

Zayd ibn 'Ali رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ



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## Transliteration key

أ-'	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ṣ
ت - t	ع - ʿ
ث - th	غ - gh
ج - j	ف - f
ح - ḥ	ق - q
خ - kh	ك - k
د - d	ل - l
ذ - dh	م - m
ر - r	ن - n
ز - z	و - w, ū
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	ي - y, ī
ص - ṣ	

## Zayd ibn 'Ali عليه السلام

The month of Muharram having passed, Shi'ah around the world would still be recovering from their ritual practices and self-flagellation. The yearly commemoration of the Shi'ah needs no introduction and the level of zealotry displayed by the Shi'ah requires no elaboration. But while Shi'ah the world over would have mourned the martyrdom of Sayyidush Shuhada' Sayyiduna Husayn ibn 'Ali عليه السلام, little mention is made of the Shi'i betrayal which led to this great tragedy, resulting in the honourable blood of the Ahl al-Bayt being spilt. Furthermore, no mention is made in any of these mourning processions that this was not the first betrayal of the Shi'ah nor is it mentioned that it is but another in a series of betrayals that occurred throughout history.

After the tragedy of Karbala', Sayyiduna 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, who was the sole male survivor from the family of Sayyiduna Husayn steered far away from the political tensions of that era and engrossed himself in teaching and spiritual reformation, all the while keeping his family close to him.<sup>1</sup>

Zayd ibn 'Ali is the son of the illustrious 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. He is also the brother of Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Baqir, considered to be the fifth infallible by the Twelver Shi'ah. He also had three other brothers, namely 'Abd Allah, 'Umar, and 'Ali.<sup>2</sup>

He narrates from his father, Zayn al-'Abidin, and his brother, al-Baqir. His nephew, Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, Shu'bah, Fudayl ibn Marzuq, al-Muttalib ibn Ziyad, Sa'id ibn Khuthaym and Ibn Abi al-Zinad have narrated from him.<sup>3</sup>

Sayyiduna Zayd was born in year 80 A.H. Although there is no mention about his exact date of birth, it is well-known that he was martyred in the year 122 A.H at the age of 42.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Abu Zahra: *Al-Imam Zayd* pg. 27

2 *Al-Anwar al-Nu'maniyyah* 1/375

3 *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* 3/362, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'* 5/389

4 Abu Zahra: *Al-Imam Zayd* pg. 25

After memorising the Qur'an, he began learning the sciences of hadith and fiqh from his father, who was a great muhaddith and faqih. He lost his beloved father at the tender age of 14, after which he continued his pursuit of knowledge under other recognised Muhaddithin of that era such as Zayd ibn Aslam, etc. He has also narrated ahadith from his brother, Muhammad al-Baqir, and from many Sahabah whom the Ahl al-Bayt have narrated from, including Sayyiduna Ibn 'Abbas, Jabir, Umm al-Mu'minin Safiyyah, Umm al-mu'minin Umm Salamah, and many other Sahabah. He went on to become a renowned Mujtahid.<sup>1</sup> When Imam al-Baqir was asked about his brother, Zayd, he replied:

You have asked me about a man who is filled with iman and knowledge from head to toe. He is the leader of the Ahl al-Bayt.<sup>2</sup>

When the same question was put to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, he answered:

He was the best reciter of the Qur'an from all of us, and had the best understanding of din from all of us. He surpassed us in joining family ties and there is none left amongst us who can equal him.<sup>3</sup>

This noble grandson of Sayyidush Shuhada would later follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and lead a rebellion against the Umayyad rulers of that time.

There is difference of opinion regarding the actual reason that led to his uprising. It is reported that a claim was made against Zayd ibn 'Ali concerning some wealth or land. He was then taken before the governor of Iraq, Yusuf ibn 'Umar, and an argument ensued between them. He was then sent to the Khalifah Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik.

Hisham addressed Zayd ibn 'Ali, "I have been informed of such and such regarding you?"

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1 Abu Zahra: *Al-Imam Zayd* pg. 36

2 Introduction to *Musnad Imam Zayd*, pg. 8

3 *Ibid*, pg. 7

Zayd replied, "It is incorrect."

Hisham said, "But it is correct according to me."

Zayd asked, "Should I take an oath for you?"

Hisham replied, "I will still not believe you."

Zayd retorted, "Indeed, Allah will not raise the status of a person who has the power to make someone take an oath on Allah, yet does not believe him."

Hisham ordered him to get out of his sight whereupon he commented, "If I leave, you will only see from me what you detest."

He then returned to Kufah, and the Shi'ah began inciting him to rebel against the Khalifah. He conceded to their requests and remained in Kufah. The people of Kufah (once again, just as they had done to his grandfather, Husayn رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, before him) pledged their allegiance to him, that they would assist him and protect him. His family members warned him not to trust the people of Kufah.<sup>1</sup> His cousin Dawud ibn 'Ali said to him, "O my cousin, do not let these people fool you. Take lesson from what happened to your Ahl al-Bayt and the deception these people gave them."<sup>2</sup>

It was in the year 122 A.H that Sayyiduna Zayd took the pledge of allegiance from the people of Kufah and commanded them to prepare for battle. The governor of Iraq, Yusuf ibn 'Umar, was informed of this uprising and issued orders to quell this rebellion.

The people of Kufah were now called upon to honour their oaths and fulfil their pledges. They did gather around Zayd ibn 'Ali رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ but not to protect him, rather to question him about his beliefs (after inciting him to accept their oaths and rise up against the rulers):

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1 *Tarikh al-Tabari* 4/193-200, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* 36-37

2 *Ibid*

They asked: “What is your view, may the mercy of Allah be upon you, regarding Abu Bakr and ‘Umar?”

Zayd ibn ‘Ali answered, “May Allah forgive them. I did not hear anyone of the Ahl al-Bayt dissociating from them and I only speak good of them... They ruled and displayed justice and enforced and practiced upon the Qur’an and Sunnah.”

On hearing this, the Shi’ah deserted him and turned away. They broke their pledge and left him alone with a few hundred followers against a ten thousand strong army. Zayd ibn ‘Ali said to them, “You are Rafidah (deserters),” and they were referred to by that term from that day.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the loyalty of the Shi’ah towards the grandson of Sayyiduna Husayn, such was their obedience to the teachings of the Family of Muhammad; they were willing to abandon him simply because he would not dissociate himself from the first two khulafa’, Abu Bakr and Umar.

Praise for the Sahabah by the Ahl al-Bayt, especially for the first two khulafa’, was not a singular or rare occurrence. All of the illustrious Imams praised them, honoured them, and revered them. They named their children after them and even intermarried with their family. They left no stone unturned in trying to distance themselves from the falsehood that was ascribed to them. However, the Shi’ah were prepared to absolve themselves from the Ahl al-Bayt but not the false beliefs they had invented. The conversation between Zayd ibn Ali and Muhammad al-Ahwal, better known as Shaytan al-Taqa, the infamous liar of Kufah, better illustrates the vast contrast in beliefs that existed between the members of the Ahl al-Bayt and those who claimed to be their Shi’ah.

Zayd ibn ‘Ali summoned Muhammad al-Ahwal and asked him: “I have heard that you are claiming that among the family of Muhammad, there is an Imam to whom obedience is obligatory.”

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1 The Shi’ah came to Zayd and told him, “Disassociate yourself from Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, and then we will assist you!” Zayd replied, “Instead I will associate myself with them.” They replied, “Then we will desert you.” Zayd answered, “Go! You are deserters!” *Siyar A’lam al-Nubalâ*

Muhammad al-Ahwal replied, “Yes, your father, ‘Ali ibn Husayn, was one of them.”

Zayd said, “How can that be, when he would take a mouthful of food, and if it was hot, he would cool it with his hand and then put it in my mouth? Do you think that he would protect me from the heat of this mouthful and not protect me from the fire of hell (by not informing me of this)?”

Al-Ahwal answered, “He did not want to tell you lest you reject it and thus become a disbeliever, then he would not be able to intercede for you.”<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, despite this betrayal, Zayd رضي الله عنه proceeded with the few companions who still remained loyal to him. Yusuf ibn ‘Umar despatched a contingent to Kufah and the armies rode with the vice-governor of Kufah. Yusuf ibn ‘Umar also came amidst a huge army. Zayd’s army faced a small battalion of their enemy numbering 500 riders who they defeated easily and proceeded to al-Kunasah.

At al-Kunasah, he attacked a group of the people of Sham and defeated them. Accompanied by 200 horsemen, he continued forward. He defeated every small battalion he encountered and his companions began announcing, “O people of Kufah! Come to din, honour and this world since you have no din, no honour and no world.” At sunset, a small group joined him.

On the first day of battle, some of his warriors were slain. On the second day, a fierce battle between his army and the people of Sham ensued. He killed seventy men and the rest returned in a pitiable condition. That evening, Yusuf ibn ‘Umar mobilised his army and at dawn, the two armies met. Zayd and his small band of followers stood firm and drove the enemy back despite their small number. They then pursued them with cavalry and infantry until they reached the dam where fierce fighting continued. When darkness covered the sky, Zayd was struck by an arrow which pierced his left temple. As a result, they were forced to stop the battle. The people of Sham were unaware of this and assumed that they had stopped due to nightfall. Zayd was taken to a doctor who removed the arrow from

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1 *Rijal al-Kashshi* pg. 186

his temple. No sooner was it removed, did Sayyiduna Zayd breathe his last. May Allah have mercy on him.<sup>1</sup>

Sayyiduna Zayd ibn Ali was martyred on 1 Safar 122. A.H and was buried in secret, so as to prevent the enemy from mutilating his body. They even threw water over his grave so that it would not be recognised. However a slave disclosed the whereabouts of the grave to the Iraqi governor who then had his body exhumed and crucified. It is said that Zayd was left crucified for four years after which his body was removed and burnt to ashes. And Allah knows best, to Allah do we belong and unto Him is our return.<sup>2</sup>

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, upon receiving news of his uncle Zayd ibn 'Ali's martyrdom, broke down and cried uncontrollably. He then proclaimed out loud:

To Allah do we belong and unto Him is our return. He was an excellent uncle. He was a man for our world and our hereafter. I swear by Allah that my uncle is a martyr just like the martyrs who fought along with Allah's Prophet ﷺ, 'Ali, Hasan, or Husayn.<sup>3</sup>

Imam 'Ali Rida narrated:

Zayd ibn 'Ali was one of the scholars of the Ahl al-Bayt and got angry for the sake of Allah, the Most Exalted. He fought with the enemies of Allah until he was martyred in his path.

He goes on to narrate that Imam Ja'far said, **“Woe be to those who hear his call but do not help him.”**<sup>4</sup>

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1 This incident is reported the same in *Bihar al-Anwar* of Baqir Majlisi, with the addition that Imam Ja'far said, “May the curse of Allah be upon his killers and those who betrayed him. To Allah do we complain of what has descended upon us the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet. From Allah do we seek assistance, and He is the best of helpers.” *Bihar al-Anwar* 46/172

2 Details of the battle and his martyrdom taken from *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* vol. 10 pg. 39 – 41

3 *Uyun Akhbar al-Rida* 2/228

4 *Ibid* 2/225

The repeated lies, betrayal, and deception the Shi'ah have given to the Ahl al-Bayt throughout history brings to mind the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ narrated in *Sahih al-Bukhari*:

The signs of a hypocrite are three:

1. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.
2. Whenever he promises, he breaks his promise.
3. Whenever he is trusted, he betrays (that trust).<sup>1</sup>

After all it was the illustrious Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq who described the Shi'ah thus:

Allah did not reveal any sign about the Munafiqin except that it can be found in those who claim to be Shi'ah.<sup>2</sup>

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1 *Sahih al-Bukhari*: 6095

2 *Rijal al-Kashshi* pg. 154