

TAREEKH SYLLABUS - CLASS ('fl 5 @@&\$%&L

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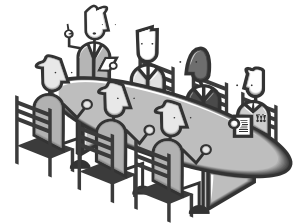
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LESSON 1: THE EVENTS OF SAQIFA

While Imam Ali (A) was busy attending to the burial of the Holy Prophet (S), the Muhajireen of Makka and the Ansar of Madina had lost no time in contesting the matter of the Caliphate. They had gathered at a place called Saqifa bani Sa'da and each group was putting forward its merits and claiming the Caliphate.



One can only wonder at their actions, because only two months ago the Holy Prophet (S) had openly declared that Imam Ali (A) would be his successor. In their greed, these so-called Muslims even forgot that their beloved Holy Prophet (S) lay as yet unburied.

The Muhajireen claimed that they had a greater right to the Caliphate because they had been Muslims for longer and had supported the Holy Prophet (S) in Makka when he had very few friends. They also claimed to be his kin and said that they had migrated from their homes in Makka in very difficult circumstances, leaving behind all their wealth and property.

The Ansar insisted that they had a greater right to the Caliphate because they had given the Holy Prophet (S) shelter in Madina when he could live in Makka no longer. They had also protected him in his time of need and had fought at his side in battles against powerful enemies. They recalled how for 13 years he had preached amongst the Makkans and only a handful had become Muslims. They argued that it was the Ansar who had given Islam strength and consolidation.

When Umar bin Khattab and Abu Bakr bin Qahafa reached Saqifa, the arguments had almost been settled in favour of the Ansar, who had chosen Sa'd bin Ubadah to lead the Muslims. Umar did not find this acceptable at all as he had already planned to bring in a man from the Muhajireen. He urged Abu Bakr to make a speech and turn the situation. Abu Bakr rose and said that the Arabs would not accept any Caliph who was not from the tribe of Quraish, which was the tribe of the Holy Prophet (S). He also praised the merits of the Ansar to keep them quiet. The Ansar were not fooled by the clever words of Abu Bakr and while there was some silence, Abu Bakr received help from an unexpected quarter.



The two main tribes of the Ansar were the Aws and Khazraj. The old enmity between them had been settled long ago by the Holy Prophet (S), but now it came out into the open.

To stop the selection of Sa'd bin Ubadah who was the chief of the Khazraj, Bashir bin Sa'd from the tribe of Aws suddenly went forward and gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr. He was followed by three other men from Aws. Suddenly, the tables had turned and now the Muhajireen had the upper hand.

Despite protests from the tribe of Khazraj and a few followers of Imam Ali (A), Abu Bakr was elected as the first Caliph. How strange was their behaviour! While Abu Bakr and Umar sold their religion for their greed, the people of Aws sold their religion for fear that the Khazraj might come to power. The rest of the people followed like sheep, too weak or uncaring to protest. The few who did raise their voices to defend the unrecognised rights of Imam Ali (A) were ignored and outnumbered.

The members of Bani Hashim and some loyal Muslims were too occupied with the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S) to give any thought to worldly affairs. By the time they learnt of the happenings at Saqifa, it was too late to do anything.

When Imam Ali came to exercise his right to the Caliphate as per the orders of the Holy Prophet (S) at Ghadeer Khum, his claim was rejected and he was forced to return to his house. Later, Abu Bakr sent Umar to Bibi Fatimah's (A) house, where Imam Ali (A) and some friends had gathered. Umar had instructions to bring Imam Ali (A) to Abu Bakr to pay the oath of allegiance to him. When Imam Ali (A) refused to do this, Umar threatened to burn down the house. Imam Ali (A) then came out with Abbas and Zubayr. From the open door was heard the sound of Bibi Fatimah (A) weeping.

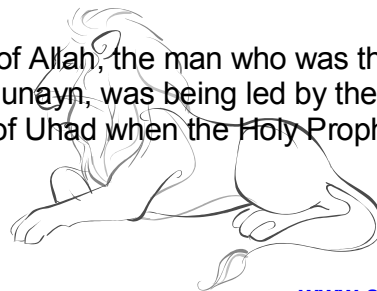


She was saying,

"O Father, how soon after your death are troubles pouring on our head at the hands of the son of Khattab and the son of Abu Qahafa. How soon they have ignored your words of Ghadeer Khum and your saying that Ali was to you as Haroon was to Musa."

Hearing these heartrending words, the companions of Umar could not keep themselves from weeping and turned back. However Umar was bent on humiliating Imam Ali (A). He insisted that Imam Ali (A) be led to the mosque tied with a rope so that he could not escape.

The Muslims now saw an amazing sight. The Lion of Allah, the man who was the champion of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Khayber and Hunayn, was being led by the cowardly Umar, who had run away from the battle of Uhud when the Holy Prophet (S) was injured.



It was a measure of the patience of Imam Ali (A) that he did not use force in the interests of Islam. He knew that nothing could be gained by fighting, and a civil war would destroy the Muslims.

When Imam Ali (A) was brought in front of Abu Bakr, Umar insisted that if he did not give the oath of allegiance, he should be killed. Imam Ali (A) replied:

***"Will you kill a man who is a servant of the Lord
and a brother of the Apostle of the Lord?"***

Umar then turned to Abu Bakr who had remained silent till then, asking him to decide Imam Ali's (A) fate. However, Abu Bakr said that so long as Bibi Fatimah (A) was alive, he would not force her husband to give allegiance to him.

After that Imam Ali (A) was released and he went directly to the grave of the Holy Prophet (S) where he stood, reflecting on how the attitude of the people had changed now that his brother had left this world.

MORAL BOX

- ❖ Like the people at Saqifa, will we turn our back to our Imam (A) when he reappears, or are we his sincere followers?
- ❖ We need to be able to practice patience even at the most difficult of times.

- ❖ _____

- ❖ _____

Now you know...

- ◆ The Muhajireen of Makka and the Ansar of Madina were putting forward their claims to the Caliphate, while Imam Ali (A) was busy with the burial of the Holy Prophet (S).
- ◆ The Muhajireen claimed that they had a greater right to the Caliphate as they had been Muslims for longer and had supported the Holy Prophet (S) in Makka. They had also migrated from their homes in Makka in very difficult circumstances, leaving behind all their wealth and property.
- ◆ The Ansar said they had a greater right to the Caliphate as they had given the Holy Prophet (S) shelter in Madina and had protected him in his time of need. They had also fought at his side in battles against powerful enemies.
- ◆ The arguments had almost been settled in favour of the Ansar, but Umar did not find this acceptable as he had already planned to bring in a man from the Muhajireen. He urged Abu Bakr to make a speech and turn the situation. Abu Bakr said that the Arabs would not accept a Caliph who was not from the tribe of Quraish, which was the tribe of the Holy Prophet (S).
- ◆ The old enmity between the Aws and Khazraj, again came out into the open. To stop the selection of the chief of the Khazraj, Bashir bin Sa'd from the tribe of Aws went and gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr. He was followed by three other men from Aws. Suddenly, the tables had turned and now the Muhajireen had the upper hand.
- ◆ Members of Bani Hashim and the loyal Muslims were busy with the death of the Holy Prophet (S) so by the time they learnt of Saqifa, it was too late to do anything. When Imam Ali claimed his right to the Caliphate, as per the orders of the Holy Prophet (S) at Ghadeer Khum, he was rejected and forced to return home.
- ◆ Abu Bakr sent Umar to Bibi Fatimah's (A) house, with instructions to bring Imam Ali (A) to pay the oath of allegiance to him. Umar threatened to burn down the house when Imam Ali (A) refused, forcing him out of the house. From the open door was heard the sound of Bibi Fatimah (A) weeping.

LESSON 2: ABU BAKR - THE FIRST CALIPH

On the day after the people had given him their allegiance at Saqifa, Abu Bakr came to the mosque of the Holy Prophet (S) and sat on the pulpit. A large gathering was present to swear the general allegiance. Umar stood nearby, ready to prevent any trouble from the friends and followers of Imam Ali (A).

Abu Bakr then made his first address to the people, during which he said,

"I have been placed in this authority, although I do not like it. By Allah, I would have been pleased if any of you had taken it in my place. If you expect me to act like the Apostle of God, then I can not do it. He was honoured and preserved from error by the Lord, while I am an ordinary man, no better than any of you. When you see me steadfast then obey me, and when you see that I turn aside from the right path then set me aright. I have a devil that seizes me sometimes, and when you see me enraged then avoid me because at that time I will not listen to anything."

What an incredible speech by the new leader of the Muslims! In one go he admitted that he was not the right man for the task and warned that he would probably make mistakes. He knew fully well that his knowledge in religious matters was only average, so he covered any future problems by mentioning his "devil". It was not a speech to inspire any confidence and it is a wonder that he got away with such miserable and apologetic words.



Umar and Abu Bakr were so busy in securing the Caliphate that neither was present at the funeral of the Holy Prophet (S). Although Abu Bakr was now the Caliph, it was not a universally popular choice. The members of Bani Hashim and certain pious Muslims like Zubayr, Miqdaad, Salman, Abu Zar, Ammar, Barra bin Azhab, Khalid bin Sa'id, Abu Ayyub Ansari, Khazima bin Thabit and others refused to acknowledge him, believing that the position belonged to Imam Ali (A).

QUESTION BOX

- ❓ How would we react if an injustice was being carried out against us?
Would we be patient for the sake of Islam and the greater good?



Imam Ali (A) was naturally grieved at the course of events, but he patiently endured this injustice for the sake of Islam. He turned his attention to collecting the Holy Qur'an and compiling it in order of its revelation.

At the time of his election Abu Bakr was 60 years of age. He was the son of Abu Qahafa. His original names were Abd al-Ka`ba and Atiq. He was one of the earliest converts to Islam, and when he became a Muslim at the age of 38, he was renamed Abdallah. After the marriage of his daughter Ayesha to the Holy Prophet (S), he was called Abu Bakr in reference to his daughter.

Abu Bakr used to trade in cloth and was also a genealogist i.e. he knew the family trees of the Arabs, especially the Quraish. After his election, Umar saw him going to the market to open his shop and said,

"Are you going to trade although you have been given the rule over the Muslims?"

Abu Bakr asked,

"How shall I feed my family?"

Umar then took him to Abu Ubaida, the treasurer of the Bait al-Maal (public treasury), who gave him a yearly allowance of 6000 dirhams, which was more than enough for his household expenses.

One of the first things Abu Bakr did as a Caliph was to contest Bibi Fatimah's (A) ownership to the land of Fadak, an action that she never forgave him for. According to her will, he and Umar were not allowed to attend her funeral.

As Abu Bakr was not recognised as a legitimate heir to the Holy Prophet (S), the various tribes around Arabia stopped paying their taxes to the Muslim state. Abu Bakr decided to stop the voices of dissatisfaction with a show of strength, so he mobilised the Muslim army under various commanders and sent them to reclaim the distant provinces.

On reaching their destination the commanders were instructed to give the Adhaan to test the faith of the local people. If they responded, they were to be asked to repent and submit to the Caliph, if they resisted they were to be attacked and their women and children made prisoners. With these instructions, the various commanders left Madina.

The man who commanded the largest division was a brilliant general named Khalid bin Walid. He was the same man who had caused the defeat of the Muslims at Uhud.

Despite his later conversion to Islam, he was a cruel soldier and had no faith at all. He had been sent against Tulaiha, a man claiming to be a new prophet, in the north east. After Tulaiha ran away and the tribes of Bani Hawaazan surrendered, his task was over and his men advised him to return to Madina.

However, Khalid wanted to continue fighting and he led his men southwards to the tribe of Bani Yarb. The chief of this tribe was Malik bin Nuwaira, a noble man who was famous for his generosity, horsemanship and poetry. He also had for his wife a beautiful woman named Laila. When Malik heard that Khalid was approaching at the head of 4,500 men, he realised that it was useless to fight. When the Adhaan was given, he responded to the call with all his men.

Khalid however, would not have any of it and brutally killed Malik and married his widow the same night, despite the time limit fixed by the Holy Prophet (S) for marrying a widow. Although Khalid was later charged by the evidence of his own men, who were shocked by his inhuman conduct, Abu Bakr pardoned him.

The Caliphate of Abu Bakr is filled with incidents where he proved himself to be weak, a poor judge and inadequate in matters of religion. He finally died in 13 A.H. after ruling for 2 years and 3 months.

LESSON 3: UMAR - THE SECOND CALIPH

Umar al-Khattab was selected by Abu Bakr to succeed him and he took over the Caliphate on the day of the death of Abu Bakr. In his first address to the people he said,

"O God! Verily I am rough in temper, therefore soften me; and verily I am weak, therefore strengthen me; and verily I am miserly, therefore make me generous".

With these poorly chosen words, Umar began his rule which was to last for 10 years and six months.

Only one year after he came to power Umar made new religious laws.

- He introduced a special prayer called Tarawih, during the month of Ramadhan. This prayer, which requires recitations of large portions of the Holy Qur'an, is still recited by Sunni Muslims today.
- He also stated that the minor Haj (Umrae Tamattu) and the temporary marriage (Mut'a) were Haraam from that time onwards.
- He reduced the number of Takbirs in Namaaze Mayyit from five to four.

Umar had no authority to make these changes because the Holy Prophet (S) has said that the things which he himself had taught to be Halaal and Haraam shall remain unchanged till the Day of Judgement.

Umar was once preaching from the pulpit when Imam Husain (A), who was then only a young boy, stood up and told him,

"Come down from the pulpit of my father".

Umar admitted,

"It is the pulpit of your father, not the pulpit of my father, but who told you to say this?"

Imam Ali (A) who was present, rose and said

"By Allah! No one told him what to say".

During the reign of Umar, the boundaries of the Muslim territories were expanded greatly and many foreign lands were conquered. These included Syria, Jordan, Jerusalem, Egypt and Persia.

Umar placed ill-chosen governors in many of these new lands. In particular, he was responsible for the growth of power of Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan in Syria.

By initially placing Muawiya's brother Yazid in power, Umar was the originator of the massacre in Kerbala which took place at the orders of Muawiya's evil son Yazid.

Umar's knowledge of the Holy Qur'an was weak. He used to make rounds in the streets of Madina at night with a whip in his hand. Once he passed a house where he heard someone singing. He jumped over the back wall and found a man and woman drinking wine. He shouted in anger,

"O enemies of God, did you think your sin would pass unnoticed?"

The man replied,

"O Umar, if I am guilty of one sin, then you are guilty of three wrong acts according to the Holy Qur'an".

Umar could not believe his ears and challenged the man to prove his words. The man quoted three verses of the Holy Qur'an:

1. ***O you who believe, avoid much suspicion ... and do not spy.***
Hujuraat, 49 : 12 (Part)
2. ***...It is not good that you should enter your houses from behind but the righteous one is he who guards himself against evil and enters the houses by the doors...*** ***Baqarah, 2 : 189 (Part)***
3. ***O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you have asked for permission and greeted those within...*** ***Nur 24 : 27 (Part)***

On hearing this Umar was ashamed of his ignorance of the Holy Qur'an and asked for forgiveness for the intrusion. After the man promised not to touch wine again, Umar left. Many such incidents occurred and Umar was embarrassed time and time again by his poor command of the verses of the Holy Qur'an. It is a wonder that he still thought himself fit to rule the Muslims!

Numerous incidents have been noted in history where Umar made hasty and incorrect decisions which were changed by the presence and intervention of Imam Ali (A).

Once Umar ordered that a mad woman who had been found guilty of adultery should be whipped as per the prescribed punishment. As the poor woman was being dragged along on the way to be flogged, Imam Ali (A) passed by and asked what was going on. When he was informed of the situation he said,

"Do you not know that the Holy Prophet (S) has said that the order of punishment should be withheld from a mad person till they recover, because they are not in control of their actions".

Umar then ordered the woman to be released. Such incidents happened so many times that Umar used to say,

"If it was not for Ali, Umar would have been destroyed".

Umar had a rule that non-Arabs were not allowed to enter Madina. However, he relaxed the rule for one man only at the request of his friend Mughira bin Sho'iba, the governor of Kufa. The man in question was called Abu Lulu. He was not an Arab, but he was a good carpenter, blacksmith and engraver.

Abu Lulu was heavily taxed for the privilege of residing in Madina and asked Umar to increase his allowance. Umar refused and instead commissioned him to build a windmill for grinding grain.

Abu Lulu promised him that he would build him such a windmill that people would always talk about it. The way he said it made Umar wonder whether he was being threatened and his fears proved correct.

A few days later Abu Lulu ambushed Umar in the early hours of the morning and stabbed him in the stomach three times with a double-bladed dagger. One of these wounds was fatal and Umar died three days later on 26th Zilhaj at the age of 63 years.

The death of the man who was responsible for hurting the feelings of Bibi Fatima (A), when he tore her deed of ownership of Fadak, is celebrated as 'Eide Zahra. May the curse of Allah be on Umar al-Khattab for all time.

LESSON 4: UTHMAN - THE THIRD CALIPH

Just before he died, Umar nominated six companions of the Holy Prophet (S), to choose from amongst themselves his successor. The six were Abdur Rahman bin Awf, Uthman bin Affan, Ali bin Abu Talib (A), Sa'd bin Abi Waqqaas, Zubayr bin Awam and Talha bin Ubaidullah.

This was a very clever move by Umar because he had chosen people who would not readily favour Imam Ali (A). Furthermore, he had instructed that if any of these six challenged the appointment of the person who was finally declared Caliph, he should be killed.

After his death the nominees met but could not reach any conclusion. At last, Abdur Rahman said that he would forego his claim for the Caliphate if they allowed him to elect the Caliph. Uthman agreed to this but Imam Ali (A) said that he would only agree if Abdur Rahman promised not to give consideration to family but judge only on merit. He said this because Uthman was the brother-in-law of Abdur Rahman and the two were friends. Abdur Rahman accepted the condition and then talked to each of the candidates privately.

Zubayr was in favour of Imam Ali (A), Talha was not present in Madina and how Sa'd voted is uncertain. Both Imam Ali (A) and Uthman pressed their own claim. Therefore the selection narrowed down to these two men.

The next day the mosque was crowded because everyone wanted to know who their new Caliph would be. Abdur Rahman had discussed the situation with Amr al-Aas, who was a shrewd politician with no religious morals.

Acting on Amr's advice, Abdur Rahman asked Imam Ali (A) to become Caliph as long as he would agree to rule by the Holy Qur'an, the teachings of the Holy Prophet (S) and the practices of Abu Bakr and Umar. As expected, Imam Ali (A) agreed to the first two conditions but flatly refused to follow the practices of Abu Bakr and Umar. When Uthman was given the same conditions, he agreed at once and was thus declared the third Caliph.

Imam Ali (A) told Abdur Rahman,

"It is not the first time I have been deprived of my rights, but you have not been free of self interest in your decision."

On hearing these words Abdur Rahman warned Imam Ali (A) that Umar had said that the one who defies the selection should be killed, whereupon Imam Ali (A) left the gathering in disgust.

The choice of Uthman was a bad mistake and in later years the man almost destroyed the faith and dignity of the Muslims. His first speech to the public was a very poor effort and he lamely finished by saying,

"We were never preachers but the Lord will teach us."

From the first day of his rule, Uthman began systematically replacing the governors of the major provinces with his own relatives from the Bani Umayyah.

Thus, in Kufa he appointed his drunkard brother Waleed to replace Sa'd bin Waqqaas. In Egypt he replaced Amr al-Aas with his foster brother Abdallah bin Abi Sarh, who has been cursed in the Holy Qur'an (**Surah An'am, verse 93**) for inventing lies and saying that he had revelations from Allah.

He recalled back to Madina Hakam bin al-Aas, who had been exiled for life by the Holy Prophet (S). Hakam was Uthman's uncle and Uthman made Hakam's evil son Marwan his secretary and gave him huge gifts from the property of the Muslims. He also gave Marwan the property of Fadak and made him his son-in-law.

As Uthman began to squander the public money on his relatives openly, resentment against him grew from all quarters. Ammar Yasir, an old and respected companion of the Holy Prophet (S) challenged Uthman's conduct and was severely beaten for his words. This action against a man like Ammar outraged the people.

In Syria, another great companion of the Holy Prophet (S), Abu Zar Ghifari, was going around warning the governor Muawiya and the people against their evil ways.

Muawiya sent Abu Zar to Madina where Uthman had the bad manners to insult him. He then cruelly banished the old man to Rabazha, in the desert of Najd, where he died of neglect two years later.

Uthman's high-handed behaviour and the cruelties and excesses of his worthless governors caused unrest throughout the empire. Riots broke out everywhere. In Madina itself there were calls to remove Uthman.

The Caliph was beset from all sides and turned to Imam Ali (A) to appeal on his behalf. Imam Ali (A) agreed, provided Uthman publicly apologised for his mistakes.

In despair, Uthman mounted the pulpit and with a voice broken by sobs and tears he begged the forgiveness of Allah and assured the public that he was repentant. Because of his apologetic state and the intervention of Imam Ali (A) the people were quietened.

However, the Egyptians insisted that their cruel governor Abdallah bin Sarh be replaced by Muhammad the son of Abu Bakr. He was a pious man who had been raised from his infancy by Imam Ali (A), who had married Abu Bakr's widow.

Uthman agreed to this demand, but secretly sent a letter to his brother in Egypt warning him of the situation and advising him to kill Muhammad bin Abu Bakr on his arrival.

Unfortunately for Uthman, this messenger was intercepted on the way to Egypt by Muhammad himself. The Egyptians were outraged by the Caliph's treachery and returned to Madina in a furious mood. The news of his actions spread and finally Uthman had to take refuge in his palace which was then surrounded by people calling for his blood.

After a siege of 40 days the palace was broken into and Uthman was killed by repeated stab wounds. His body was buried in the graveyard of the Jews. He was 82 years old and had ruled for 11 years.

LESSON 5: THE CALIPHATE OF IMAM ALI (A)

After the murder of Uthman, there was great unrest in the city of Madina due to the absence of any government. The main citizens of the city called for the immediate election of a Caliph to end the danger of a civil war. Two men had ambitions to become Caliph. They were Talha and Zubayr, both brothers-in-law of Ayesha, the widow of the Holy Prophet (S). However, to the great disadvantage of these two candidates, she was in Makka for pilgrimage at the time.

The people of Madina, however, wanted Imam Ali (A) to be their Caliph. He was a man admired by his friends and enemies alike for his courage, piety, eloquence, wisdom and kinship to the Holy Prophet (S). After having been ruled by weak men the people now turned to the man who had been nominated to lead them in the first place. However, Imam Ali (A) refused their offer and said that he would rather remain as an advisor to any Caliph they elected.

The people of Madina insisted that they would follow none but him and at last he reluctantly agreed. He said,

"I must say frankly at the outset that I shall deal with you according to the Holy Qur'an and to the best of my knowledge and judgement."

This condition was accepted, but Imam Ali (A) asked that his nomination be made in public so that if anyone had anything to say, they would have an opportunity to do so.

Next day in the mosque of Madina most of the Muslims were present to pay allegiance to Imam Ali (A), including Talha and Zubayr. Imam Ali (A) thus took over as the fourth Caliph of the Muslims.

After a few days Talha and Zubayr and a few others came to Imam Ali (A) asking that the murder of Uthman be avenged. Imam Ali (A) knew fully well that some of these same people had been responsible for the riots that led to Uthman's death, and now they just wanted to stir up trouble. However, he told them that he had called Uthman's wife Naila and his secretary Marwan and asked them if they could identify the culprits since they had been with Uthman at the time of his death. Marwan did not come and Naila said that Uthman was killed by two men who she did not recognise. Under the circumstances Imam Ali (A) could do nothing more unless further evidence came to light.

Meanwhile, the members of Bani Umayyah, most of whom had not paid allegiance to Imam Ali (A), began to leave Madina. Imam Ali (A) knew that they were up to no good and in anticipation of future trouble, he began to secure the good will of the Quraish and Ansar in Madina.

The first matter that Imam Ali (A) attended to was replacing the worthless governors of Uthman. Most of the governors took over their new posts but the governor to Kufa was stopped from entering that city while the governor to Syria was stopped by Muawiya's men and both had to return to Madina.

The Bani Umayyah, with the help of their leader Muawiya, began to stir up trouble for Imam Ali (A) and his government. In the mosque of Damascus, Muawiya displayed the blood-stained shirt of Uthman and the chopped-off fingers of his wife Naila, to incite the anger of the people. They swore that they would take revenge for Uthman's death and Muawiya began to blame Imam Ali (A) for doing nothing to bring the murderers to justice.

When his governors returned from Kufa and Syria, Imam Ali (A) wrote letters to Abu Musa Ash'ari in Kufa and Muawiya in Syria demanding that they give way to the new governors.

Abu Musa wrote back from Kufa, stating that the Kufans were at the service of the new Caliph, but Muawiya did not send a reply for three months. Finally, his messenger arrived with a letter. When Imam Ali (A) opened the letter it contained no words at all and was a gesture of outright defiance. In addition the messenger informed him that Muawiya had gathered 60,000 men ready to avenge the murder of Uthman on Imam Ali (A). This news astonished Imam Ali (A) and he said, ***"I call God to witness that I am not guilty and that it is a false charge."***

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

The cunning Muawiya had managed to rouse the hatred of the people of Syria against Imam Ali (A) by using Uthman's murder as an excuse. However, Imam Ali (A) declared that only the sword would decide matters between Muawiya and himself and he gave orders for an army to be gathered to march to Syria.

Meanwhile, Talha and Zubayr had plans of their own and proceeded to Makka on the excuse of performing Umrah. On the way they joined Ayesha the widow of the Holy Prophet (S) who was also using the death of Uthman to create trouble for Imam Ali (A), whom she had always hated.

Thus, Imam Ali (A) was faced with a double threat to the security of his government - from Ayesha in Makka and from Muawiya in Syria.

LESSON 6: THE BATTLE OF JAMAL

Ayesha, the widow of the Holy Prophet (S), was in Makka for the pilgrimage when Uthman was killed. She had always expected either Talha or Zubayr to succeed him and when she heard of Imam Ali's (A) appointment as Caliph, she was very upset.

Ayesha was a jealous and cunning woman, one who had caused the Holy Prophet (S) a lot of annoyance. Now she declared herself as the avenger of the murder of Uthman and prepared to wage war against Imam Ali (A), whom she had always hated.

She managed to recruit the support of the powerful clan of Bani Umayyah, to whom Uthman had belonged. The ex-governors of Uthman, who had been replaced by Imam Ali (A), also joined her and the ex-governor of Yemen provided her with the means of financing her war by giving her the treasure he had stolen from Yemen when he was deposed. Talha and Zubayr also joined her, in spite of their oath of allegiance to Imam Ali (A). A large number of aimless drifters were also paid to enlist in the army.

The preparations of war having been completed, Ayesha's army proceeded to Basra. Before leaving, she had asked Umme Salma, a faithful widow of the Holy Prophet (S), to accompany her. Umme Salma had indignantly refused, reminding Ayesha that the Holy Prophet (S) had said that Imam Ali (A) was his successor and whoever disobeyed him, disobeyed the Holy Prophet (S) himself. She also reminded her of the time when he had addressed all his wives saying that the dogs of Hawab would bark at one of his wives, who would be part of a rebellious mob. She then warned Ayesha not to be fooled by the words of Talha and Zubayr who would only entangle her in wrong deeds. This advice had a sobering effect on Ayesha, who almost gave up her plan. However, her adopted son, Abdallah bin Zubayr, convinced her to go ahead.

Ayesha mounted on a litter on the camel al-Askar, and marched from Makka at the head of 1,000 men. On her right was Talha and on her left, Zubayr. On their way many more joined them, swelling their numbers to 3,000.

On the way to Basra, the rebel army received news that Imam Ali (A) had come out of Madina in their pursuit. They decided to leave the main road and proceed to Basra through a different route.

When they passed through the valley of Hawab the dogs of the village surrounded Ayesha's camel, barking loudly. She was immediately worried and asked for the name of the place.

When she was told it was Hawab, she was shocked and she despairingly cried,

"Alas! Alas! I am the wretched woman of Hawab. The Prophet of Allah had already warned me against this."

She got off her camel and refused to go any further. Talha and Zubayr tried to convince her that the place was not Hawab and even brought 50 witnesses to testify to this lie, but in vain.

Finally, they raised a cry that Imam Ali (A) was approaching, and Ayesha, struck with terror, quickly remounted and the march was resumed.

The army reached Basra and camped in the suburbs. Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr began talks with the leading citizens of Basra, trying to get their support for their cause. In this they failed and were subjected to ridicule.

Finally, some of them entered the city and during the congregational prayers, they treacherously captured Imam Ali's (A) governor, Uthman bin Huneif, after killing 40 of his guards.

Fighting broke out in the city and many of Imam Ali's (A) supporters were killed before Ayesha gained control of Basra.

The governor, Uthman, suffered the indignity of having his eyebrows, moustache and beard plucked out, hair by hair, before being turned out of the city.

Meanwhile, Imam Ali (A) had received information about Ayesha's plans from Umme Salma, and news of the disturbances in Makka and Basra also came through.

Imam Ali (A) made immediate plans to march towards Basra but could only raise 900 men with difficulty. This was because the people were reluctant to fight Ayesha, who was considered to be the Mother of the Faithful by virtue of being the widow of the Holy Prophet (S).

Also, Muawiya had succeeded in making people think that Imam Ali (A) was somehow involved in the murder of Uthman.

In Kufa, Imam Hasan (A) raised 9,000 men, and other units arrived as well, all joining Imam Ali (A) at his camp at Zhi-Q'ar. Meanwhile, Uthman bin Huneif arrived with fresh news from Basra.

Imam Ali (A) smiled and said to him that he had left them as an old man but had returned as a beardless youth.

Imam Ali (A) wrote letters to Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr, warning them against unwise steps they had taken, but his words were ignored. Finally he marched to Basra at the head of 20,000 men.

Ayesha's forces numbered 30,000 but they were mostly raw recruits, while Imam Ali's army was full of battle veterans.

In Basra, the sight of Imam Ali's (A) men in battle formation filled Ayesha and her comrades with terror. Imam Ali (A) talked at length with Talha and Zubayr, negotiating for peace.

He reminded them of the words of the Holy Prophet (S) regarding his authority, which they both admitted they had heard. Zubayr was ashamed of his deeds and left the scene but Talha remained doubtful. Ayesha was furious at the conduct of the two and ordered a raid at night time to end the chance of peace.

The next morning Ayesha mounted her camel al-Askar and urged her troops to prepare for battle. Thus began the unfortunate Battle of Jamal (Camel), where Muslims fought each other for the first time.

Although outnumbered, Imam Ali (A) and his soldiers were too skilled to be defeated. Soon victory began to incline towards Imam Ali (A). Talha was wounded and later died.

Ayesha's camel was brought down and Imam Ali (A) ordered his adopted son Muhammad bin Abu Bakr to take care of Ayesha who was his half-sister.

After that, the battle was soon over, and Imam Ali (A) declared a general amnesty for all the rebels.

Ayesha's plans had come to nothing and 10,000 men lay dead as a result of her jealousy. In this battle Imam Ali (A) restrained his men from taking any war booty and all property found on the battle ground was gathered in the mosque of Basra, from where the owners could claim their possessions.

LESSON 7: THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN

After the battle of Jamal was over, Imam Ali (A) returned from Basra to Kufa in Rajab of 36 A.H. He decided to set up the capital of his government in Kufa because it was more centrally placed in the Muslim Empire, and he could halt Muawiya's progress into Iraq.

Before marching towards Muawiya, Imam Ali (A) tried to settle matters peacefully by sending Jarir, the governor of Hamdan, to Syria as an envoy. However, Jarir became so engrossed in the entertainment that Muawiya put his way, that he wasted his time in Syria. He finally returned three months later with the useless message that peace could only be negotiated if the murderers of Uthman were brought to justice.

Imam Ali (A) decided that matters could be only decided by war, so he marched without delay through the Mesopotamian desert to Riqqa at the banks of the Euphrates.

After crossing the river by constructing a bridge they came across the Syrian outposts at Sur al-Rum. There were a few skirmishes between the armies but the Syrians gave way and in the month of Zilhaj of 36 A.H., the army of Imam Ali (A) came into sight of Muawiya's main forces, which had already camped at Siffin.

At Siffin, Muawiya had stationed his general, Abul Awr, with 10,000 men on the river to stop the access to water for Imam Ali's (A) army. Imam Ali (A) sent a message to Muawiya that this action was not necessary because, after all, the people whom he was refusing water were also Muslims.

He further assured Muawiya that if the situation had been reversed, the river would have been open to both armies. However, Muawiya sent back a message that the murderers of Uthman had not allowed him any water when they had laid siege to his palace, and Muawiya was avenging that action.

Imam Ali (A) knew that this situation would be intolerable and he launched an attack under Malike Ashtar. The brave commander secured the river after heavy fighting and Abul Awr was dislodged from its banks. Having control of the river, Imam Ali (A) kept to his word and allowed unlimited access to Muawiya's side.

Imam Ali (A) divided his army of 90,000 men into seven units each commanded by brave warriors. Muawiya similarly divided his army of 120,000 men into seven columns. Everyday one column from each army would engage one another in combat.

The battles were mostly restricted to single combats or small groups fighting because Imam Ali (A) was trying to avoid the serious loss of Muslim lives that would have resulted from a full scale battle.

The month of Zilhaj ended in this manner and the month of Muharram, in which fighting is forbidden, set in. During this month, Imam Ali (A) tried hard to resolve the crisis by negotiation, but to no avail. He pointed out that he was ready to punish the murderers of Uthman if Muawiya would point them out. However, Muawiya did not wish the matter to end so easily, because it was the issue of Uthman's unavenged death that had enabled him to gather such a large army.

In the month of Safar fighting was resumed. For a week, fierce battles raged all day. Everyday the conflict got more severe and bitter. In the second week Imam Ali (A) came to the battlefield for the first time. After a series of single combats, in which he overcame every opponent with his awesome skill, no body would come to fight him.

He was forced to disguise himself to get anybody to challenge him. On one such occasion, an unsuspecting warrior from Muawiya's side attacked Imam Ali (A). The man was struck with a single sweep of Zulfiqar with such force by Imam Ali (A) that the upper half of his body was severed from the lower half.

Those who watched thought that the blow had missed, and it was only when the horse moved and the two halves fell to the ground, that people realised what had happened.

Day after day the loss of lives increased, especially in the ranks of Muawiya. However, Imam Ali (A) also lost several distinguished Companions of the Holy Prophet (S) from his side. Amongst them were Hashim bin Utba and Ammar Yasir.

Ammar, who was 93 years old, had been informed by the Holy Prophet (S) that he would die fighting rebels and enemies of Islam. This was well known by all, and when he died there was some commotion in Muawiya's army.

He managed to quieten them down by saying that, since Ammar had been brought to fight by Imam Ali (A), it was he who was the cause of his death. He said that Imam Ali (A) therefore was the rebel that the prophecy talked about, and not Muawiya.

This incredible argument was accepted by his men and war continued until the 13th night.

On that day the commander-in-chief of Imam Ali's (A) army, Malike Ashtar, attacked the enemy ferociously. His shout of Allahu Akbar, every time he killed a man, was heard no less than 400 times.

The hero of the battle began to bring on victory when Amr al-Aas on Muawiya's side said,

"Call the enemy to the Word of God."

Muawiya eagerly accepted these words and his men raised 500 copies of the Holy Qur'an on their spears, saying that the Holy Book would decide their differences.

This trick had a strange effect on some people in the army of Imam Ali (A), who dropped their weapons and agreed that the Holy Qur'an should decide the matter.

Imam Ali (A) stepped into the battlefield urging his men to continue fighting and ignore the tricks of Muawiya, but they disobeyed.

The war thus came to an unsatisfactory end, and it was decided that one representative from each side should meet to reach a final decision.

Imam Ali (A) wanted Abdullah bin Abbas or Malike Ashtar to represent him, but his men insisted that Abu Musa Ash'ari be chosen instead. Muawiya appointed Amr al-Aas to represent him.

Abu Musa had neither wit nor tact and was no match for the cunning Amr al-Aas.

In the meeting that took place some months later, Abu Musa was badly tricked by Amr into giving up the rights of Imam Ali (A).

Muawiya thus managed to escape certain defeat at Siffin. The damage done at the battle was great. Muawiya lost 45,000 men and 25,000 men were killed on the side of Imam Ali (A).

LESSON 8: THE BATTLE OF NAHRAWAN

After the unsatisfactory conclusion to the Battle of Siffin, Imam Ali (A) returned with his army back to Kufa on the 13th of Safar 37 A.H. During the march, a group of 12,000 men kept themselves at a distance from the main part of the army.

The group was furious at the way things had ended at Siffin. These were the Kharjites (Kharjite means one who rebels against religion). They were the same people who had put down their weapons on the battlefield. Now they said that Imam Ali (A) had betrayed Islam by agreeing to the truce and should have referred judgement to the Holy Qur'an alone or continued to fight. They demanded that he repent for this great sin.

When the army neared Kufa, the Kharjites camped at a village named Harura. They started saying that all Muslims were equal and nobody could rule over the other. In this way, they denounced both Imam Ali (A) and Muawiya and said that their belief was in

"La Hukma Illa Lillah", meaning, "No Rulership except by Allah alone."

Imam Ali (A) went to their camp and tried to explain to them that they were misunderstanding the words ***"La Hukma Illa Lillah"***, and that in accepting the arbitration (peace talks) at Siffin, he had not gone against the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

He pointed out that they themselves were at fault, because they should never have laid down their arms and forced him to call back Malike Ashtar, who was at the point of securing victory. He reminded them that they had pressed for the arbitration and had forced him to appoint Abu Musa Ash'ari as their representative. He told them that he found their present behaviour very strange, considering their involvement in Siffin. To this they admitted that they had sinned but now they had repented for it and he should do the same.

Imam Ali (A) replied that he was a true believer and did not have to repent because he had not committed any sin.

The Kharjites refused to accept the words of Imam Ali (A) and awaited the decision of Amr al-Aas and Abu Musa Ash'ari. When they learnt of the decision they decided to revolt, and they set up their headquarters at Nahrawan, a few miles from Baghdad. Some people came from Basra to join the rebels.

Meanwhile, Imam Ali (A) received news that trouble was brewing in Nahrawan. He was involved in raising another army to march against Muawiya and wrote to the Kharjites that it was high time they joined his army. However, the Kharjites insultingly wrote back that they would think about it when he repented for his mistake at Siffin.

Imam Ali (A) had already started towards Muawiya when he received the news that the Kharjites had raided the town of Mada'in but had been repelled back to their camp. They were now committing horrible crimes around Nahrawan and killing all those who did not accept their viewpoint.

There was a danger that the Kharjites might attack Kufa while Imam Ali (A) and his men were marching towards Muawiya, so Imam Ali (A) decided to stop them. He changed his course eastward, crossed the river Tigris and approached Nahrawan.

Imam Ali (A) sent a messenger to the Kharjites demanding that those people who had murdered innocent Muslims around their camp should be surrendered. The Kharjites replied that they were all equally responsible for killing these sinners.

There was some reluctance in the army of Imam Ali (A) to fight the Kharjites, because they had been their companions against Muawiya at Siffin. Imam Ali (A) himself did not desire the bloodshed of these misguided fanatics, so he placed his battle standard outside their camp and announced that all those who gathered around it or returned to their homes would be safe.

This announcement had the desired effect and most of the Kharjites began to leave. In the end, only a core of 1,800 die-hards were left under the command of Abdallah bin Wahab. These Kharjites swore that they would fight Imam Ali (A) at any cost.

The Kharjites attacked Imam Ali's (A) army with desperate courage. However, they did not stand a chance against the superior army that faced them and they were all killed except nine men. These nine managed to flee to Basra and elsewhere, where they spread the fire of their hatred and recruited more followers.

Three years later, in 40 A.H., it was the Kharjites who sent out three assassins to kill Imam Ali (A), Muawiya and Amr al-Aas. The latter two survived but Imam Ali (A) was martyred following Ibne Muljam's cowardly attack in the mosque of Kufa. Having disposed of the Kharjites at Nahrawan, Imam Ali (A) resumed his march to Syria.

However, the chiefs of his followers urged him to stop at Kufa to let the men rest before the long journey and to enable the army to repair their weapons and armours. Imam Ali (A) agreed to this request and camped at Nukhayla outside Kufa. The soldiers were allowed to leave the camp for a day.

On the next day, hardly any men returned and at length, Imam Ali (A) entered Kufa and gave a stern sermon to the people. However, nobody came forward and finally, Imam Ali (A) turned away from them in disappointment. The Syrian expedition was abandoned, never to be resumed.

LESSON 9: 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 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 60 A.H., news was conveyed to Walid, the governor of Madina, about the death of Muawiya. Yazid the evil son of Muawiya who was the next caliph, 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. Imam Hussain (A) went to with some Hashimite youth to the Government House. He asked the youth to remain at the door whilst he entered alone, 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.

Imam (A) 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. 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. Imam (A) managed to calm the boiling blood of his companions and averted a situation which would have certainly resulted in a blood bath.

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.