

السلام عليك يا حسن المجتبي

IMAM AL-HASAN ^[A.S]

امام الحسن (ع)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- The complex atmosphere of the time of the Imam of Imam Ḥasan (as)
- The motivation behind the actions of Imam Ḥasan and Mu'āwiyah during their conflicts
- Why the peace treaty was the best solution to solve the conflicts
- Appreciate Imam Ḥasan's forbearance throughout the difficulties which he faced

Lesson 1: Imam Ḥasan: The Forbearing Imam

Imam Ḥasan (as), as we have learnt previously, was our second Imam after Imam 'Ali (as) After the death of Imam 'Ali (as), the Muslim world was in turmoil especially after the battles that Imam 'Ali (as) fought against Mu'āwiyah. In this lesson we will discuss the most controversial incident that occurred in his life, which is his peace treaty with Mu'āwiyah.

In order to understand the situation of the society that Imam Ḥasan (as) lived in, we need to take a step back and understand the character of Mu'āwiyah and his attitude towards Imam 'Ali (as) and Islam.

MU'ĀWIYAH VS IMAM 'ALI (AS):

How did Mu'āwiyahⁱ come into power?

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 5

The Caliphs before Imam 'Ali made Mu'āwiyah the governor of Syria

When 'Uthmān died and people pledged their allegiance to Imam 'Ali (as) in the year 34 A.H, Mu'āwiyah heard of this. He immediately began to conspire to overthrow Imam 'Ali's government meanwhile strengthening his forces in Syriaⁱⁱ.

- During the Caliphate of Imam 'Ali (as), Mu'āwiyah was constantly trying to expand the area under his control to include Iraq and the rest of the Muslim world. Imam 'Ali was fighting to stop this, and when he was martyred Imam Ḥasan (as) continued to do the same.
- In the year 40 A.H, Imam 'Ali (as) was murdered and so the people pledged allegiance to Imam Ḥasan (as) while in Kūfa (Iraq).

THE KŪFANS DURING THE TIME OF PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE

Before Imam 'Ali (as) passed away, he was in Kūfa, preparing an army to restart the battle against Mu'āwiyah. When the Imam was martyred, Imam Ḥasan became the leader of the Muslims and he tried to bring together an army to continue his father's struggle against Mu'āwiyah.

The people of Kufa eventually formed an army under the leadership of Imam Ḥasan. However, only few of them were sincere followers of the



Imam. The rest were fighting Mu'āwiyah with their own reasons and intentions. Some belonged to the group called Khawārij, who only agreed to join Imam Ḥasan if he fought against Mu'āwiyah. Others were professional warriors who would benefit from the war financially, and so on. Therefore, when things became difficult, most of these people dispersed from around Imam Ḥasan (as) and no longer supported him.

IMAM HASAN FACES MU'ĀWIYAH

When Mu'āwiyah learnt of the death of Imam 'Ali and the succession of Imam Ḥasan (as) as leader, he sent two spies to undermine affairs for Imam Ḥasan (as). When Imam Ḥasan (as) learnt of that, he ordered the spies to be caught and executed and they were.

Imam Ḥasan (as) wrote a powerful letter to Mu'āwiyah notifying him of his failed trick and exposing his (Mu'āwiyah) wicked plans for war. From this, correspondence began between the two regarding Imam Ḥasan's (as) right to authority. Mu'āwiyah began his silent war by sending men to spread rumours in Kūfa and cause corruption and bribe people with money and promises in order to follow Mu'āwiyah.

Imam Hasan wrote a letter to Mu'āwiyah advising him and threatening him with war if he continued to cause corruption.iii Mu'āwiyah responded by threatening him with assassination.

WAR BEGINS

In order to pressure Mu'āwiyah to stop causing havoc, Imam Ḥasan (as) sent two messengers to Mu'āwiyah, however Mu'āwiyah sent them back saying: *“Go back. There is nothing between me and you but the sword.”* Hence the attack with war initiated by Mu'āwiyah began.

In the year 41 A.H, Mu'āwiyah headed towards Iraq with his Syrian army^{iv}.

Imam Ḥasan (as) had to respond to this. It is important to note that if Imam Ḥasan (as) was the first to initiate war, certain groups of the Kūfans would have taken advantage of the opportunity to disobey the Imam and call him an aggressor.

Imam Hasan (as) sent Ḥijr ibn 'Adi to call the people together for war. The people were slow to answer him but finally came forward. The army consisted of a mixed band of people with different intentions including:

Kharijites, doubters, those who loved conflicts and were anxious for booty of war and tribal supporters who followed the leaders of their tribes without referring to Islam.

AN ATTEMPT AT ASSASSINATION

Mu'āwiyah's major strategy and tactic in war was not military, but psychological: based on cunning, bribery and deceit. He sent men to communicate with Imam Ḥasan's army and spread rumours about the Imam that he wanted to make peace with Mu'āwiyah and hand over the authority to him. This caused much disunity and disobedience in Imam Ḥasan's army and many members deserted him and accused him of disbelief. A group of the army rushed towards the Imam's tent and plundered everything including Imam Ḥasan's prayer mat from under the Imam and his cloak from his shoulder. His true Shī'ah surrounded him and defended him. During this attack of the disloyal members of his army, he was brutally stabbed in the thigh.

Meanwhile a group of tribal leaders wrote secretly to Mu'āwiyah offering to accept his authority. They urged him to come to them and promised to hand over Imam Ḥasan (as) when Mu'āwiyah got to their camp or to murder the Imam.

IMAM ḤASAN IS BETRAYED

Imam Ḥasan (as) had appointed 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Abbās' (his cousin) as a commander over the major part of his army. Mu'āwiyah wrote to 'Ubaydullāh urging him to go to him and offered him a million dirhams. 'Ubaydullāh accepted this and secretly left Imam Ḥasan's army at night with his close associates to Mu'āwiyah's camp. Eight thousand of the members of Imam Ḥasan's army also followed.

This caused a detrimental drop in the number of Imam Ḥasan's army^{vi} and hence it became clear that the Imam's army would not be able to resist against sixty thousand fighters from the enemies.

THE ONLY SOLUTION – A PEACE TREATY

The remaining members of Imam Ḥasan's army were still disunited and not firm in faith. Due to the disobedience of Imam Ḥasan's army, Imam Ḥasan (as) could not opt for the battle against Mu'āwiyah's army as it posed a great risk to the lives of his few true followers. If the true

Shī'ah were all killed in the battle, Islam would also die with them as it would be perverted at the hands of Mu'āwiyah.

Imam Ḥasan (as) was well aware of all the tricks and motives of Mu'āwiyah and hence resorted to a wise plan that would destroy his opponents by accepting to make peace. This would also prevent bloodshed and unite most Muslims.

Mu'āwiyah wrote to Imam Ḥasan (as) inviting him to peace to which the Imam accepted.

Mu'āwiyah sent a blank piece of paper to Imam Ḥasan (as) in order to write the conditions he wished. Hence Imam Ḥasan (as) posed five major conditions for the peace treaty:

The authority would be handed over to Mu'āwiyah provided that he should act according to the Book of Allah and the practice (Sunna) of the Prophet.

Authority should be for Imam Ḥasan (as) after him. If an accident happened to him, authority should be for his brother Imam al-Ḥusayn (as). Mu'āwiyah had no right to entrust anybody to it.

Mu'āwiyah should abandon cursing Imam 'Ali (as) and should not mention Imam 'Ali except in a good manner.

The money in the public treasury had to be dealt with in a certain way.

The people should be safe wherever they are in the earth of Allah. The family of the Prophet and companions of Imam 'Ali (as) should be given security over their lives, properties, women and children wherever they are. They should not be exposed to any evil and should be given their rights.

Mu'āwiyah accepted these conditions, signed and stamped the letter that the treaty was written on and made all leaders of the Syrians bear witness to it. Mu'āwiyah wrote: *"Concerning that, Mu'āwiyah ibn Abu Sufyān is obliged to fulfil the covenant of Allah and His promise..."* This treaty occurred in the middle of the month of Jamādi al-Ūlā in the year 41 A.H.

MU'ĀWIYAH'S VIOLATION OF THE TREATY

The two parties (Imam Ḥasan (as) and Mu'āwiyah) met in Kūfa to publicly declare the peace treaty. Large groups of

people went with them. Mu'āwiyah ascended the pulpit before Imam Ḥasan (as) arrived at the gathering in order to speak first. His following speech indicates his treachery, deceit, desire for power and carelessness in the matter of religion. *"Kufans! I have not fought against you to make you pray and fast and pay zakāt and perform the pilgrimage"^{vii}... I have fought against you to have power over you ... Indeed I have been requested by al-Ḥasan to give him things and I have given things to him. All of them are now under my feet. And from now on I will not fulfil anything!"* He also defamed Imam 'Ali and Imam Ḥasan (as) in his speech.

Then Imam Ḥasan (as) approached the gathering and addressed the people to explain the situation and rebuke Mu'āwiyah. He said:

"Indeed unity is better than division. I take care of you more than you take care of yourselves. Therefore ... do not oppose my judgement. Indeed Mu'āwiyah has told you that I see him appropriate for the succession to authority and I do not see myself appropriate for it. So Mu'āwiyah has told you lies..."

He then praised his father Imam 'Ali (as) and described his outstanding merits then honoured his (Imam Ḥasan)'s noble lineage and compared it to Mu'āwiyah's cursed lineage because they opposed the Prophet and Ahlul Bayt.

Imam Ḥasan (as) adhered to the peace treaty (although Mu'āwiyah did not) and gave the authority of affairs to Mu'āwiyah. Imam Ḥasan (as) did not give the right to succession in religion to Mu'āwiyah as some people have wrongly accused the Imam of. Rather, he was forced to stop fighting him and make a peace treaty to protect the Muslims.

Mu'āwiyah violated each one of the points in the treaty. He gave the authority to his son Yazīd instead of to Imam Ḥasan (as) or Imam Ḥusyan (as), he did not act according to the practice of the Qur'an and Sunna, he continued to curse Imam 'Ali and would punish those who did not curse the Imam. He killed many of the close followers and companions of Imam 'Ali and Imam Ḥasan in which the greatest sin is killing Imam Ḥasan himself. He also did not use the money of the treasury correctly.

WERE THERE ANY BENEFITS IN THE PEACE TREATY?

By fulfilling the peace treaty with Mu'āwiyah, Imam Ḥasan was able to:

- draw the people's hearts towards Ahlul Bayt (especially after the meeting in Kūfa)
- spare the Muslims' blood and united most of them
- save Islam from the destruction that would be caused by a protracted war
- expose Mu'āwiyah's wicked character to the people^{viii}

IMAM ḤASAN IS MURDERED

After the treaty, Imam Ḥasan (as) left Kūfa to Medīna and resided there, restraining his anger. Mu'āwiyah had authority as 'caliph' for 10 years then decided to hand over the authority to his son Yazīd. This could not happen while Imam Ḥasan was still alive, so he secretly communicated with Imam Hasan's wife Ju'dah and bribed her to poison the Imam, which she did. Imam Ḥasan was murdered in the month of Ṣafar, in the year 50 A.H.

IMAM ḤASAN'S FORBEARING CHARACTER!

ⁱ Mu'awiyah is the son of Abu Sufyan and Hind (the lady who ate the liver of Hamzah (ra)). His lineage goes back to Umayyah and Abd al-Shams who was the brother of Hashim (the Prophet's ancestor). The children of Abd al-Shams have always fought against the children of Hashim and always despised them. Mu'awiyah's hatred for Islam was shown on a number of occasions. His main goal was to ruin Islam and hence his enmity and wars against Ahlul Bayt. He once said to his companion al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba when asked by the latter to make to show justice and spread good and take care of his cousins banu Hashim: "The brother of Taym (Abu Bakr) ruled, showed justice and did what he had done. However when he perished his reputation perished, except his name. Then the brother of 'Adi ('Umar) ruled and did his best for ten years. By Allah when he perished his fame perished except his name, then our brother 'Uthman ruled, while no one was like him in lineage. He did what he had done but he was killed. By Allah when he perished his reputation perished, and what had been done towards him has been mentioned. However the brother of Hashim (ie the Prophet) is mentioned five times a day: I testify that Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah. May your mother lose you, every practice remains after this will bury us thoroughly."

ⁱⁱ Mu'awiyah brainwashed the people of Syria making them believe that he was the right Caliph. He kept them away from the news of what was happening in other Muslim countries and hence without the influence or knowledge of anything else, Mu'awiyah was their only source and he was able to manipulate their minds to believe all he said. The Syrians followed him blindly.

ⁱⁱⁱ A part of Imam's letter to him: "... avoid going too far in falsehood and pledge allegiance to me as the people have done. You know that I am worthier of this authority than you with Allah... Fear Allah, abandon oppression and spare the blood of the Muslims. Enter peace and obedience. Do not dispute with the people of authority over their authority, and with those who are worthier of it than you... If you insist on your error, I will advance against you with the Muslims and punish you till Allah judges between you and me..."

As a note, if students argue that they (both Imam Hasan and Mu'awiyah) could have both been leaders of different areas, it is impossible as both had opposing doctrines and ambitions. Furthermore, the people are bound to follow the leader they have so if he is corrupt, away from Islam and after

The ordeals Imam Ḥasan (as) had to deal with throughout his life, especially the period of his Imamah, prove the great personality of the Imam. He endured the corrupt minds of his army disobeying him, falsely accusing him, stabbing him and attempting to kill him and deserting him. In addition he dealt with the various parties of the Muslims and Kufans in a dignified manner without retaliation. Furthermore, dealing with Mu'āwiyah's complex cunning personality and his lies and deceit cannot occur without patiently persevering. In all his actions and all incidents that occurred, Imam Ḥasan (as) the Imam maintained his forbearance and continued to put the ^{ix}interests of Islam and Muslims first.

Homework

1. In a few paragraphs, explain why the peace treaty between Imam Ḥasan (as) and Mu'āwiyah had to occur.
2. Use different incidents mentioned in the lesson and relate them to Imam Ḥasan's forbearance. Also think of the consequences that may have resulted if Imam Ḥasan (as) acted otherwise.

worldly gains (ie Mu'awiyah) then the people will also be thus, and if they are for Islam and the sake of Allah (swt) (ie Imam Hasan (as)) then the people will follow.

^{iv} Mu'awiyah's followers did not pledge allegiance to Imam al-Hasan because Mu'awiyah educated and brought them up according to his ideas.

^v He was a religious man and fought alongside Imam Ali (as) in his battles such as Siffeen. He was eager to fight Mu'awiyah as Mu'awiyah was the cause of his two sons being killed. However 'UbaydAllah new the weakness of the division of the army that he commanded and became very pessimistic. Hence due to Mu'awiyah's deceit and bribery, 'UbaydAllah slipped from the straight path and chose this worldly life over the next by accepting the bribe and deserting Imam Hasan (as).

^{vi} In Sulhul Hasan's army was initially 12000 men strong under the command of 'UbaydAllah in a place called Maskan. There was another 8000 men in the second division of the army that resided a distance away in al-Mada-in. However after the desertion they became 4000 only in Maskan and hence altogether unable to resist Mu'awiyah's army of sixty thousand.

^{vii} i.e. he had no Islamic aspirations. He only wanted power.

^{viii} After Mu'awiyah violated the peace treaty by announcing it publicly, his actions also followed. He mistreated the people and brutally killed a large number of people especially those who followed Ahlul Bayt. His true nature was gradually exposed to the people and the people grew enmity towards him.

^{ix} References

Sulh al-Hasan (The peace treaty of al-Hasan), by Shaykh Rādi Āl-Yasīn

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