qur'an; though before this you were of the unaware ones (of its details).
Yusuf, 12:3

Indeed, the adventures and experiences of Prophet Yusuf (A), and his conduct throughout his life, provide us with a wealth of lessons and morals. Some things we may learn from his life are:

1. The belief in the presence of Allah makes a man's troubles easier for him to bear, and as long as he keeps himself away from sins despite temptations, he will ultimately be successful. Prophet Yusuf (A) taught us this by his cheerful conduct throughout his enslavement and imprisonment.
2. In all difficulties and hardships one should seek only Allah's protection. Prophet Yusuf (A) showed his faith by seeking refuge from Allah when faced with the evil intentions of Zuleikha. He was thus saved from committing a terrible sin.
3. One should always remain attached to religion and should take every opportunity to persuade others towards the right path. Prophet Yusuf (A) did not forsake his duty even when in the prison, where he preached against idol worship before interpreting the dreams of his cell-mates.
4. Patience in the face of hardship is the best of qualities and results in reward from Allah in this life and the hereafter. Prophet Yusuf (A) remained calm and resigned to the Will of Allah, despite being abandoned in the well by his brothers. He also bore the shame of being sold as a slave patiently. He also accepted his false imprisonment. In return for his forbearance, Allah raised his position till it was the highest in Egypt.
5. It is important to act in such a manner as to preserve your honour and dignity, and these qualities must always be safeguarded. Prophet Yusuf (A) taught us this valuable lesson when he refused to accept his freedom from prison until his innocence was proved to the people. Thus when he was finally released, he knew he could come in front of the people with his head held high and without any blemish on his record.
6. Above all, this story teaches us that we should forgive and forget the past. When Prophet Yusuf's (A) brothers came to him in Egypt, they were in a pitiable condition and would have been helpless against his great power. If he had wished, Prophet Yusuf (A) could have severely punished them for the heartless treatment they had given him. Instead he forgave their errors and treated them well.

We have listed only a few lessons above, and there is a lot more that one can learn and understand from the story of Prophet Yusuf (A).

LESSON 8: KERBALA - PART 1

Yazid's Demand for Allegiance

In 50 A.H. when Imam Hasan (A) was poisoned, the duty of Imamatus became the responsibility of his younger brother Imam Husain (A). At the time, Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan, the governor of Syria and arch-enemy of the family of the Holy Prophet (S), was virtually the ruler of the whole Muslim Empire. Muawiya, who had caused the poisoning of Imam Hasan (A), continued to disregard the human rights of the people and employed gangs of criminals to terrorise them. Imam Husain (A) was not frightened by the power of Muawiya, and openly condemned him and criticised his actions in his letters, warning him against the punishment of Allah.

Muawiya broke the conditions of the treaty he had signed with Imam Hasan (A) and declared his evil son Yazid as Caliph. In 60 A.H., news was conveyed to Walid, Yazid's governor in Madina, about the death of Muawiya. At the same time, Yazid sent orders to Walid to demand the oath of allegiance (Bay'at) from Imam Husain (A). The orders stated that if Imam (A) refused, his head should be cut off and sent to Yazid in Damascus.

On receipt of the letter of Yazid, Walid sent his servant to Imam (A), requesting a meeting. It was night time and Imam (A) was in the mosque when Walid's servant found him. When the servant informed him that Walid was calling him, he at once exclaimed that Muawiya was dead. He then sent word to Walid that it was late and he was in the mosque, and that he would visit him the next morning.

When Imam (A) returned home to his family with the news of his invitation by the governor, they were very worried. His sisters Bibi Zainab (A) and Bibi Umme Kulthum (A) asked him to take along the youth of Bani Hashim, especially Abbas (A), for protection. Imam (A) was reluctant to take any one along, saying that he had been invited alone. He finally agreed to allow some of the Hashimite youth, including his brother Abbas (A) and his son Ali Akbar to accompany him.

When they reached the Government House the next morning, Imam (A) asked the men to remain at the door, and only to come in if they heard his voice become unusually loud.

Walid was well aware of the position of Imam (A) and greeted him with respect and offered him a seat beside him. He then read out the letter he had received from Yazid, and when he reached the part about sending the severed head of Imam (A) if he refused to pay allegiance, he was too embarrassed to continue and handed over the letter to Imam (A) to read.

Imam (A) read it and smiled and said: "O Walid, invite the Muslims of Madina tomorrow and ask them if they say I should pay allegiance to Yazid, and then let us decide."

Walid accepted this reply, but Marwan, the old enemy of Islam who the Holy Prophet (S) had expelled from Madina, said, "Do not let Husain out of your grip now. If the fox gets out of the four walls of your court you will not see it again. Cut off his head here and now and do not let this opportunity pass or you will not get it again."

When Imam (A) heard these insulting words of Marwan, he put his hand on his sword and said aloud, "O enemy of Allah, will you or Walid touch my head?" On hearing the raised voice of Imam (A), the young men of Bani Hashim burst into the court room. Abbas (A), who was well known for his skill in combat, had already drawn his sword. Imam (A) managed to calm the boiling blood of his companions and averted a situation which would have certainly resulted in a blood bath. The shaken and cowardly Marwan took advantage of Imam's (A) mercy and quickly ran away from the scene.

Imam (A) flatly refused to pay allegiance to Yazid, well knowing that such an action would leave Islam and the Muslims in ruins. His famous answer to the governor of Yazid was, "A man like me can never give allegiance to a man like him."

After this confrontation the life of Imam (A) was in danger, and with a heavy heart he began to plan to leave Madina, the city of his beloved grandfather.

LESSON 9: KERBALA - PART 2

Imam Husain's (A) Departure from Madina

When Imam (A) announced that he was leaving Madina, the people of the city were struck with grief. They could not bear the loss of their dear Imam (A) who reminded them so much of the Holy Prophet (S) in his appearance, manner and speech. Groups of people approached him asking him why he was leaving, and begging him not to go.

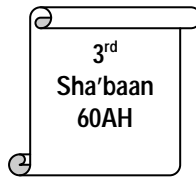
Imam (A) explained that Yazid had demanded his allegiance and that because of his refusal, the tyrant would not hesitate to make Madina a battlefield. Imam (A) did not want bloodshed of innocent Muslims in the city of his grandfather. Therefore, he was going to Makka for pilgrimage and then he would decide what to do.

Imam (A) then visited the graves of his grandfather, his mother Bibi Fatimah (A) and his brother Imam Hasan (A). After this, he went home to make preparations for the journey.

Imam Husain's (A) sister Bibi Umme Kulthum (A) was a widow and lived with him. His other sister Bibi Zainab (A) was married to Abdullah bin Ja'far, and she begged her husband for permission to accompany her brother, saying that she could not live without him in the city. Abdullah granted her his permission and she returned to Imam (A) and prepared to leave with him.

The caravan began moving and Imam Husain (A) bid farewell to the people of Madina. The people were weeping openly, wondering whether they would ever see him again.

Imam Husain (A) in Makka



Imam (A) arrived in Makka on 3rd Sha'baan 60 A.H. While he waited for the Haj season, he pondered about his future action. He could not have continued to live in Madina after refusing to pay Yazid the allegiance he demanded. Had he stayed on in Madina, he would have undoubtedly been killed and his murder would cause the clash of the loyal people of Madina, especially the Hashimites, with the forces of Yazid.

This would result in the massacre of innocent people and destruction of the city of his beloved grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S). Besides if he had stayed in Madina, the world would always ask why he had not sought shelter elsewhere.

The whole empire was going through terrible times. Yazid's grip on the people was absolute and anyone who dared to say anything against him was harshly dealt with. Yazid favoured those worthless people who flattered him, and he installed them as governors and leaders in the mosques.

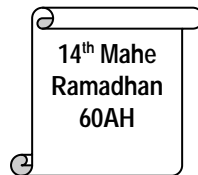
The chastity of women was no longer safe, with their dignity at the mercy of Yazid's brutal soldiers. Marriage lost its sanctity and protection to married women. If a woman was desired by men of the government, deceitful measures were adopted to force the husband to divorce his wife so that she could be made available to these shameless men.

Human rights were deliberately denied and the laws of religion were openly defied by Yazid, who remained in a constant state of intoxication. There was no protection for life or property and looting and persecution was freely practised in the political interests of the state.

At last, people could bear it no longer and messengers began to come to Imam (A), with written requests to come to the rescue of Islam and the Muslims. People wrote to Imam (A) saying that if he did not do something to defend the religion of Allah from getting lost and the people from going astray, they would complain about him to Allah and the Prophet (S) on the Day of Judgement.

Many of these desperate messages came from Kufa, begging Imam (A) to come to their urgent aid. When Imam (A) received these calls for help in Makka, he had to respond. However, he could not blindly accept the call from Kufa, because the people of that city were well known for their fickle and unstable character and conduct.

Therefore, he decided to send a deputy to Kufa who would write to him after having studied the sincerity of the invitation.



Imam (A) sent his cousin Muslim bin Aqeel to Kufa and asked him to report from there. Muslim left for Kufa on the 14th of Mahe Ramadhan, along with his two sons and two guides.

Meanwhile, Yazid received news in Damascus that Imam (A) was in Makka for Haj. He therefore hired 30 men to disguise themselves as pilgrims and murder Imam (A). These men entered Makka with daggers under their Ehram with a view to kill Imam (A) even if he was within the boundaries of the Holy Ka'ba.

At the same time, Imam (A) received a letter from Muslim that it was safe for him to come to Kufa. He decided to leave for Kufa once the Haj was over. However, he was then made aware of the presence of Yazid's assassins in Makka.

On the eve of Haj, Imam (A) decided to change his intention to Umrah instead of Haj, and leave Makka immediately. The reason for this was that he did not want bloodshed on the sacred ground of Makka. In response to the call of the people of Kufa, Imam (A) made his way towards that city. By that time however, Muslim was in dreadful trouble in Kufa, where after being welcomed, he was now having to fight for his very life. Although Muslim desperately tried to send a message to Imam Husain (A) to avoid Kufa at all costs, he was not successful.

LESSON 10: KERBALA - PART 3

Muslim bin Aqeel in Kufa

In Kufa, Muslim was given a very warm reception and thousands of people swore the oath of allegiance to Imam Husain (A) at Muslim's hands. He was impressed, and, guided by the enthusiasm and assurances of the people, he immediately wrote a letter to Imam (A) advising him to come to Kufa.

When Yazid learnt of Muslim's arrival in Kufa and the reaction of the people, he despatched Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad as his governor to Kufa with instructions to force the people to withdraw their support of Muslim. Soon after his arrival, the new governor had managed to bribe all the leading figures of Kufa to change their allegiance. To the rest of the population a strong threat was issued. At the time of evening prayers, the following message was announced: "The Caliph Yazid will consider anyone who is found associating with Muslim bin Aqeel, the Deputy of Husain bin Ali, to be a rebel. By way of punishment, such people will be hanged, their families put to sword and their property confiscated. If anyone has extended any help to him upto now, no harm will come to him as long as the support is withdrawn immediately".

The time for prayers came and Muslim rose to lead the congregation as he had done since his arrival. When he completed his prayers, he turned back to find the whole mosque deserted, except for Hani bin Urwah, at whose house Muslim was a guest. The people of Kufa had all succumbed to the warning of the governor, too cowardly to make a stand against this injustice and knowing that they had effectively passed the death sentence on Muslim. These were the same people who had deserted Imam Ali (A) and Imam Hasan (A) in their times of need.

Both men realised that their first priority was to get a message to Imam Husain (A) and warn him to turn away from Kufa. Hani knew the town better so they decided that he should get away with the message.

With a quick farewell, Hani ran out. He knew that before he left Kufa he had to do something to secure the safety of Muslim's two little boys. He rushed home and told his wife to get the children out of the back door with instructions to leave the city.

As Hani prepared to leave, his house was surrounded by armed soldiers. Hani drew out his sword, determined not to give in easily. However, he was hopelessly outnumbered and was overpowered, chained and taken to the governor. Meanwhile, Muslim left the mosque not knowing where to go. At last he rested against a doorway, tired and thirsty. The door opened and an old lady stood there. On learning his identity she quickly pushed him in, warning him that soldiers everywhere were hunting for him.

This pious lady, who's name was Tau'a, told Muslim to hide in her attic till it was safe to leave. Before retiring into the attic, Muslim told the old lady that he had to get an urgent message to Imam Husain (A). She assured him that her son would soon return and he was a noble young man who would do his best to help.

When Tau'a's son returned she explained the situation to him. The evil man immediately thought of the reward being offered for Muslim's capture. He cunningly assured his mother that he would make arrangements for Muslim's escape the next day. In the morning the traitor went and informed the governor of Muslim's whereabouts.

When Muslim heard the approach of soldiers, he knew that he had been betrayed and had to leave. He snatched a sword from the room and rushed out. The soldiers, who were expecting a meek surrender, were surprised to see Muslim emerge from the house like an enraged lion.

The lane outside was too narrow for the soldiers to attack him in a group and Muslim could thus fight in single combat. Muslim was no ordinary soldier. He had extensive experience and skill in combat and the enemies began to fall back under his attack, dying and being trampled by the hooves of the horses of their own men.

The leader of the soldiers sent word to the governor that they needed more men, a request that astounded Ubaidullah. He tauntingly asked how many warriors they needed to capture a single man. When it was suggested that perhaps he would like to go and capture Muslim himself, the coward backed away. Instead, he suggested that it would be better to trap Muslim by foul means.

Accordingly, a trench was dug and then disguised with straw and sticks.

As Muslim surged forwards attacking the enemy, they broke away and he unsuspectingly fell into the trench. Immediately, the cowards who had been running from him, returned to pelt him with stones.

His head pouring with blood, Muslim fell unconscious. He was dragged up, chained and brought to Ubaidullah. When Muslim was presented to Ubaidullah, he stood erect with dignity. He was asked for his last wish before he joined Hani, who had already been killed. Muslim asked for a messenger to be sent to Imam Husain (A). This request surprised the governor, who expected a plea for mercy for Muslim's sons, who had also been found and captured. In any case, he refused the request. Muslim then asked for his armour to be sold and his debts in Kufa be paid with the proceeds. Agreeing to this, Ubaidullah then ordered that Muslim be beheaded.

As the sword of the executioner fell on his neck, Muslim spoke his last prayer: "O Holy Imam, pardon me for I was misled. O Allah!, let him know what has happened here and not come to Kufa."

LESSON 11: KARBALA - PART 4

The Arrival in Karbala

When Imam Husain (A) left Makka for Kufa, a large group of people accompanied him. Many of these people thought that if the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S) was making a stand against Yazid, the whole Muslim world would support him and Yazid would surely be toppled. They thought that they would be able to share in the glory and war booty that would follow. Although Imam Husain (A) repeatedly warned them that they were mistaken in their thinking, the crowd persisted in travelling with him.

Imam Husain (A) continued on his journey towards Iraq until he neared Kufa. From there he wrote a letter to the people of Kufa and sent it through Qays bin Mashar Saidaawi. In the letter he informed the people of Kufa that he had received Muslim's letter and that he was on his way to Kufa and would arrive soon. Qays took the letter to Kufa but was arrested outside the city and taken to the governor, Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad.

As he was led to the governor, Qays managed to tell some people where Imam Husain (A) was, and the word spread secretly amongst the loyal Kufans, many of whom managed to reach Imam (A) in Karbala.

The governor told Qays that the only hope he had to save himself was to mount the pulpit and publicly abuse Imam Husain (A). Qays addressed the people by first praising Alláh and then said, "O People, Husain (A) is the best of men living at present and is the son of Fatima (A) the daughter of your Prophet (S). I have been sent by him. All of you should rise and assist him." He then cursed Ubaidullah and his father and praised Imam Ali (A). By this time, the governor had heard enough and ordered that Qays be thrown down from a high roof. Qays did not survive this brutal treatment and was martyred. His broken body was left on the ground where it fell.

Meanwhile, Imam Husain (A) continued his journey towards Kufa until he reached a place called Zurud. There, he learnt about the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani and said: "We are from Allah and to Him we all will return." He prayed to Allah to bless them.

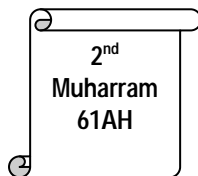
At the stopping place of Uzaybul Hajanaat, Imam Husain (A) received news about Qays. When the caravan stopped at Zabala, he informed his companions of the deaths of Muslim, Hani and Qays and the state of affairs in Kufa. Thereafter, he said, "Our supporters have withdrawn their support from us. Whoever wishes to leave us and go his own way should do so." At this time most of his companions left and very few remained. These few were his sincere followers and had not come with him for material gains.

In response to the news of Imam Husain's (A) approach, several military parties had been sent out to search the desert and stop his advance. One such party, led by a famous commander, Hur ibne Yazid ar-Riyahi, met the caravan of Imam Husain (A) on the 1st of Muharram 61 A.H.

When they met, Hur's army was exhausted and desperately thirsty. Imam Husain (A) instructed that water from their stores be provided to Hur's men and horses.

It was time for noon prayers. Imam Husain (A) led the Jamaat prayers and Hur's army also prayed behind him. After the prayers were over, Imam Husain (A) addressed Hur and his companions. He reminded them that he was only there in response to their written invitations. He also explained that he was the rightful Imam and that he was one of the people mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in the verses relating to Mubahila (3:61) and Purification (33:33). He warned them of the consequences of obeying a man like Yazid, and urged them to refrain from staining their hands with the innocent blood of the family of the Holy Prophet (S).

Hur did not accept these words of advice, and although there was no fighting, he diverted the path of Imam Husain (A) away from Kufa and led him into the desert.



On Thursday, 2nd of Muharram 61 A.H., they reached a place where the horse of Imam Husain (A) stopped. Although he changed horses several times, the animals would not carry him further.

Gathering the people who lived there, Imam Husain (A) asked the name of the place. Some said that it was called Naynava, others said it was also called Mariya. Imam Husain (A) asked if there was any other name. Someone said it was also known as Shattul Furaat. Then one old man came forward and said that he had heard his ancestors say that one name for this area was Karbala.



When Imam Husain (A) heard this, he smiled and thanked Allah and then said, "Surely this is the plain where my Holy Grandfather has prophesied that I, with my faithful companions shall lay slain after suffering three days of hunger and thirst. We will not move from here - we have reached our destination."

Imam Husain (A) then ordered for his caravan to stop and tents were pitched next to the banks of the river Euphrates.

LESSON 12: KARBALA - PART 5

Events of the First Days in Karbala

The caravan of Imam Husain (A) had arrived in Karbala and their tents were pitched next to the river Euphrates. As his companions settled down, Imam Husain (A) took his brother Abbas (A) around the barren desert and pointed out the various places where each of his comrades would fall and be slain on the Day of Ashura.

The people living in the area were from the tribe of Bani Asad. Imam Husain (A) purchased the land of Karbala from them and then gifted it back to them. He then addressed the men of Bani Asad saying, "On the tenth of this month you will see our dead bodies lying on this plain with our heads severed and taken away. Please bury us, and when our devotees come to visit our graves, treat them with honour and point out to them the places of our burial." He then turned to the women of the tribe and said, "O virtuous ladies! If your husbands, fearing Yazid, do not bury us, then please encourage them to do so or do it yourselves." Finally, he turned to the children of Bani Asad and said, "O innocent ones! If your parents, out of fear of the ruler, do not bury us then, by way of playing, bring some earth and throw it on our bodies to hide them." This heartrending appeal of Imam Husain (A) made all the listeners weep.

When Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad, Yazid's governor in Kufa, learnt that Hur had brought Imam Husain (A) and his companions to Karbala, he sent his troops to surround them. The first man to arrive in Karbala on behalf of Yazid was Amr ibne Sa'ad, who was the commander-in-chief of all the forces. He brought with him 6,000 men. After that, regiment after regiment began to pour in onto the plains of Karbala. Historians all agree that at least 33,000 of Yazid's men gathered to fight Imam Husain (A), while some state that the figure was closer to 80,000 men. This large army was bent on the massacre of Imam Husain (A) and his companions for the sake of the rewards that Yazid had promised them. Many amongst them were the same people of Kufa who had invited Imam Husain (A) to come there in the first place.

The first act of the enemy was to order Imam Husain (A) to remove his tents from near the river. Abbas (A) objected to this demand, claiming priority of occupation and the right of the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S) to stay where he had first camped.

When the enemy threatened to march towards their tents, the lion-hearted Abbas (A) stood firm and drew out his sword shouting, "If anyone dares to advance one more step forward, he shall lay headless on the ground." His bravery was well known and none dared to step closer. However, Imam Husain (A) called to his brother saying, "Brother Abbas, do not let the bloodshed be started by our side. When Allah is with us, it does not matter how far the river is."

Imam Husain (A) then ordered for their camp to be moved further into the interior of the desert.

In the days that followed there were several meetings between Imam Husain (A) and Amr ibne Sa'ad. Amr kept on insisting that the only way to stop war was for Imam Husain (A) to give the oath of allegiance to Yazid. He said that once the allegiance was given, all worldly comforts would be at the disposal of Imam (A). However, Imam (A) remained firm on his stand and replied: "I shall never yield to the one who does not believe in Allah and one who defies Him, both by words and actions. I am willing to meet any calamity but will never surrender Truth to falsehood."



On the 7th of Muharram, Amr ibne Sa'ad received orders to block all sources of supply of water to Imam Husain (A). From that day onwards, not a single drop of water was allowed to reach the camp of Imam (A). The scorching desert sent heat waves everywhere and the little children began to cry with intense thirst. Even little babies could not receive milk, because their poor mothers were themselves suffering from thirst.

The brave group of Imam Husain (A) suffered these tortures with patience as they watched the enormous army that faced them prepare for war.

LESSON 13: KARBALA - PART 6

The Night of Ashura



On the 9th of Muharram, Shimr arrived in Karbala with orders from Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad for Amr ibne Sa'ad. The orders stated that if Imam Husain (A) did not surrender and give the oath of allegiance at once, he must be fought and killed immediately.

On receipt of these orders, Amr rallied a part of his army and marched towards the camp of Imam Husain (A). Abbas (A) advanced towards the enemy with 20 horsemen and enquired from them the reason for their sudden approach. When he was told of the ultimatum, he said that he would inform Imam Husain (A) of the position and bring back the reply.

When Abbas (A) briefed Imam Husain (A) of the situation, Imam (A) said to his brother, "Go back to them, and if possible, ask for an extension of time till tomorrow morning, so that tonight we may offer prayers to Allah, make Du'as and ask for His forgiveness".

Amr granted them respite till the next morning with great reluctance. Now that they knew that death was inevitable the next morning, the whole camp of Imam Husain (A) readied themselves for martyrdom.

Imam Husain (A) gave a speech on the night of Ashura saying in part, **"O Lord! I thank You, because You have honoured us by means of Prophethood and taught us the Qur'an, made us understand the religion and its commandments, granted us eyes, ears and hearts, kept us free from the evils of idol-worship and then enabled us to thank You for Your blessings. I am not aware of any companions more faithful and honest than my companions, and any relatives more righteous and kind than my relatives. May Allah grant you all a good reward. I think the day of our fighting with this army has arrived. I permit you all to go away, because the enemies are after me only. You are free to depart without any restriction and can take advantage of the darkness of night"**.

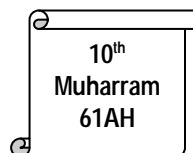
The people who had come with the wrong intentions had already left before, and the ones who remained were perfect in their faith and loyalty. The listeners all rejected the option of abandoning Imam (A). One said, "Should we go away to live after you? We pray to Allah that the time may not come when you may be killed while we remain alive".

Thereafter the whole camp busied itself in preparation for the events of the next day. The sound of prayers and supplications filled the air like the buzz of hundreds of bees. Some soldiers checked their weapons, while others discussed tactics of warfare that would allow them to cause the most damage to Yazid's army. Mothers prepared their sons to lay down their lives with Imam Husain (A) in the cause of Islam.

Imam Husain (A) went around the camp talking to his men as well as his family and giving encouragement and last minute instructions. He consoled his sister Bibi Zainab (A) and urged her to remain patient in the face of the hardship that was to follow his martyrdom.

The night eventually came to an end and the morning of the day of great sacrifices arrived. After reciting the dawn prayers, Imam Husain (A) arranged his small army in readiness for the battle. Just about one hundred brave men readied themselves to face the onslaught of thousands.

LESSON 14: KARBALA - PART 7



The Day of Ashura

The 10th of Muharram 61 A.H. is known as the day of Ashura. On this day in Karbala, the army of Yazid fought the army of Imam Husain (A). On this day the household of the Holy Prophet (S) was killed, alongside the faithful companions of Imam (A).

The details of the battle are given in the Appendix, please study these for an overview of the martyrs.

Imam Husain (A) and his companions had spent the entire night in prayer. In the morning Ali Akbar gave the Adhan. He resembled the Holy Prophet (S) greatly and his recital reminded the people of the early days of Islam.

After the morning prayer, Imam's (A) followers took it in turns to come forward to address Yazid's army. Many had relatives and friends in the enemy camp and they tried to convince them of the terrible crime they were about to commit.

Finally, Imam Husain (A) came forward himself and addressed the enemy. He introduced himself and informed them that he was a peaceful man, living quietly in Madina and not harming anyone. He asked them why they were so bent on killing the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S), in whom they all believed.



Seeing the result of the words of Imam Husain, Amr ibne Sa'ad, the commander of Yazid's army, was concerned that the morale of his troops would be affected. He therefore declared that all should witness that he was casting the first arrow in battle and he shot an arrow towards Imam (A).

This was the beginning of the battle. Imam (A) had only 32 horsemen and about 110 soldiers in all. He had fortified his camp by locating it so that it was enclosed by a chain of hills on three sides. This area is known as "Haa-yeer" and can be seen even today.

He pitched his tents close together and dug a ditch at the exposed rear. The ditch was filled with firewood which was set alight when the enemy attacked the camp.

After a few single combats, there was a general attack in the mid-morning. Although the enemy was repulsed. Most of the army of Imam (A) was killed. By now it was time for the Dhohr prayer. Imam (A) prayed Salatul Khawf (prayers under attack) while the battle continued.

In the afternoon, it was the turn of the family of the Holy Prophet (S), the Banu Hashim, to sacrifice themselves. Ali Akbar was the first to go and within an hour, no adult male remained alive in Imam's (A) camp except his ill son Ali Zainul Abideen (A) and himself.

It was Asr time when Imam Husain (A) bid the ladies and children farewell and entered the battle-field. He gave his last speech, once more urging the enemy to consider their actions. When he did not receive any reply, he attacked them bravely, scattering them wherever he turned. The enemy could not stop him.

Finally, Imam (A) paused. He was dizzy with the loss of blood. He slid off his horse in a little hollow. Here the enemy found him with his head in Sajdah. The accursed Shimr committed the most terrible of crimes when he beheaded Imam (A).

LESSON 15: KARBALA - PART 8

The Aftermath of Karbala

After the supreme sacrifice had been accepted and our Holy Imam Husain (A) had been martyred, a gloomy silence hung over the battlefield of Karbala.

Every now and then the silence would be broken by the sound of drum-beating to celebrate victory. Not content with spilling the innocent blood of Imam Husain (A) and his companions, Amr ibne Sa'ad, the commander of Yazid's army, ordered the horses to be shod afresh and then run over the bodies of the dead Muslims. Although some people from his army objected to this gross disrespect to the dead, he managed to enforce this horrible action. Having trampled over the bodies of the martyrs, the enemy next turned their attention to the defenceless camp of Imam Husain (A).

Yazid's soldiers marched into the camp where they subjected the grief-stricken ladies to further torment and indignity. They had expected to find luxurious articles in the tents of the family of the Holy Prophet (S), but all they found were simple items and clothes, some of which had been stitched by Bibi Fatima (A) with her own hands. The ruthless soldiers snatched away these few possessions of sentimental value. They were angry at the lack of booty, and they took the veils off the struggling ladies forcing them to expose their hair and faces. This humiliation was almost too much to bear.

Not satisfied with this, the enemy set fire to the tents. The terrified ladies gathered their children and rushed from tent to tent, trying to escape the burning flames. One young child was seen rushing out of a tent with her clothes on fire. One of the enemy soldiers, seeing her pitiable condition came forward and put out the flames. The child looked at him, surprised at the unexpected kindness. Tearfully, the little child asked him, "O Shaikh, do me one more kindness and tell me the way to Najaf." The soldier was very surprised at this unusual request, and replied, "Najaf is far away from here. Why do you want to know the way there?"

The child said with heartbreaking innocence, "I want to go to the grave of my grandfather Imam Ali (A) and complain about what your people have done to us - how our men were butchered and how our ladies have been whipped. I want to tell him how the earrings were snatched from my cousin Sakina's ears, leaving her earlobes torn and bleeding."

Bibi Zainab (A), who had been left in charge of the camp by Imam Husain (A), was at a loss as to what to do. She went to the seriously ill Imam Ali Zainul Abideen (A). He lay unconscious on the ground after the enemy had even robbed the mattress on which he lay. She shook him urgently to ask his advice. He was burning with fever but with a great effort he replied that it was compulsory on them to save their lives and he asked her to get everyone out from the burning tents into the open.

Soon the raging fires subsided leaving only one tent standing, although it was also damaged by fire. The ladies and children salvaged whatever they could of their few belongings and huddled together in that little shelter waiting for nightfall.

The night following the day of Ashura is known as Shame Ghariba. It was the night when the exhausted, hungry and tired families of Imam Husain (A) and his companions sat in loneliness, each thinking about the loved ones they had lost in the unjust battle on that day.

Due to the illness of Imam Ali Zainul Abideen (A), Bibi Zainab (A) realised that she would have to take care of the small group of women and children herself. She called her sister Bibi Umme Kulthum (A) to help her and they decided to count all the children to see that none had gone missing in the confusion of the fire. To her horror and dismay Bibi Zaynab (A) found that Bibi Sakina (A), the beloved daughter of Imam Husain (A), was not there.

The two ladies searched everywhere for the young girl but in vain. Finally, in desperation, Bibi Zainab (A) went to the place where the body of her brother Husain (A) lay and cried, "O my brother, Sakina, who you left in my care, is nowhere to be found. Where shall I look for her in this wilderness?" Just then, the moon came out from behind a cloud and Bibi Zainab (A) saw that little Sakina (A) lay on her father, sleeping on his chest like she always used to. She shook the child awake and said, "My child, how did you find your father's beheaded body in this darkness?"

The little girl replied innocently, "I wanted to tell my father about what the people had done to me. I wanted to tell him how Shimr had robbed the earrings that my father had so lovingly given me. I wanted to tell him how he had ripped them from my ears leaving my earlobes torn and bleeding. I wanted to tell him how the beast had mercilessly slapped me when I cried in pain. When I was running aimlessly in the desert I thought I heard my father's voice telling me he was here. I followed the voice and I found him lying here. I told him everything and then I felt like sleeping on his chest the way I always did, for the last time. So I kept my head on his chest and slept till you came."

Bibi Zainab (A) took the little child's hand and led her back to the camp where her mother Bibi Rubab waited anxiously. She had just returned the exhausted child to her mother when she noticed that a group of people were advancing towards the camp carrying flame torches. She thought that some soldiers had returned to loot them and she hurried to stop them from disturbing the children who had finally gone to sleep despite their hunger and thirst.

However, it turned out that the arrivals were a group of ladies, the wives of some of the enemy soldiers. They were led by the widow of Hur, who had joined Imam Husain's (A) army from the enemy camp.

Hur's widow said, "Dear lady, we have been asked to bring food and water for the children and bereaved ladies of your camp." She continued sadly, "I am the widow of Hur who died fighting for your brother. When the soldiers of Amr ibne Sa'ad realised that all of you would perish of hunger and thirst, and that they would not be able to take you back to Yazid according to his command, they sent me to bring food and water to you."

Bibi Zainab (A) offered her condolences at the death of Hur and apologised that they had not been able to offer him much hospitality. This remark prompted Hur's widow to say, "My lady, I do not know how to offer you condolences, because you lost not one, but 18 members of your family."

Bibi Zainab (A) supervised the feeding of all the children and ladies. She then took a broken sword in her hands and began going around the camp ensuring that the small group was safe from any further disturbances during that night.

LESSON 16: KARBALA - PART 9

The Journey to Damascus

On the morning of 11th Muharram, the army commander, Amr ibne Sa'ad called his officers to decide what steps they should take next. It was decided that the captives should be led through Kufa to Damascus to the court of Yazid. Amr ibne Sa'ad marched directly on to Damascus to inform Yazid about the events of Karbala, and to obtain his promised reward. He left Shimr and Khooli in charge of the captives.

With these arrangements completed, some soldiers were appointed to bind the ladies and children. They tied ropes and chains round their hands and feet. The ladies were put on camels with no saddles. The hands of some of the ladies were tied behind them and linked to the necks of the young children. Imam Ali Zainul Abideen (A) was heavily chained and made to walk on foot, despite his weakened condition. The heartless officers made the captives pass by the place where the bodies of their loved ones lay, headless and without even shrouds over them. Many of the ladies and children threw themselves down from the camels to the bodies of their dead relatives, only to be whipped by the soldiers. Even the innocent children were not spared the lashes.

Once the captives were made ready, the heads of all the martyrs were mounted on spears. Every soldier who was given a severed head was made in charge of it and marched at the front of the army. The head of Imam Husain (A) was given to Khooli, who was a hard-hearted tyrant.

Finally the caravan got underway for Kufa. The pitiful condition of the little children was such that they could not hold on to the camels due to their inexperience and the rapid pace of the march. Many children fell to the ground as a result. Despite the pleading of the mothers, the heartless soldiers would not halt the march to remount a fallen child. Today, the road from Karbala to Kufa has many graves of such children who were left to die in the hot desert.

Within a few hours, the caravan reached the outskirts of Kufa. Shimr decided to send a messenger to inform the governor, Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad, of their arrival. The messenger returned, saying that all preparations had been made, and the captives should be marched through the main streets of the town.

The people of Kufa lined the streets and looked from the balconies of their houses as the captives were paraded in front of them. The announcer was saying, "O people of Kufa, we are bringing you the grand-daughters of the Prophet and other women and children of the family of Husain son of Ali. Husain, who had risen in rebellion against our Caliph Yazid, has been defeated and killed with his companions on the battlefield of Karbala.

The members of his family are now being taken to the court of Yazid, to face whatever punishment he wishes to inflict upon them. People of Kufa, this is the fate that awaits all those who question the authority of Yazid, and no person who tries to rise against Yazid will be spared."

The people heard all this in astonishment. Not long ago Kufa was the capital of Imam Ali (A), and they all remembered the kindness shown to them by him and his sons and daughters. On seeing the pitiful condition of the captives, many were crying, but none dared to raise their voice against the oppressors, in case a similar fate befell them.

Finally the caravan reached the court of the governor. When he saw the condition of the captives, he mockingly said that it seemed that some slave girls had been brought before him, and not the grand-daughters of the Holy Prophet (S). This remark made Bibi Zainab (A) lose her temper and she addressed Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad with a fiery and eloquent speech.

Bibi Zainab (A) related the status of the Holy Prophet (S) and his Holy Ahlul Bayt (A). She reminded him of the teachings of Islam about the considerations to be given to prisoners, especially women and children. She warned him about the temporary nature of his victory and the doom that he and his evil master Yazid would soon face. She began to tell the assembled people about the inhuman crimes committed against Imam Husain (A) and his companions.

As she spoke, the people were reminded of the eloquence of her father Imam Ali (A). Ubaidullah became worried at the effect the speech of Bibi Zainab (A) was having on the people. He tried to shout her down by threatening the worst possible torture if she did not stop. Undaunted by his threats, the brave lady continued and her words moved many to tears. One of the aged companions of the Holy Prophet (S), Zaid bin Arkan, who was blind, rose up and protested at the cruel treatment of the members of the family of the Holy Prophet (S).

Ubaidullah realised at once that the situation could get out of hand. The speech of Bibi Zainab (A) could cause an uprising against him if he did not act quickly. He ordered his men to get rid of the companion of the Holy Prophet (S) and told Shimr and Khooli to get the captives out of Kufa immediately.

Arrangements were made for departure straight away, and Shimr chose the quietest route to Damascus so that he would not face any surprise attacks from anyone wishing to avenge the martyrs of Karbala. The caravan of the captive families of Imam Husain (A) and his companions was led by Shimr through the deserts of Iraq and Syria, from Kufa to Damascus (Sham).

Throughout the journey people noted with wonder that the lips of the cut head of Imam Husain (A) kept on moving, reciting verses from the Holy Qur'an. Clearly heard was the following verse: ***Do you think that the people of the Cave and of the Inscription were of Our wonderful miracles?*** ***Kahf, 18 : 9***

By reciting this verse, the Holy Imam (A) was calling the attention of the people to the next verses of this chapter of the Holy Qur'an (18 : 9-14), where Allah relates how He increased the guidance and strengthened the hearts of the Companions of the Cave, when they stood up against the evil-doers. Even in death, our Holy Imam (A) was pointing out the similarity of the message of his stand in Karbala to the other event from ancient history.

The captives finally reached Damascus. On reaching the city gates, the caravan was halted and Yazid was informed of their arrival and his permission was sought to bring the captives into his court.

LESSON 17: KARBALA - PART 10

The Court of Yazid

By the time the captive ladies and children of the caravan of Imam Husain (A) reached Damascus, they were in a terrible state. Their bodies were covered in dust, their clothes were in rags and blood oozed from the wounds and cuts inflicted by the tight ropes and whips.

As the caravan was paraded through the streets, the people of Damascus saw the captives and were moved by their pitiable condition. The children were crying with hunger and thirst, so many onlookers threw them dried dates as alms. Bibi Zainab (A) and Bibi Umme Kulthum (A) asked the hungry children not to eat these dates as it was Haraam for them. They requested the people not to throw them food as Sadqah, because the Holy Prophet (S) had forbidden his family to eat such sacrificial offerings. The people of Damascus could not believe that these ladies, who were covering their faces with their hair, were actually from the family of the Holy Prophet (S). They wondered how Yazid had dared to humiliate these holy people in such a manner.

Finally, the prisoners arrived at the court of Yazid. After a wait of one full hour under the scorching sun, the orders came from Yazid to admit the captives into the court. As they entered they saw that the Yazid sat on an elevated gold throne while his courtiers and foreign envoys sat on gilded chairs around him. Yazid was already quite drunk. What a terrible spectacle the poor prisoners had to witness. They saw that the accursed oppressor had the head of Imam Husain (A) on a tray at his feet and he was rattling a cane against the teeth and lips of the Holy Imam (A). He was boasting, "Ah, aren't these the same lips that received the kisses of Muhammad? How delighted will be my ancestors when they see how I have taken revenge for their defeats in the battles of Badr and Hunayn."

In his drunk state, Yazid could not believe that the people he saw before him were members of the family of the Holy Prophet (S). In a quivering rage he accused Amr ibne Sa'ad of substituting slaves instead of the relatives of Imam Husain (A).

Amr ibne Sa'ad knew that Yazid was more dangerous than normal when he was drunk so he quickly reassured him and began to point out the ladies. He said, "O Commander of the Faithful, your slave has done exactly what you asked. Those are the sisters of Husain, Zainab and Umme Kulthum. The young girls are Sakina and Rukayya, the daughters of Husain. That lady is Rubab, the widow of Husain, while the others are orphans and widows of Husain's friends and relatives. The man before you is Husain's son Ali."

Yazid turned his attention to the people that Amr ibne Sa'ad had identified. He noticed that an old lady was standing in front of one of the lady prisoners, as if shielding her from the gaze of Yazid. He pointed towards the direction of the lady and shouted, "Who is that one sheltering behind the old woman, and why?" Amr ibne Sa'ad replied, "Your Majesty, she is Zainab, daughter of Ali and Fatima and the old woman standing in front of her is Fizza, and Abyssinian princess, who calls herself the slave of Fatima and Zainab."

Yazid ordered Shimr, who was guarding the prisoners, to throw Fizza aside so he could have a full view of Bibi Zainab (A). Seeing Shimr advance towards her, Fizza turned to the Abyssinian slaves who stood armed behind Yazid as his bodyguards, and said, "O brothers from my native country, will you watch silently while an aged lady from your land is molested in this manner?"

Hearing the words of Fizza, some of the slaves stepped forward and warned Yazid, saying, "Your Majesty, ask Shimr to step back from our lady Fizza. If he does anything to her, blood will flow like water in your court."

Yazid was stunned at this threat and immediately stopped Shimr and assured his bodyguards that he would not harm Fizza. However, he was furious at the fact that he had been humiliated in this manner in front of everyone and he soon wound up the court session, deciding to imprison the captives in the dark dungeons of the fort of Damascus.

LESSON 18: THE PEOPLE OF THE CAVE

In their attempts to discredit the Holy Prophet (S), the Quraish of Mecca sent three men to the Jewish scholars in Najran. They were sent to learn some difficult problems from the ancient scriptures of the Jews and bring them back to test the Holy Prophet (S). The Jews gave the Quraish some questions about the Seven Sleepers of the Cave, whose account was known to only a few special scholars. The men returned to Mecca and posed these questions to the Holy Prophet (S) and the whole story was revealed to him in Surae Kahf. The Holy Qur'an says:

[Do you not think that the people of the Cave and of the Inscription (Raqeem) were of Our wonderful signs? When the youths sought refuge in the cave they prayed, "Lord grant us mercy and help us to get out of this trouble in a righteous way." We sealed their ears for a number of years. Then We roused them to see which of the party had the correct account of the duration of their sleep. We tell you this story for a genuine purpose. They were young people who believed in their Lord and We gave them further guidance. We strengthened their hearts when they stood up (against the idol-worshippers) and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We shall never worship anyone other than Him, lest we commit blasphemy.

Kahf, 18 : 9 - 14]

Afsoos was a famous city that once flourished on the West Coast of Asia Minor. It was part of the Roman Empire and the king was a kind and just ruler. During his reign, there was peace and prosperity. When he died, there was a division amongst the people as to who should rule. While they had no leader, Dacius, a neighbouring king, invaded their land and annexed it to his kingdom. He ruled them from 249 A.D. to 251 A.D. Dacius was a heathen and a violent persecutor of the faithful Christians who lived at the time.

Six (or seven) young men stood up for their beliefs and had to leave the town to escape the cruel king. On their way, they met a shepherd who gave them some water to drink.

When they told him about their intention of finding a secluded place to worship Allah in peace, he joined them with his dog, Qitmir.

The shepherd led them to a fertile valley, through which they came upon a mountain and entered a cave called Kahf. Meanwhile, Dacius followed the fugitives, determined to make an example of them. When they heard the sounds of pursuit get closer, the men prayed to Allah to rescue them from the merciless king.

Soon afterwards the young men were overcome with a deep sleep and the dog sat outside the cave. The king reached the spot and sent in his minister to bring the men out. The minister was a faithful believer in Prophet Isa (A). When he when he saw the young men sleeping, he came out and reported that they had all died of fright. This news pleased the king, who ordered that the cave be shut.

A stone tablet, with the name of the men and the date of the event inscribed on it, was put at the entrance of the cave.

This is why these people have been referred to as those of the Cave and the Inscription in the Holy Qur'an, which says:

[They will say, "They were three, the fourth of them was their dog", and (others) say, "Five, the sixth of them was their dog", guessing about the unknown; and (others) say, "Seven and the eighth of them was their dog." Say (O Muhammad), "My Lord knows best their number... Kahf, 18 : 22(Part)]

Allah caused the young men to sleep for about 180 years before they woke up. When they consulted one another it seemed to them that they had slept for a day or even less. They were all starving so they decided that one of them would go into town and secretly purchase some food and bring it back. They prayed to Allah to first open the entrance to the cave. This prayer was granted and they emerged from the cave. The sight that greeted them amazed them. The entire landscape had changed. Little did they know that Dacius was long dead and this was the time of the reign of the kind Christian king Theodosius I, who ruled from 408 A.D. to 450 A.D.

The man who went to the town to get food saw that everything was different. The houses did not look right and people were dressed in strange clothes. He looked about in amazement, wondering if he was dreaming. At length, he approached a baker and asked for some bread. The baker was surprised to see the oddly dressed young man who spoke an ancient dialect and was offering him outdated money.

He asked him whether he had discovered the coins in some treasure. The young man replied, "No, this is the money I made after selling my dates the day before yesterday."

The baker did not believe this tale and took the man to the king. When the young man told his story, the king informed him that Dacius was long dead and he then asked to be shown the cave and its inhabitants. Just before they reached the mountain, the young men told the king and his courtiers, "Let me inform my comrades of the situation so that they are not alarmed by your presence."

When he entered the cave and told the rest about his experiences, they were worried that it might be a trick and that they would be arrested. Therefore, they prayed to Allah to restore them to their original condition. Their prayer was granted and they were again overcome with a deep sleep.

After a while the king approached the cave and found the men and their dog asleep. The sight made him believe their story and he decided to build a mosque at the spot in respect of the miracle that had occurred at this place. The Holy Qur'an says:

*[And they stayed in the Cave three hundred years and add nine (more).
Kahf, 18 : 25]*

LESSON 19: THE PEOPLE OF RAS

The people of Ras lived between Azarbaijan and Armenia on the bank of the river Ras during the time just after Prophet Sulayman (A). They lived in twelve towns situated along the river. The largest of these towns was Isfandar where the king, Tarqooz, lived. Tarqooz was a descendant of the cruel king Namrud who had ruled at the time of Prophet Ibrahim (A).

The people of Ras worshipped the "Sanobar". This was a huge pine tree that had been originally planted at Isfandar by Yafas, son of Prophet Nuh (A), after the great flood. There was a spring at the foot of the pine tree and nobody was allowed to drink from it because it was considered to be the life blood of the god.

The people of Ras cultivated the lands around the river and Allah blessed them with a pleasant climate and a life of comfort. In spite of this, they were unmindful of His favours and thoughtlessly turned to the pine tree for their needs. Twigs from the great tree would be taken to homes and also worshipped. During the days of festival, animal flesh would be burnt and offered to the tree as sacrifices.

To educate and guide these ignorant people, Allah sent to them His Prophet. Although the name of the Prophet is not mentioned in history, we do know that he was from the descendants of Yahuda, son of Prophet Ya'qub (A).

The Prophet tried to bring the people to their senses by pointing out the error of their ways. He taught them about the blessings and bounties of Allah and warned them not to worship anything besides Him. However, in spite of his continuous efforts, the people turned a deaf ear to the Prophet's words and carried on worshipping their pine tree.

On the day of their festival the Prophet sadly watched the people prepare for the ceremonies. As he observed the dedication and enthusiasm with which they were preparing to glorify their tree, he invoked Allah to dry up the tree so that the people may realise the absurdity of their worship.

The prayer was granted by Allah and the shocked people watched their pine tree wither and begin to die before their eyes. However, instead of learning a lesson, they decided that their god was annoyed at the interference of the Prophet and resolved to sacrifice him to appease their god.

The people of Ras seized the Prophet and threw him into a large pit. Thereafter, they covered the pit and thus buried him alive. For some time the cries of the Prophet were heard but then there was quiet as his soul departed this world. The people turned to their tree to see if it had recovered. Instead, they noticed the signs of Divine Punishment.

Suddenly, the Wrath of Allah broke over the whole tribe. A red blast of wind swept through them and destroyed the entire population.

All that was left at the end was a black cloud which hung over the entire region, plunging it into darkness. Thus, the people of Ras faded into obscurity, providing posterity with a valuable lesson.

The Holy Qur'an mentions them in the following verses:

[And the (tribes of) Aad and Thamud and the inhabitants of Ras, and generations between them in a great number. And to each of them We gave examples (lessons, warnings) and We destroyed every one (of them) with an utter extermination.

Furqan, 25 : 38,39]

[...The people of Nuh and the dwellers of Ras, Thamud, Aad, Fir'aun and the brethren of Lut and the dwellers of the Forest and the people of Thubba' had all rejected the Prophets. Thus My promise (of their doom) was proved true.

Qaaf, 50 : 12 - 14]

LESSON 20: THE PEOPLE OF SABT

Prophet Musa (A) had taught the Bani Israa'il (Jews) to designate one particular day for the worship of Allah . On that day they were to abandon all their business or leisure activities. Originally, the day of Friday was specified, but at the request of the Bani Israa'il, it was changed to Saturday. This day, the Sabbath, became a holiday for the Jews and on Saturdays Prophet Musa (A) used to address a special congregation and preach to the people. For many years after Prophet Musa (A), the Sabbath was faithfully observed as a religious day. However, in the time of Prophet Dawood (A), one group of the Bani Israa'il, who lived at the seaport of Ela, broke the Divine rule. The people of Ela were mainly fishermen and fished the seas everyday except Saturday. Allah tested their faith by making the fish become very easy to catch on Saturdays. The Holy Qur'an says:

[And (O Muhammad) ask them about the (people of the) town which was beside the sea; when they exceeded (the limits) in the Sabbath when their fish came to them on the day of their Sabbath, appearing on the surface of the water; and on the day they did not observe the Sabbath, they (the fish) did not come unto them. Thus did We try them, for they were transgressing. And when a part of them said, "Why do you preach to those whom Allah would destroy or punish by a severe torment?" They replied, "To be free from blame before your Lord, so that perhaps they may become pious."

A'raf, 7 : 163,164]

The fishermen were tempted by the easy catches to be made on Saturday and they thought of a plan to get around the Divine restriction. They decided to dig trenches and canals to divert the fish. On Saturdays, the canals were opened and the fish would swim into them in large numbers. At night, before the fish could return back to the sea, the canals were dammed. Then on Sundays the fishermen would easily catch all the trapped fish.

The wise and pious people of the tribe advised these greedy fishermen not to violate the command of Allah . They considered it their duty to guide those who were in error, because otherwise they would also be to blame for the consequences. However, the fishermen continued disobeying the Divine commandment and even boasted about their cleverness. Finally, the punishment of Allah came down and their faces were transformed into those of animals. After three days and nights all the sinners were destroyed. The Holy Qur'an says:

[And indeed you know of those amongst you who transgressed on the Sabbath, so We said unto them, "Become apes, despised and spurned!" And We made it a lesson for (those of) their own times and those (of their posterity) who came after them and a guidance for those who guard against evil.

Baqarah, 2 : 65,66]

Appendix THE MARTYRS OF KARBALA

The Companions of Imam Husain (A)

Hereunder are recorded brief details of the companions of Imam Husain (A), who sacrificed their lives in the cause of Islam on the Day of Ashura in Karbala.

1. Abdullah bin Umayr al-Kalbi.

He was a companion of Imam Ali (A) and a brave and noble resident of Kufa. After the death of Muslim bin Aqeel, Abdullah learnt that troops were being sent to Karbala to fight Imam Husain (A). He decided to fight on the side of Truth and, accompanied by his wife, he went to join Imam Husain (A).

Abdullah was the first of Imam Husain's (A) companions to go to the battlefield on the day of Ashura. In response to the challenge of Yasaar and Saalim, two servants of Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad, this brave soldier went forward. He killed them both, but not before Saalim cut off the fingers of his left hand. Seeing her husband fighting against two men, his wife Umme Wahab rushed into the battlefield. However, she came back at the command of Imam Husain (A), who told her that women were not required to fight. Although he returned to the camp, Abdullah went back to the battle later and killed two soldiers of the enemy. He was then attacked by Thuybath al-Hadhrami and Bukayr bin Hayy and killed, being the second supporter of Imam Husain (A) to be martyred. Hearing about his death, his wife came to his body and started removing the dust and blood from his face, saying, "Accept my congratulations on winning paradise." However, the cruel Shimr saw her and got this defenceless lady put to death. She was the only lady to die on the day of Ashura.

2. Hur bin Yazid ar-Riyaahi.

He was one of the nobles of Kufa, and was a respected officer in the army of Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad. He had been ordered to keep Imam Husain (A) away from Kufa, and it was Hur who had diverted Imam (A) to Karbala.

Hur had never expected that the situation in Karbala would become so serious. He had thought that the people might listen to the message of Imam Husain (A) and had not thought that they would harm him. On the night of Ashura he approached Amr ibne Sa'ad, the commander-in-chief of the forces, and asked him if the battle would definitely go ahead. Amr replied that the governor of Kufa, Ubaidullah, would not listen to any reason and was keen to kill Imam Husain (A).

That night Hur paced in his tent, hearing the sounds of worship from the camp of Imam Husain (A). He was unable to sleep because he realised that by taking part in the killing of Imam (A), he would commit a crime that would surely earn him Hell.

On the morning of Ashura, he waited for the armies to gather. Muhajir bin Aws saw him trembling with emotion and asked, "What is the matter with you, I have never seen you act like this before. If I was asked who is the bravest warrior from the Kufans, I would certainly mention you."

Hur replied, "I see myself between Hell and Heaven. By God, I will not choose anything but Heaven, even if I am cut to pieces and burnt." Saying this, he turned his horse and galloped to the side of Imam Husain's (A) camp.

Hur approached Imam Husain (A) and begged his forgiveness. Such was Imam Husain's (A) character that he said, "I forgive you and God will also forgive you." Hur asked to be allowed to sacrifice himself first since it was he who had first resisted him.

Getting permission, Hur advanced to the battlefield and addressed the enemy saying, "O people of Kufa, may your mothers be deprived of you! You summoned this man to come to you and then handed him over to his enemies. You have prevented him from obtaining water while non-Muslims and animals may drink freely from the river, How wickedly you have treated the offspring left by Muhammad (S)." Hur then attacked the enemy vigorously and his expert swordsmanship had the enemy disorganised. When Hur had left the army of Amr ibne Sa'ad, a soldier called Yazid bin Sufyan al-Tamimi had remarked that if he had seen Hur deserting, he would have despatched him with a single thrust of his spear. Seeing Hur fighting now, an officer reminded Yazid of his words, so he came and challenged Hur to fight.

Hur killed him immediately and this caused such awe amongst the enemies that none dared to come forward to fight him. Hur then returned to the camp. Later during the day, Hur returned to the battlefield, fighting alongside Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn. This time the infantry succeeded in isolating and surrounding him. They showered him with arrows and killed his horse. Hur dismounted and attacked them on foot. However, there were too many against him and he was struck a terrible blow on the head. Ayyub bin Musarrih and another Kufan horseman shared in finally killing him. When Imam Husain (A) saw the body of Hur he wiped the dust and blood from his face and said, "O Hur, you are Hur (a free man) in this world and the hereafter." Thus Hur secured everlasting peace for himself by realising in time his duty to Imam Husain (A).

3. Muslim bin 'Awsaja al-Asadi.

Muslim was a distinguished supporter of Imam Husain (A) and had even seen the Holy Prophet (S). He was a reliable source of traditions and used to pray the midnight prayers regularly. He was an expert horseman who had fought well in previous wars. He was well known and respected throughout Arabia. At the time of his martyrdom he was a very old man.

After suffering a series of defeats in single combat, the enemies were disheartened. Amr bin Hajjaj warned his men not to engage in single fights because they were facing expert horsemen who were fighting for their lives.

He therefore attacked Imam Husain's (A) forces with the entire right wing of the army under him. This assault was met with such resistance by the small band of Imam Husain (A), that it had to be withdrawn. However, it left Muslim rolling on the ground in his own blood. His last request to Habib ibne Mazahir was to take care of Imam Husain (A).

Thus died the first martyr on the day of Ashura. He was killed by Abdullah ad-Dhubabi and Abdullah Khashkara al-Bai Ali.

4. Burayr bin Hudhayr al-Hamadani.

Burayr came from Kufa and was an old and devout companion of Imam Ali (A). He knew the Holy Qur'an by heart and used to teach it in the mosque of Kufa. On the day of Ashura he was quite light-hearted despite knowing that he could not survive the day. He remarked that he could not wait for swords to strike at him because he knew that his reward would be everlasting bliss.

When Yazid bin Ma'qil came forward from the army of Amr ibne Sa'ad, he called for Burayr by name to come and fight him. The two men had often argued in Kufa about the religious merits of the stands taken by Imam Ali (A) and Muawiya. In Karbala, Yazid raised the question again and they both prayed to Allah to grant victory to the one who was right. When they began to fight, Yazid struck and injured Burayr slightly, but Burayr dealt him a blow that cut through Yazid's iron helmet and penetrated his head, killing him. As Burayr retrieved his sword, he was attacked by Radhi ibne Munqidh. Throwing him to the ground, Burayr sprang to kill him but Radhi shouted for help. Ka'b bin Jaabir came to his aid and attacked Burayr. Although he was warned by a man from his own side not to kill Burayr because he used to teach others how to memorise the Holy Qur'an, Ka'b killed Burayr.

5. Munhij bin Sahn.

He was the son of a slave girl of Imam Husain (A) whose name was Husainiyyah. She married Sahn and was in the service of Imam Ali bin Husain (A), whom she had accompanied with her son to Karbala. Munhij was killed at the very start of the battle.

6. Amr bin Khalid.

He was from the nobles of Kufa and was sincerely devoted to the Holy Prophet's (S) family. He had originally supported Muslim bin Aqeel in Kufa, but when Muslim was arrested, he went into hiding. Later he heard that Imam Husain (A) had reached Hajir on his way to Kufa, so he left with his slave Sa'd, Mujammi' bin Abdullah, his son A'idh and Jaabir bin Harith al-Salmani and joined Imam Husain (A) at Uzaybul Hajanaat.

On the day of Ashura, Amr and his four companions attacked the enemy soldiers together. The enemy surrounded them and separated them from the rest of Imam Husain's (A) men. Imam Husain (A) sent Abbas (A) to rescue and help them. Single-handedly, Abbas (A) drove away the enemy and guided the group out of danger. However, as soon as they saw the enemy pursuing them, the brave men rushed back towards them attacking with all their strength, till every one of them lay dead.

7. Sa'd.

He was the slave of Amr bin Khalid, and was martyred as stated above.

8. Mujammi' bin Abdullah.

He was born at the time of the Holy Prophet (S) and was a companion of Imam Ali (A), on whose side he had fought at Siffin. He informed Imam Husain (A) that the leading men of Kufa had been bribed and although the hearts of the common men were inclined to him, they would raise their swords against him in war due to their weak faith. He was martyred as stated above.

9. A'idh bin Mujammi'.

He was martyred alongside his father as already stated.

10. Jaabir bin Harith al-Salmi.

He was a leading Shia in Kufa and was born during the life time of the Holy Prophet (S). He had fought on the side of Imam Ali (A) at Siffin and had taken the oath of allegiance to Imam Husain (A) at the hands of Muslim bin Aqeel. Although he had helped Muslim in his fight, he was forced to conceal himself. He later reached Karbala and was martyred as stated above.

11. Jundub bin Hujr al-Kindi.

He was a distinguished Shia in Kufa and a companion of Imam Ali (A). In the battle of Siffin, he had commanded two regiments. He joined the group of Imam Husain (A) before Hur intercepted them and travelled with him to Karbala. He died in the early stages of the battle.

12. Yazid bin Ziyad bin Muhaasir al-Kindi.

He was a brave warrior from the Shia of Kufa. He joined Imam Husain (A) before the arrival of Hur and remained with him throughout the rest of his journey. He was an expert archer, and on the day of Ashura he shot 100 arrows, only five of which missed their target. When he ran out of arrows, he entered the battlefield where he was killed in the early part of the fighting.

THE FIRST GENERAL ATTACK

During the first part of the battle the army of Amr ibne Sa'ad were forced to fall back wherever they attacked. The small army of Imam Husain (A), worn out by three days of thirst, not only managed to make effective inroads into the enemy ranks but also caused confusion amongst the cavalry.

Finally the Kufans decided that Husain bin Tamim would advance with his men for a general attack supported by 500 archers.

The companions of Imam Husain (A) met this attack bravely. This great assault, which saw fierce fighting, is called the first general attack and occurred about an hour before noon. Although the supporters of Imam Husain (A) managed to throw back the enemy, they suffered heavy losses. 50 men out of their small number were killed, as were all their horses.

The exact order in which these martyrs met their death is not certain but their names have been given separately or in groups, and are as below.

13. Harith bin Banhaan.

14. Shabib bin Abdullah al-Nahshali.

15. Qarib bin Abdullah.

16. Nasr bin Nayzar.

These four men had accompanied Imam Husain (A) from Madina. Harith had served Imam Ali (A), then Imam Hasan (A) and had kept Imam Husain (A) company on his journey. Shabab had fought on the side of Imam Ali (A) in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan. Qarib's mother, Faakiha, served a wife of Imam Husain (A). Nasr had spent his youth in the company of Imam Ali (A) and had later remained loyal to his sons.

17. Janaada bin Ka'b al-Ansari.

18. Abdar Rahman bin Abd Rabb al- Ansari.

These two men had joined Imam Husain (A) at Makka.

19. Jabir bin Hajjaj al-Taymi.

20. Jabla bin Ali al-Shaybaani.

21. Hubaab bin Amir bin Ka'b al-Taymi.

22. Zarghama bin Maalik al-Taghlabi.

These men had supported Muslim in Kufa, but when Ubaidullah ibne Ziyad managed to turn the people away from him, they went into hiding. They later joined Imam Husain (A) in Karbala.

23. Harith bin Imru' al-Qays bin 'Abis al-Kindi.

24. Juwayn bin Malik bin Qays al-Taymi.

25. Halas bin Amr al-Azdi.

26. his brother Nu'man.

27. Zuhayr bin Salim bin Amr al-Azdi.

28. Mas'ud bin Hajjaj al-Taymi.

29. Abd ar-Rahman bin Mas'ud.

30. Abdullah bin Bishr al-Khath'ami.

31. Amr bin Zabi'a bin Qays al-Taymi.

32. Qasim bin Habib bin Abi Bishr al-Azdi.

These men reached Karbala with the army of Amr ibne Sa'ad. Abd ar-Rahman bin Mas'ud and Mas'ud bin Hajjaj went to Imam Husain (A) on the 7th of Muharram to pay their respects and never returned back to their army. The first five men joined Imam Husain (A) when all offers of peace made by him were rejected and war became unavoidable. The last three also went to him at unspecified points of time.

33. Yazid bin Nubayt.

34. his son Abdullah.

35. his other son Ubaidullah.

36. Adham bin Umayyah.

37. Sayf bin Maalik al-Abdi.

38. 'Aamir bin Muslim al-Abdi al-Basri.

39. Saalim, the slave of 'Aamir bin Muslim.

These men were from the Shia of Basra. When news arrived that Imam Husain (A) intended to depart for Kufa and that all the roads to that city had been sealed by soldiers, they decided to go to his help. They met Imam Husain (A) at Abtah within the boundaries of Makka, and accompanied him to Karbala.

40. Salim.

He was a faithful slave of Imam Hasan (A) who was also martyred in the general assault.

41. **Abd bin Muhajir al-Juhani.**
42. **'Uqba bin Salaat al-Juhani.**
43. **Mujammi' bin Ziyaas bin Amr al-Juhani.**
44. **Qasit bin Zuhayr bin Harith al-Taghlabi.**
45. **Muqsit, the brother of Qasit.**
46. **Kardoos, also brother of Qasit.**

These six men joined Imam Husain (A) in Karbala and were martyred in the main attack. The three brothers Qasit, Muqsit and Kardoos were the companions of Imam Ali (A). Later they kept the company of Imam Hasan (A) till he left for Madina. Thereafter these brothers took up residence in Kufa, from where they came to Karbala.

47. Umayya bin Sa'd bin Zayd al-Taa'i.

He was a veteran who had fought in Siffin on the side of Imam Ali (A). He reached Karbala when Imam Husain (A) was holding peace talks with Amr ibne Sa'ad.

48. Zaahir bin Amr al-Kindi.

He was a companion of the Holy Prophet (S) and had taken part in the battle of Khayber. He was well known for his bravery and was devoted to the family of the Holy Prophet (S). He performed the Haj in 60 A.H. and then met Imam Husain (A) and accompanied him to Karbala.

49. Suwaar bin Abi 'Umayr an-Nahmi.

He was a narrator of traditions who reached Karbala after Imam Husain (A). On the day of Ashura he took part in the battle and was wounded but did not die. He was arrested and taken to Amr ibne Sa'ad who wanted to put him to death. The soldiers from his tribe resisted this and took him away. However, he died of his wounds six months later.

50. Shabib bin AbdAlláh.

He was a slave of Harith bin Sari' al-Hamadani. He came from Kufa and was a companion of the Holy Prophet (S). He knew the Holy Qur'án by heart. He had taken part in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan with Imam Ali (A). He came with Sayf and Maalik, the sons of his master.

51. Abd ar-Rahman bin Abdallah bin Kadan al-Arhabi.

He managed to leave Kufa after the assassination of Muslim bin Aqeel and joined Imam Husain (A) in Karbala.

52. 'Ammar bin Abi Salama al-Dulaani.

He had fought on the side of Imam Ali (A) in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan.

53. 'Ammar bin Hasan al-Taa'i.

He was a distinguished Shia whose father had been killed in the battle of Siffin fighting on the side of Imam Ali (A). He accompanied Imam Husain (A) from Makka to Karbala.

54. Kinaana bin 'Atiq al Taghlabi.

He lived in Kufa and was noted for his bravery. He knew the Holy Qur'an by heart. He joined Imam Husain (A) in Karbala.

55. Muslim bin Qasir al-Azdi.

He was crippled while fighting in the battle of Jamal. He went from Kufa to help Imam Husain (A).

56. Na'im bin 'Ajlal al-Ansari.

He was a companion of Imam Ali (A). When Imam Husain (A) reached Iraq, Na'im managed to join him at Karbala from Kufa.

57. Habsha bin Qays al-Nahmi.

His grandfather had been a companion of the Holy Prophet (S) and he himself was a narrator of traditions.

58. Hajjaaj bin Zayd al-Taymi.

He lived in Basra. When Imam Husain (A) had left Makka he had sent letters to the leading men in Basra. Mas'ud bin Amr al-Azdi wrote a letter of reply and entrusted it to Hajjaaj. The messenger delivered the letter and also sacrificed himself.

59. Habaab bin Harith.

60. Hanzala bin 'Mar al-Shaybaani.

61. Zuhayr bin Busr al-Khath'ami.

62. 'Imran bin Ka'b al-Ashja'i.

63. Maani' bin Ziyaad.

No details of these martyrs are available.

Encouraged by the loss of men in Imam Husain's (A.S) army, Amr ibne Sa'ad decided to launch an attack on the camp of Imam Husain (A). He tried to get round the back of the camp so that he could surround Imam Husain's (A) men. In this he failed because Zuhayr bin Qayn and 10 others repelled the enemy attack and caused much bloodshed. In this offensive, two of Imam Husain's (A) men lost their lives. They were:

64. Bakr bin Hayy al-Taymi.

He had joined Imam Husain (A) after having come to Karbala as part of Yazid's army.

65. Amr bin Janaada bin Ka'b as-Khazraji.

He was a young boy, hardly 10 years of age, whose father had already been martyred in the first general attack. Although Imam Husain (A) did not initially allow him to fight, he insisted that his mother had ordered him to fight and was then permitted to go to the battlefield.

THE OFFENSIVE AT THE TIME OF NOON PRAYERS

When the time of noon prayers approached, Imam Husain (A) sent a request to the enemy for fighting to stop for the duration of the prayers. However, Husain bin Tamim emerged from the enemy ranks and said, "Your prayers will not be accepted." This reply enraged Habib ibne Mazahir and there was combat between the two. Habib knocked down Husain but the latter was saved by his men. At this time two men were martyred.

66. Habib ibne Mazahir.

He was amongst the select disciples of Imam Ali (A) and a personal childhood friend of Imam Husain (A). He had taken a leading role in inviting Imam Husain (A) to Kufa and came to Karbala after he received Imam's (A) letter asking for his help.

Habib was the commander of the left wing of the army and he fought with great valour. After having killed a number of the enemy, he was knocked off his horse by a soldier with a spear. His once defeated adversary, Husain bin Tamim, returned and killed him with a blow to the head.

67. Abu Thumaama al-Sa'idi.

He was an ace horseman and had fought at the side of Imam Ali (A) in every war. He had actively supported Muslim bin Aqeel in Kufa. On the day of Ashura he had expressed his desire to pray behind Imam Husain (A) one last time.

Imam Husain (A) had blessed him for remembering the prayers at such a dangerous time and had said that, on the Day of Judgement, Abu Thumaama would be in the special group of those who were mindful of their prayers. Abu Thumaama was killed in the fight that broke out when he requested the enemy to give them time to pray.

THE DHOHR (NOON) PRAYERS

Since fighting had not been suspended, Imam Husain (A) and his followers prayed the specially shortened form of the daily prayer called Salaatul Khawf. While he led the prayer, Imam Husain (A) was shielded from the enemy arrows by Sa'id bin Abdallah al-Hanafi and Zuhayr bin Qayn.

68. Sa'id bin Abdallah al-Hanafi.

He was a prominent Shia from Kufa and was known for his bravery and devotion to prayers. On the day of Ashura he stood in front of Imam Husain (A) and his men while they prayed. Just as the prayers finished, he fell down dead with 13 arrows in his body.

69. Zuhayr bin Qayn bin Qays al-Bajali.

He was an experienced warrior who had originally disagreed with the views of Imam Ali (A) regarding the revenge of the murder of Uthman, the third Caliph. But on his way back from Haj, he met Imam Husain (A) at Zarud and their discussion made him convert completely to the cause of Imam Husain (A). He commanded the right wing of the army and fought bravely in the initial stages of the battle. At the time of prayers he also stood as guard and was grievously wounded by arrows. When he saw that the enemy had reached dangerously close, he made his final charge and fell fighting.

70. Salman bin Muzarib bin Qays al-Bajali.

He was a cousin of Zuhayr and was martyred in the afternoon.

71. Amr bin Quraaza bin Ka'b al-Ansari.

He was a Kufan used by Imam Husain (A) as a go-between in his peace talks with Amr ibne Sa'ad. He was also martyred after he used his body to shield the praying soldiers.

72. Naafi bin Hilaal al-Jamali.

He was the chief of his tribe and knew the Holy Qur'an by heart. He had fought at the side of Imam Ali (A) in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan. When the enemy had stopped access to the river, he went with Abbas (A) and 20 others to take water by force. They pushed back the guards on the river and succeeded in bringing water back to the camp. Naafi was an expert bowman and in the afternoon of Ashura he killed 12 men with his arrows and wounded many others. He was captured by the enemy and both his arms were broken. Finally Shimr killed him.

73. Shawdhab bin Abdallah.

He was a slave of 'Abis bin Abi Shabib and had come with his master to Karbala.

74. 'Abis bin Abi Shabib al-Shakri.

He was amongst the leaders of the Shia of Kufa. In the battlefield, 'Abis caused havoc in the enemy ranks before a large number of soldiers surrounded him and killed him.

75. Abdallah, and 76. Abd ar-Rahman bin 'Urwa.

These two brothers reached Karbala together and were martyred in the afternoon of Ashura.

77. Hanzala bin Asad al-Shaybaani.

He knew the Holy Qur'an by heart. In the afternoon of Ashura he entered the battlefield and severely admonished the enemy, telling them to be afraid of Allah's Wrath.

78. Saif bin Harith bin Saari.**79. Malik bin Abd bin Aari bin Jaabir al-Hamadani.**

These two men were cousins who had joined Imam Husain (A) in Karbala while peace negotiations were in progress.

80. Jawn bin Huwai.

He was a slave of Abu Zar. After he was martyred, his body gave off a beautiful fragrance.

81. A Turkish slave.

He knew the Holy Qur'an by heart. He killed many soldiers before he was wounded. Imam Husain (A) put his arms around the neck of the dying man, who opened his eyes once, smiled and then died.

82. Qa'nab bin Amr al-Numari.

He was from Basra and was martyred in the afternoon of Ashura.

83. Raafi' bin Abdallah.

He was a slave of Muslim bin Qasir.

84. Anas bin Harith al-Asadi.

He was a Companion of the Holy Prophet (S) and had heard him foretell the events of Karbala. He had prayed that he could be martyred at the side of Imam Husain (A).

85. Hajjaj bin Masruq al-Ju'fi.

He was a respected Shia from Kufa and used to give the Adhaan for the prayers led by Imam Husain (A) after he joined him in Makka. He fought and killed many enemy soldiers before he was martyred.

86. Ziyad bin 'Aarib al-Hamdaani.

He was a pious and brave man and put up a spirited fight before he was martyred.

87. Salim bin Amr bin Abdallah.

He was a slave who had been arrested in Kufa for helping Muslim bin Aqeel. He later managed to reach Karbala.

88. Sa'ad bin al-Harith.

He was a slave of Imam Ali (A) who had accompanied Imam Husain (A) right from Madina to Karbala, where he was martyred.

89. Umar bin Jundab al-Hadrami.

He was one of the Shia of Kufa who had been a companion of Imam Ali (A). He came to Karbala after Muslim bin Aqeel had been killed in Kufa.

90. Yazid bin Mughfil al-Ju'fi.

He had been a companion of Imam Ali (A) and a commander in his army. He was martyred in the afternoon on Ashura.

91. Bishr bin Amr al-Hadrami al-Kindi.

He was a Kufan who was martyred in the afternoon of Ashura.

92. Suwayd bin Abi al-Mata' al-Khath'ami.

He was an old warrior who was so badly injured on the battlefield that he was given up for dead. However when he heard that Imam Husain (A) had been martyred, he raised himself with uncontrollable emotion and tried to attack the enemy with a big knife. He was then martyred.

THE FAMILY OF IMAM HUSAIN (A)

The companions of Imam Husain (A) had not let a single member of the Bani Hashim come to the battlefield while they lived. Imam Husain (A) had allowed them to sacrifice their lives first because he knew that those who remained alive longer would have to endure more thirst and greater mental agony as they watched their friends die, and he wanted to spare his companions from that additional suffering. When the companions of Imam Husain (A) had all been martyred, it was the turn of his family to sacrifice themselves for his mission. Hereunder we record brief details of the martyrs from Bani Hashim, who were all from the descendants of Abu Talib.

1. Ali Akbar bin Husain bin Ali (A).

He was the son of Imam Husain (A) and the first martyr from the Bani Hashim. His mother was Laila binte Abu Murra. Although she had died by the time the tragedy of Karbala took place, she was actually the first cousin of Yazid.

Ali Akbar was only 19 years old on the day of Ashura. He was a handsome and graceful youth and especially dear to Imam Husain (A) because he bore a great resemblance to the Holy Prophet (S) in his features and voice. Ali Akbar knew of his father's attachment to him and, when he approached him for permission to go to the battlefield, he was worried that his father would refuse. However, Imam Husain (A) turned to his son and said, "O son, if my grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S) would be here today, I would be the first to go out to fight." Ali Akbar understood immediately that his father was encouraging him to go and he eagerly began his preparations to fight the enemy. Imam Husain (A) gently retrained him and told him to first visit Bibi Zainab (A), and seek her blessings also. She had lovingly brought up Ali Akbar since his mother had died and he was very dear to her.

After bidding the womenfolk his farewell, Ali Akbar proceeded to the battlefield. Watching him go, Imam Husain (A) raised his hands and said, "O Lord, be my witness of the cruel oppression of these men towards whom I am sending that handsome youth who most of all resembles Your Prophet in looks and nature. When we longed to see Your Prophet, we used to look at his face." This brief prayer gives us an indication of the anguish of Imam Husain (A) at the parting of his beloved son. Ali Akbar entered the battlefield and attacked the enemy reciting his war poem: "I am Ali, son of Husain and grandson of Ali. By the Lord of Ka`ba, we have the best claim to succeed His Prophet. By God! the progeny of one of illegitimate birth cannot decide matters about us. I will strike you with the blow of a Hashimi, a Quraishi!"

He then attacked the army of Yazid, reciting these words repeatedly and the Kufans could not match him in single combat. Having killed many of the enemy Ali Akbar then returned to see his father one last time.

He said, "O Father, my armour weighs heavily on me and thirst is killing me. If I had a drop of water I could make the enemy retreat to the walls of Kufa!"

Perhaps Ali Akbar remembered his childhood days when his father had once plucked a fruit from the walls of the mosque of Madina and fed it to him. But this was a day of tests and Imam Husain (A) would not use his miraculous powers. He responded by asking his son to place his tongue onto his own and perhaps find some moisture. Ali Akbar obeyed but immediately withdrew his tongue saying, "O Father, your tongue is drier than mine!" He then returned to the battlefield and resumed his attack on the enemy. At last, Murra bin Munqidh managed to stop him by plunging a lance deep into the chest of Ali Akbar. As he fell, the enemies surrounded him, cutting him with their swords. Ali Akbar managed to send one last Salaam to his father. Imam Husain (A) saw the plight of his son, and stumbled towards him. At the body of his brave son, he wept "My son, my son, there will only be dust on the world after you."

2. Abdallah bin Muslim bin Aqeel.

The news of the death of Ali Akbar caused great lamentation in the camp of Imam Husain (A). Some young boys, including Abdallah, rushed out in sorrow. This gave a chance to an enemy, Amr bin Subayh, to shoot arrows at them. Abdallah put up his hand to guard his brow but the arrow struck his hand and pinned it to his head. A heartless enemy then came and thrust a spear into the young boy's heart and killed him.

3. Muhammad bin Muslim bin Aqeel.

4. Ja'far bin Aqeel.

5. Abdar Rahman bin Aqeel.

6. Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Aqeel.

7. Muhammad bin Abi Sa'id bin Aqeel.

After the death of Abdallah, these men from the progeny of Aqeel bin Abu Talib made a grouped attack on the enemy. Imam Husain (A) called out to them, "O sons of my uncle, go and triumph over death!" The men went out and bravely attacked the enemy who preferred not to fight them in combat but resorted to cutting each of them down with their expert archers.

8. Muhammad bin Abdallah bin Ja'far.

9. Awn bin Abdallah bin Ja'far.

These two young brothers were the sons of Abdallah, the cousin of Imam Husain (A) and the husband of Bibi Zainab (A). Muhammad's mother was Khawsa while Awn's mother was Bibi Zainab (A). She had prepared her two sons and instructed them to sacrifice themselves for her brother Imam Husain (A). The two boys entered the battlefield together and managed to penetrate deep into the ranks of the enemy. They were finally brought down by arrows. Abdallah bin Qutba al-Ta'i killed Awn and Amir bin Nashhal al-Tamimi killed Muhammad.

10. Qasim bin Hasan bin Ali (A).

Qasim was the son of Imam Hasan (A) and only 13 years old when he came to Karbala. His mother was Umme Farwa. He was very keen to sacrifice himself for the cause of Islam and once when Imam Husain (A) asked him what he thought of death, he remarked that to him death was sweeter than honey.

On the day of Ashura when Qasim came to ask for permission to fight, Imam Husain (A) embraced him and wept for a long time. Then he told the disappointed youth that he could not allow him to go because he was the last sign of Imam Hasan (A). Qasim returned to his mother, dejected beyond words.

Umme Farwa urged him to ask for his uncle's permission again, saying, "When your father was close to his death he said that he would not be present at Karbala but that you, who were then a baby in the cradle, would serve in his stead." Qasim returned to Imam Husain (A) and reminded him of his father's last words. Imam Husain (A) agreed that that was indeed what his brother had said, and with a heavy heart he prepared his nephew to go to the battlefield. He dressed Qasim in a white shirt and white waistcloth. He then wound a white turban on his head and let the cloth trail over the boy's shoulders. It was as if he was shrouding his living nephew in the Kafan of death. Then he bid Qasim farewell and allowed him to enter the battlefield.

The enemy saw a young man come towards them, whose face shone like the first splinter of the new moon. He was dressed all in white and had no armour and carried only a sword. They wondered at the beauty of this youth and none ventured towards him. Qasim was well trained in the art of warfare despite his tender years, and he challenged them to combat. An enemy by the name of Azraq Shaami sent his son to fight Qasim, but he was soon despatched to hell. Then he sent the rest of his sons but Qasim killed them all. When all four of his sons had been killed by Qasim, Azraq himself came to fight, vowing to destroy the young man. Soon, he too lay dead.

Then Umar bin Sa'ad bin Nufayl al-Azdi rushed at Qasim and stuck him a terrible blow on the head which brought Qasim to the ground. He called his uncle for help, and Imam Husain (A) launched into the battlefield like a raging lion and struck Umar, cutting off his arm in a single stroke. Umar shouted for help but when the horsemen rushed in to save him, their horses trampled on him instead and killed him. However, the body of Qasim also came under the hooves of the horses.

Imam Husain (A) came to the broken body of his dear nephew and wept bitterly to see its condition, saying, "May the people who have caused your death perish. By God! it is hard on your uncle that he arrived too late to help you. But those who kill his relatives are many while those who help him are few."

11. Abu Bakr bin Hasan bin Ali (A).

12. Muhammad bin Ali (A).

Abu Bakr was the nephew of Imam Husain (A) while Muhammad was his brother. Both men participated in the battle but were killed by arrows.

13. Abdallah bin Ali (A).

14. Uthman bin Ali (A).

15. Ja'far bin Ali (A).

These men were three of the four sons of Imam Ali (A) by his wife Ummul-Baneen Fatima. The fourth and eldest son was Abbas (A), the standard bearer of Imam Husain's (A) army. Their mother came from a tribe noted for its bravery.

When Abbas (A) saw that their family members were being killed he urged his brothers forward, saying, "Go forth so I may see that you have remained true to Allah and His Apostle." Abdallah was the first to go and was killed by Hani bin Shabib al-Hadhrami after a brave fight. Uthman followed him into the battlefield. He had been named after Uthman bin Maz'un, a pious companion of the Holy Prophet (S) and a personal friend of Imam Ali (A). Uthman fought bravely but was then struck with an arrow by Khawali bin Yazid al-Asbahi. When he fell a man came and beheaded him. Ja'far went next and he was also killed by Hani bin Shabib al-Hadhrami.

16. Abdallah bin Hasan bin Hasan (A).

He was a grandson of Imam Hasan (A) and too young to fight at Karbala. Near the end of the battle, when the enemy had brought Imam Husain (A) to the ground, Bahr bin Ka'b bin Ubaidullah al-Taymi tried to attack Imam Husain (A) with a sword. As Bahr brought his sword towards Imam Husain (A), Abdallah ran out of the camp to stop him and Bahr cut off one of his arms and then killed him.

17. Abbas bin Ali (A).

Abul Fadhl Abbas (A) was born in 24 A.H. and spent his life in the service of his brother Imam Husain (A). He was noted for his beauty, grace, strength and knowledge, but especially feared and respected for his awesome ability in war. As a teenager he had fought at Siffin and his skill in combat was known to all. He was called "Qamare bani Hashim" which means "The full moon of the Hashimites."

In Karbala, Abbas (A) was 34 years old and in the prime of his life. He was the standard bearer of Imam Husain's (A) small army. On the day of Ashura he repeatedly asked for permission to fight but Imam Husain (A) refused, saying that he wanted the two of them to face the enemy together when nobody else remained. Even so, Abbas (A) killed many of the enemy during the day when he came to the rescue of his fellow soldiers and at the times when he went to bring their bodies back to the camp.

Finally, when nobody was left on the side of Imam Husain (A), Abbas (A) approached him and asked for permission to go to the battlefield. Imam Husain (A) turned to him and said, "O Abbas, how can I let you go, you are the standard bearer of my army." Abbas (A) replied, "O Master, where is that army now?" As the brothers talked the sounds of "Al-Atash, al-Atash" came from the thirsty children. Imam Husain (A) turned to Abbas (A) and said, "These children have not had anything to drink for three days. Go to the river and get some water and then we will fight the enemy together."

Abbas (A) then departed for the river. In one hand he carried the green standard (Alam) of Islam and in the other he carried a lance. The waterskin was slung over his shoulder. The passage to the river was blocked by Yazid's men, who had strict instructions not to let a single drop of water get back to the camp of Imam Husain (A). Abbas (A) fought his way furiously through the enemy ranks and broke through to reach the bank of the river. He filled the waterskin.

He was very thirsty but was too mindful of the thirst of the children in the camp to drink any water himself.

Abbas (A) emerged from the river bank but the enemy had regrouped and were desperate to stop him. They surrounded and attacked him from all sides. Abbas (A) was handicapped by the waterskin which he was protecting and the standard which he carried in his right hand. Even so, he made vigorous attacks, attempting to split the enemy and disentangle himself from them. However, he was outnumbered too heavily and suddenly Hukaym bin Tufayl severed his right arm with his sword. Abbas (A) immediately held the standard between his thigh and his horse but then Zayn bin Waqa al-Juhni severed his left arm.

Someone shot an arrow which pierced the waterskin and the water began to leak. Abbas (A) desperately urged his horse towards the camp, his hopes draining away with the water.

Now that the lion-hearted warrior was defenceless, the enemy swarmed around him. An arrow struck and pierced his eye and finally he was struck a terrible blow on the head with a mace. Abbas (A) could not balance on his horse and came crashing down to the ground.

From the camp, Imam Husain (A) saw the standard fall and rushed to his brother's aid. When he reached him, Abbas (A) was in his last moments. Imam Husain (A) removed the arrow from his eye and cleared the blood from his face and lay the head of Abbas (A) on his lap. With his dying breath Abbas (A) requested Imam Husain (A) to leave his body where it was and not to take it to the camp, because he did not want Bibi Sakina (A) to see him.

The standard flag was rolled up, never to fly again, and Imam Husain (A) returned to the camp. His back was bowed over with the emotional strain of having sacrificed those who were dearest to his heart. In respect of his last wishes, the grave of Abbas (A) is near the banks of the river, while all the rest of the martyrs are buried at the site of the battlefield.

18. Ali Asghar bin Husain bin Ali (A).

When no one remained from his men, Imam Husain (A) returned to the camp to say his last farewell. As he prepared to depart for the battlefield, his wife Rubab brought him his infant son Ali Asghar. The six-month old baby was suffering terribly with thirst and his mother asked Imam Husain (A) if he could take the baby to the enemy and request them to give it some water. Surely they could not refuse water to an innocent baby.

Imam Husain (A) bundled up Ali Asghar and approached the army of Yazid. They thought that he had brought the Holy Qur'an to try to discuss peace and were surprised when Imam Husain (A) revealed his son. He said to them, "If you think that I should not have any water, what harm has this innocent baby done? Its mother's milk has dried up and the baby is dying of thirst." When the enemy saw the baby move its tiny tongue over its parched lips, they openly wept with shame.

Amr ibne Sa'ad saw the effect that the words of Imam Husain (A) were having on his army and was worried that they would lose their resolve. He urgently instructed his master archer, Harmala bin Khalil al-Asadi, saying, "Cut off the words of Husain!"

The heartless Harmala fitted an arrow to his bow but, as he shot, he saw from a distance that a lady stood at the camp anxiously watching. He realised that it must be the baby's mother. He felt a twinge of shame and this upset his aim and he missed. Harmala had never missed his target before and Amr ibne Sa'ad uneasily ordered him to shoot again. This time Harmala selected a special armour-piercing arrow and shot out the throat of Ali Asghar. Imam Husain (A) sadly took his child's blood in the palm of his hand and smeared it into his beard, vowing that he would come on the Day of Judgement in the same manner to seek justice.

Imam Husain (A) - the Prince of the Martyrs

After he had buried Ali Asghar, Imam Husain (A) was left all alone. The time had come for him to join his brave companions in martyrdom. He came back to the camp for the last time. After bidding farewell to the ladies and children, he spent a moment with his beloved sister Bibi Zainab (A). He had put on old, torn clothes so that the enemy would not be tempted to tear his garments away after his death.

Bibi Zainab (A) looked at her brother with tears in her eyes and then kissed his neck. When Imam Husain (A) asked her why, she said that their dear mother Bibi Fatima (A) had told her that a day would come when her brother would meet her for the last time before going to his death. On that day she should kiss him on the neck because that same neck would be cut by the enemies of Islam. Imam Husain (A) then leaned forward and kissed his sister on the arms and explained that their mother had also told him to do that because Bibi Zainab (A) would be dragged from Karbala to Kufa, and then to Damascus, with tight ropes binding her arms.

Afterwards, Imam Husain (A) went to see his son Imam Ali Zainul Abideen (A), who was still weak with fever. On seeing his father he tried to struggle to his feet, but was too ill to rise. Imam Husain (A) made him comfortable and then informed him that there was nobody left alive and that he was soon going for his last battle. After passing over the duty of Imamat to his son, Imam Husain (A) finally left the camp.

Imam Husain (A) mounted on his faithful horse Zuljanah and rode to the battlefield. He was exhausted from the heat and thirst and he was wounded all over. However, the blood of the Lion of Allah flowed in his veins and he was not going to meekly allow the enemy to overcome him. He called out one last time, "Hal min Naasirin Yansuruna? Hal min Mughheesin Fa Yugheesuna? - Is there any helper to come and help us? Is there anyone to come to our aid?"

Imam Husain (A) knew fully well that all his helpers had been martyred but he made this call for two reasons. Firstly, he gave a last chance to the men in Yazid's army to change their minds and save themselves from Hell.

Secondly, his cry was to us, to never let his sacrifice be in vain and to carry forward the religion for which he gave up everything he had.

Then Imam Husain (A) charged at the enemy alone, sword in hand. Such was his skill, that the enemy began to die all around him and they retreated in terror. Shimr saw that Imam Husain (A) could not be fought hand to hand despite his weakened condition, so he gave orders to shower him with arrows.

So many arrows rained towards Imam Husain (A) that his body was pierced all over. Shimr then shouted to his men to kill Imam Husain (A). Soldiers attacked Imam Husain (A) with spears, swords and stones, determined to bring him down.

Somehow, he managed to drive them away and gained access to the river. Thinking that he might drink some water to quench his thirst, Husain bin Tamim shot an arrow which hit Imam Husain (A) in the mouth, filling it with blood. Imam Husain (A) took a handful of the blood and threw it up towards the sky, thanking Allah.

In the meantime, Imam Husain (A) saw Shimr advance with a group of men towards the tents where the ladies were, wishing to rob and plunder. He admonished them, asking them to behave like men and not animals. Shimr withdrew, ashamed of his action. Shimr then surrounded Imam Husain (A) with his foot soldiers but they just could not stop him.

One soldier said later, "I have never seen a man who has been so badly wounded and who has seen his children, friends and relatives killed, fight with such courage. Although men surrounded him from all sides, he scattered them like sheep wherever he turned."

Meanwhile Imam Husain (A) kept on repeating words of guidance to the enemy. He asked them, "Why do you kill me? Had I made any alteration to the laws of Islam? Had I shed anybody's blood?" Then he said, "If the religion of Muhammad cannot survive except by my being killed, then O swords! Come and get me."

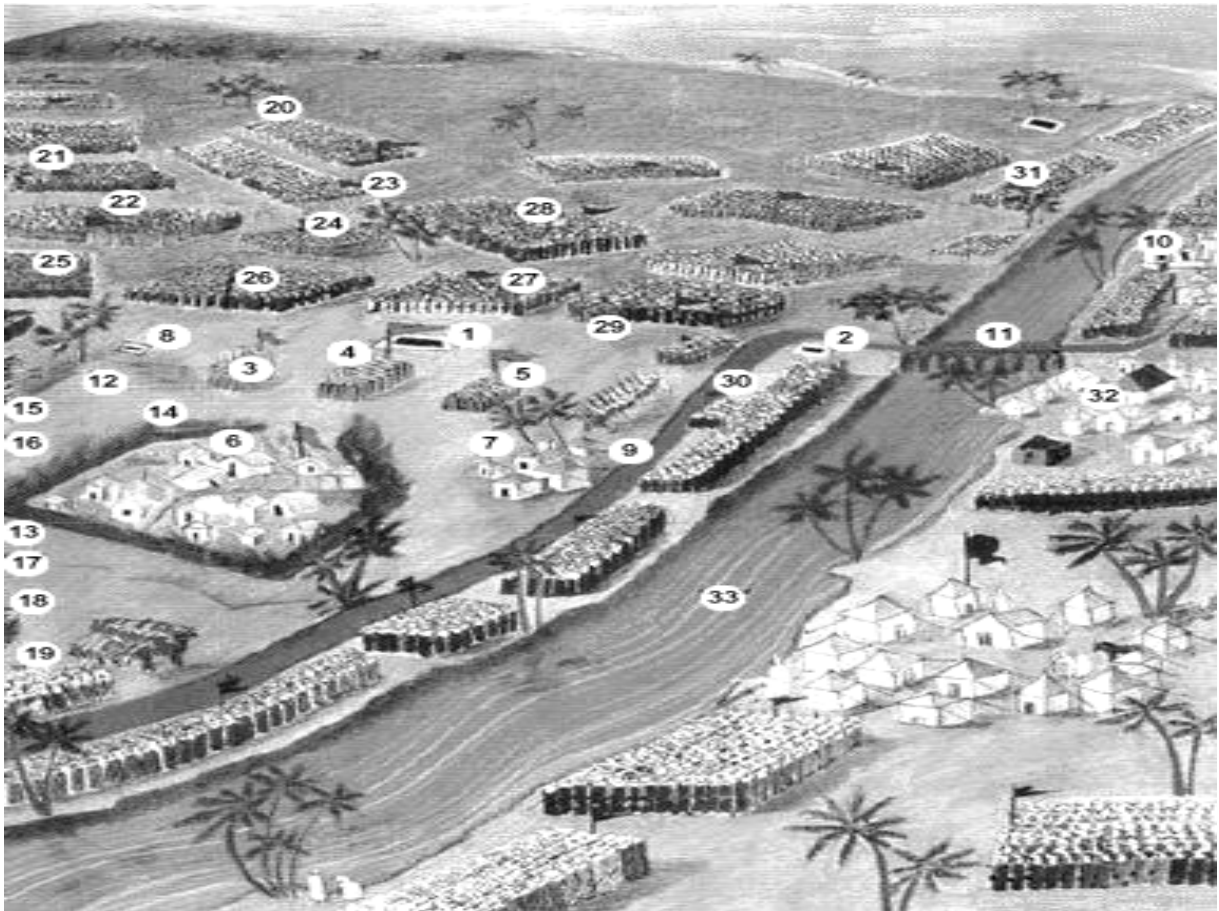
Then, Imam Husain (A) was repeatedly and powerfully attacked. At last he could no longer stay steady on his horse. He turned his face to the sky and said, "O my Lord! I have given up all without exception in my love for You. And I have left all my family and accepted that my children become orphans in order to meet You. If, out of love for You, my body is chopped into pieces, even then my heart will not bend before anyone but You."

Imam Husain (A) urged his horse to carry him to a valley so that his family would not witness his death. In the valley he fell from the horse, too weak to support himself. The enemy cautiously neared him, and saw that he had put his forehead on the ground in prostration. Nobody dared to go forward, because none of them wanted to be responsible for the inhuman crime of killing the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S).

Shimr called out to his men, "What are you waiting for?" At these words, Maalik bin Nasr al-Baddi advanced and struck Imam Husain (A) on the head with a sword that pierced his scalp. Then Zur'a bin Sharik's sword, Sinan bin Anas's spear and the dagger of Shimr killed Imam Husain (A). As his holy head was raised on a spear, the earth of Karbala trembled violently and Jibraeel's (A) voice was heard crying, "Alaa Qad Qutilal Husainu bi Karbala, Alaa Qad Zubihal Husainu bi Karbala - Alas! Husain has been killed in Karbala, alas! Husain has been slaughtered in Karbala."

May Allah curse forever those who killed Imam Husain (A), the Prince of the Martyrs, and his companions - Ameen.

THE BATTLEFIELD



1. The grave of Imam Hussain (A)
2. The grave of Abbas (A)
3. Habib bin Mazahir - Left Flank
4. Bani Hashim - Centre of Army
5. Zuhair bin Qayn - Right Flank
6. The tents of Ahlul-bayt (A)
7. The place of Hur bin Yazid al-Riyahi
8. The grave of Hur bin Yazid al-Riyahi
9. The road Kerbala - Kufa - Damascus
10. The Village of Ghadhiriyya
11. Bridge leading to Kufa
12. The hillock of Zainabiyya
13. The well dug by Abbas (A)
14. The trench surrounding the camp
- 15-19. The army of 'Umr bin Sa'd
- 20-28. The reserves of the army of Yazid
29. Shimr bin Dhil Jawshan with his army
30. The tent of (the accursed) Shimr
31. Hajjar bin Abjad with a large army
32. The tent of 'Umr bin Sa'd
33. The River Euphrates