



ḤOSAYN B. 'ALI I. LIFE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN SHI'ISM

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i. LIFE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN SHI'ISM

According to most reports, Ḥosayn b. 'Ali was born on 5 Ša'bān 4/10 January 626; another report mentions the middle of Jomādā I 6/beginning of October 627 as his date of birth. Jointly with his brother, he was at first brought up in the household of Moḥammad. Many of the accounts about Moḥammad's treatment of his grandsons and his great love for them deal with them together and at times confuse them (for these reports see ḤASAN B. 'ALI). As the elder grandson, Ḥasan seems to have attracted more attention, and he later remembered more of his grandfather. Ḥosayn is described as looking like Moḥammad, but less so than Ḥasan did.

Whereas Ḥasan primarily sought to take up the heritage of his grandfather and was critical of some of his father's policies, Ḥosayn patterned himself after 'Ali. While Ḥasan named two of his sons Moḥammad and none 'Ali, Ḥo-sayn named two of his four sons 'Ali and none Moḥammad. In contrast to the pacifist and conciliatory character of his elder brother, Ḥosayn inherited his father's fighting spirit and intense family pride, although he did not acquire his military prowess and experience. While training his elder son Ḥasan to become his successor as head of the Prophet's family, 'Ali's attitude toward



Ḥosayn seems to have been more protective and lenient. At the time of the siege of the caliph 'Oṭmān's residence in Medina by rebels from Egypt, Ḥasan joined the sons of other prominent Companions to defend the caliph. When 'Oṭmān asked 'Ali to join, the latter sent Ḥosayn. When 'Oṭmān asked Ḥosayn if he thought he would be able to defend himself against the rebels, Ḥosayn demurred, and 'Oṭmān sent him away. 'Oṭmān's cousin Marwān b. Ḥakam is reported to have told him: "Leave us, your father incites the people against us, and you are here with us!" (Balāḍori, V, pp. 78, 94). During 'Ali's caliphate, the brothers Ḥasan, Ḥosayn, Moḥammad b. Ḥanafiya, and their cousin 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far appear as his closest assistants within his household. Ḥosayn was included in the public curses of 'Ali and his major supporters that had been ordered by Mo'āwia (Ṭabari, I, p. 3360).

Ḥosayn was initially opposed to the surrender of Ḥasan to Mo'āwia in 41/661 and to the peace treaty recognizing Mo'āwia's caliphate but, pressed by his brother, accepted it. When several Kufan Shi'ite leaders proposed to undertake a surprise attack on Mo'āwia in his camp outside Kufa, he objected and insisted that he must observe the treaty as long as Mo'āwia was alive, but he would reconsider his position after Mo'āwia's death. He then left Kufa for Medina jointly with Ḥasan and 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far.

It was probably at this time that he married Laylā, daughter of Abu Morra b. 'Orwa b. Mas'ud Ṭaqafi, who bore him his son 'Ali (commonly known as 'Ali Akbar). Laylā's mother Maymuna bt. Abu Sofyān was a paternal sister of Mo'āwia, and her father belonged to the aristocracy of Ṭaqif, who were closely allied to the house of Omayya. These marriage ties may have benefited Ḥosayn materially. According to one report (Ebn Sa'd, p. 32), Mo'āwia used to give him 300,000 dirhams when he met him. The marriage probably did not last long, however, and could not permanently improve his relations with Mo'āwia because of the continued public denigration of 'Ali and persecution of his followers. In Medina, Marwān b. Ḥakam in particular was determined to forestall any reconciliation between the Banu Omayya and Banu Hā-šem. When Ḥasan proposed to marry 'Oṭmān's daughter 'Ā'eša, who had previously been married to Marwān's brother Ḥāreṭ, Marwān intervened to marry her to 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayr. This slight to the Prophet's family appears to have enraged Ḥosayn more than Ḥasan. When Mo'āwia later, after Ḥasan's death, instructed Marwān to arrange the marriage of Omm Kolṭum, daughter of his cousin 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far b. Abi Ṭaleb, to the caliph's son Yazid, Ḥosayn expressly retaliated by marrying her to Qāsem b. Moḥammad b. Abi Bakr (Ebn



Sa'd, pp. 40-41). Ḥosayn, in contrast to Ḥasan, responded sharply to the regular cursing of 'Ali by Marwān during his first governorship of Medina (41-48 /661-68) by cursing Marwān and his father Ḥakam, who had been banished by Moḥammad (Ebn Sa'd, pp. 33-36, 38).

The death of Ḥasan in 50/670, apparently by poisoning, strained the relationship with Mo'āwia further. Ḥasan refused to name his suspect, probably Mo'āwia, to his brother since he did not wish to obligate him to retaliate. He asked to be buried with his grandfather Moḥammad. If this demand were to provoke a danger of blood-shed, however, he wished to be buried next to his mother Fāṭema. When Marwān b. Ḥakam opposed Ḥasan's burial near Moḥammad on the grounds that 'Oṭmān had not been buried there, Ḥosayn appealed to the *ḥelf al-fozul*, a solidarity pact of several clans of Qorayš, to back the right of the Prophet's family against the Banu Omayya. His brother Moḥammad b. Ḥanafiya and others, however, prevailed upon him to heed Ḥasan's wish to avoid bloodshed and to bury him next to his mother. At the same time the Kufan Shi'ites shifted their allegiance to him. Their leaders met with the sons of Ja'da b. Hobayra b. Abi'l-Wahb Maḳzumi, grandsons of 'Ali's sister Omm Hāne', in the house of Solaymān b. Ṣorad Koza'i and wrote Ḥosayn a letter of condolence on the death of his brother in which they assured him of their loyalty. The Banu Ja'da informed him of the high esteem of the Kufans for him, their longing that he would join them, their loathing of Mo'āwia, and their dissociation from him. Ḥosayn wrote them that he was still bound to keep the peace concluded by Ḥasan as long as Mo'āwia was alive and asked them to conceal their feelings. If he were still alive at Mo'āwia's death he would inform them of his views.

His supporters from Iraq, however, kept visiting him in Medina in large numbers, and 'Amr, the son of the caliph 'Oṭmān, warned the governor Marwān. The latter informed Mo'āwia, who instructed him to leave Ḥosayn alone as long as he would not display any hostility to him but also to withhold any sign of friendship from him. Marwān wrote Ḥosayn a menacing letter, warning him against sowing renewed discord in the community. Ḥosayn answered him scornfully, enumerating Mo'āwia's offences, such as his recognition of Ziād as his brother in violation of Islamic law and his execution of Ḥojr b. 'Adi, and rejected his threats. Mo'āwia complained to his entourage about Ḥosayn, but refrained from further threats and continued to send his regular subsidy and gifts (Balāḍori, II, pp. 458-60). Jointly with the sons of several other prominent Companions of Moḥammad, Ḥosayn resisted



Mo'āwia's demands that they pledge allegiance to his son Yazid, whom he had appointed as his successor in breach of both his treaty with Ḥasan and 'Omar's principle of election by the consultation (*šurā*).

After Mo'āwia's death on 15 Rajab 60/22 April 680, Yazid immediately instructed the governor of Medina, 'Otba b. Abi Sofyān, to compel Ḥosayn, 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Omar, and 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayr to pledge their allegiance. 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayr and Ḥosayn left separately for Mecca to seek asylum. The account of Wāqedi (apud Ṭabari, II, pp. 222-23; tr., XIX, pp. 9-10; Ebn Sa'd, p. 56) that the two left together is unreliable. Ḥosayn was accompanied by his household, his sons, brothers, and the sons of Ḥasan. Moḥammad b. Ḥanafiya did not join him and urged him not to move to Iraq before receiving the oath of allegiance there. Ḥosayn should rather stay in Mecca or hide in the desert and mountains until the sentiments of the people became clear. Ḥosayn traveled the main road to Mecca, refusing to avoid being pursued by taking a side road. 'Otba b. Abi Sofyān, in spite of Mar-wān's prodding, did not wish to use violence against the grandson of the Prophet, and Yazid replaced him for his inaction. In Mecca Ḥosayn stayed in the house of 'Abbās b. 'Abd-al-Moṭṭaleb (Ebn Sa'd, p. 56) and remained there for four months.

In Kufa the leaders of the Shi'a, on learning of Mo'āwia's death, assembled again in the house of Solaymān b. Ṣorad. They wrote to Ḥosayn praising God for having destroyed the obstinate tyrant Mo'āwia, who had seized the rule of the Muslim community without its consent, appropriated its *fay'* (immovable properties acquired by conquest) and made it pass into the hands of the wealthy and powerful, who had killed their best men and retained the most evil among them. They urged Ḥosayn to join them, since they had no imam. They informed him that they did not attend the Friday prayer with Mo'āwia's governor No'mān b. Bašir Anṣāri and would drive him out of the town as soon as Ḥosayn agreed to come to them. They sent him in short order seven messages with bags of letters of support by Kufan warriors and tribal leaders. The first two of them arrived in Mecca on 10 Ramażān 60/13 June 680. Ḥosayn wrote the Kufans that he understood from their letters that they had no imam and they wished him to come to unite them by right guidance. He informed them that he was sending his cousin Moslem b. 'Aqil b. Abi Ṭāleb to report to him on the situation. If he found them united as their letters indicated he would speedily join them, for it was the duty of the imam to act in accordance with the Qur'an, to uphold justice, to proclaim the truth, and to dedicate himself to the cause of God.



Ḥosayn was also visited by a Shi'ite supporter with two of his sons from Baṣra, where Shi'ite sentiment was otherwise limited. He then sent identical letters to the chiefs of the five divisions into which the Basran tribes were divided for administrative purposes. He wrote them that God had preferred the Prophet Moḥammad above all His creatures and that his family were his legatees (*awṣiā'*) and heirs of his position. Their people (Qorayš) had illegitimately claimed the right which belonged exclusively to the Prophet's family. The family had consented to their action for the sake of the unity of the community. Those who had seized the right of the Prophet's family had set many things straight and had sought the truth. He, Ḥosayn, prayed to God for mercy on them and on the Prophet's family. He was now summoning them to the Book of God and the tradition (*sonna*) of His Prophet. The tradition had indeed been destroyed while innovation had been spread. Ḥosayn promised to guide them on the path of righteousness if they would obey and follow him. The contents of the letter closely reflected the guideline set by 'Ali, who had strongly upheld the sole right of the family of the Prophet to leadership of the Muslim community but had also praised the conduct of the first caliphs Abu Bakr and 'Omar. While most of the recipients of the letter kept it secret, one of them suspected that it was a ploy of the governor 'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād to test their loyalty and turned it over to him. 'Obayd-Allāh seized and beheaded Ḥosayn's messenger and addressed a stern warning to the people of Baṣra (Ṭabari, II, pp. 235-36, 240-41).

The mission of Moslem b. 'Aqil was initially successful. The Kufan Shi'ites visited him freely, and 18,000 men are said to have enlisted with him in support of Ḥo-sayn. He wrote to Ḥosayn, encouraging him to come swiftly to Kufa. The situation changed radically when Yazid replaced No'mān b. Baṣir by 'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād, ordering the latter to deal severely with Moslem b. 'Aqil. 'Obayd-Allāh succeeded in intimidating the tribal chiefs. A revolt collapsed when the rebels failed to capture the governor's palace. Moslem b. 'Aqil was found and delivered to 'Obayd-Allāh, who had him beheaded on the top of the palace and his body thrown down to the crowd. Hāne' b. 'Orwa, chief of the tribe of Morād, was also crucified for having sheltered him. Yazid wrote to 'Obayd-Allāh, commending him highly for his decisive action and ordering him to set up watches for Ḥosayn and his supporters and to arrest them but to kill only those who would fight him.

Before news of the adverse turn of events arrived in Mecca, Ḥosayn set out for Kufa on 8 or 10 Du'l-Ḥejja 60/10 or 12 September 680, breaking off his *ḥajj* for



the *'omra* (the lesser pilgrimage). He was accompanied by some fifty members of his family, close kin, and a few supporters. He had been advised by 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Omar and other prominent men of Qorayš against his move. According to most accounts, 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayr, seeing him as a rival in his own bid for popular support, urged him to join his partisans in Kufa (see esp. Ebn Sa'd, p. 56), but this is contradicted by other reports, according to which he offered to support him if he would rise in Mecca (Balāḍori, II, p. 467). His uncle 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Abbās in particular warned him not to trust the Kufans, who had betrayed his father and his brother and pleaded with him not to take his women and children along if he insisted on accepting their invitation. Ḥosayn regularly thanked his advisers for their concern but replied that he must leave the outcome to the decision of God. After Ḥosayn's departure, his cousin 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far sent him a letter with his sons 'Awn and Moḥammad, in which he implored him once more not to proceed. He further induced the governor of Mecca, 'Amr b. Sa'id Ašdaq, to write a guarantee of safety and protection for him if he would return to Mecca. The governor sent his brother Yaḥyā b. Sa'id with a group of men and 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far to persuade Ḥosayn, but he told them that he had seen a vision of the Prophet, who had ordered him to proceed, whatever the outcome. As he continued on his way, there was a minor scuffle between his supporters and the messengers of the governor, who then returned to Mecca. The two sons of 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far accompanied Ḥo-sayn and were killed with him.

At Tan'im Ḥosayn seized a caravan carrying clothes and dye plants sent by the governor of Yemen to the caliph, Yazid. He gave the camel owners the choice between accompanying him to Iraq and being paid in full there or being paid immediately for the distance they had already traveled.

'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād sent his police chief Ḥoṣayn b. Tamim to Qādesiya with the order to block the roads from Ḥejāz to Iraq. Ḥosayn learned of this from some bedouins he met, who stated that they were cut off from Kufa, but he continued on his way. In Ṭalabiya he first received news of the abortive Kufan rising and the execution of Moslem b. 'Aqil and Hāne' b. 'Orwa. The reliability of reports that he considered turning back at this stage and changed his mind only because of the resolve of Moslem's brothers to seek revenge or death is to be doubted. In Zobāla he was informed that a messenger he had sent to Kufa to announce his imminent arrival had been intercepted and killed by 'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād by having him thrown from the roof of his palace. In a written statement he broke the news to his supporters, acknowledging that the Kufan



Shi'ites had deserted him, and encouraged anyone who so wished, to leave freely without guilt. Most of those who had joined him at various stages on the way from Mecca now left him.

Soon after leaving Šarāf his supporters sighted a troop of 1,000 Kufan mounted men under the command of Ḥorr b. Yazid Riāḥi Tamimi. He turned off the road towards the left and alighted at Du Ḥosom near Karbalā', where he was joined by the Kufan troop. Ḥosayn ordered the call to prayer to be made and addressed the Kufans, reminding them that they had invited him to come because they were without an imam. He told them that he intended to proceed to Kufa with their support, but if they were now opposed to his coming, he would return to where he had come from. The Kufans did not respond, but performed the midday prayer under his leadership. After the afternoon prayer he addressed them again. He stressed the prior right of the Prophet's family to govern them and mentioned the letters he had received from them. When Ḥorr claimed that they knew nothing of these letters, he had the saddlebags with them brought forward and scattered the letters before them. Ḥorr averred that they were not of those who had written them and that they were under order to bring him to 'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād. When Ḥosayn set out to move, Ḥorr blocked his way. After a heated exchange, Ḥorr explained that he had not been ordered to fight Ḥosayn but to bring him to Kufa. If Ḥosayn would not follow him, Ḥorr would not allow him to take the route to either Kufa or Medina. He would write to 'Obayd-Allāh for further instructions, and, also suggested that Ḥosayn should write to Yazid or 'Obayd-Allāh. Ḥosayn did not accept the advice and turned left in the direction of 'Odayb and Qādesiya. Ḥorr kept following him and warned him against a fight in which he would inevitably perish, but he was unable to prevent four Kufan Shi'ites from joining him. When they reached the district of Ninawā, a village near Karbalā', a messenger arrived from Kufa with instructions for Ḥorr to force Ḥosayn to camp in the open desert in a place without fortification and water. 'Obayd-Allāh's aim evidently was to force Ḥosayn to start fighting. As Ḥorr prevented him from alighting either in Ninawā or Gāzeriya (a village to the northeast of Karbalā'), on 2 Moḥarram 61/2 October 680, he set his camp in the desert land of Karbalā' at a location that was without water.

The following day a Kufan army of 4,000 men arrived under the command of 'Omar b. Sa'd b. Abi Waqqāṣ. 'Omar b. Sa'd had been appointed by 'Obayd-Allāh governor of Rayy and been sent off to fight the Deylamites, but was recalled to lead the army against Ḥosayn. As the son of one of the most eminent early



Companions of Mo-ḥammad, he was loath to use force against the Prophet's grandson and asked to be excused from the mission. 'Obayd-Allāh demanded that he return the letter of appointment for the governorship of Rayy if he refused to lead the campaign against Ḥosayn. After some delay, 'Omar accepted the command, evidently still hoping that he could avoid a battle. He first sent a messenger to Ḥo-sayn to inquire about the purpose of his coming to Iraq. Ḥosayn answered again that he had responded to the invitation of the people of Kufa but was ready to leave if they now disliked his presence. When 'Omar b. Sa'd reported back to 'Obayd-Allāh, the governor instructed him to offer Ḥosayn and his supporters the opportunity to swear allegiance to Yazid. If they were to do so, he would judge the matter further. Shortly afterwards, he ordered 'Omar b. Sa'd to cut off Ḥosayn and his followers from access to the water of the Euphrates. 'Omar stationed 500 men along the river, but was unable to prevent Ḥo-sayn's brother 'Abbās with fifty men from filling their water-skins in a night sortie.

While the formal standoff continued, Ḥosayn sent a messenger to 'Omar b. Sa'd, suggesting that they meet privately at night between the camps. They met and are said to have talked for much of the night. No one was present to hear their conversation, but there were rumors that Ḥosayn proposed that they both leave their armies and together go to see Yazid. 'Omar b. Sa'd, however, refused to do so, afraid of being punished by 'Obayd-Allāh. The majority of the transmitters, rather, maintained that Ḥosayn offered 'Omar three choices: Either he would return to where he had come from, or he would go to Syria to submit to Yazid personally, or he could be sent to one of the border stations to fight the infidels. 'Omar is reported to have transmitted these proposals to 'Obayd-Allāh. This offer ascribed to Ḥosayn was, however, emphatically denied by 'Oqba b. Sem'an, a client of Ḥosayn's wife Rabāb, who survived the battle of Karbalā'. He testified that Ḥosayn never offered anything but to depart and travel the land until the affairs of the people would clarify (Ṭabari, II, p. 314; tr., pp. 108-9). An offer by Ḥosayn to submit to Yazid at this stage must appear unlikely in view of his religious convictions, and the reports are in line with the tendency of the early tradition to accent the primary guilt of 'Obayd-Allāh in Ḥosayn's death.

Whatever proposals 'Omar b. Sa'd submitted to 'Obayd-Allāh, they were evidently designed to avoid fighting or the surrender of Ḥosayn to the governor in Kufa. 'Obayd-Allāh is reported to have at first been ready to accept them. Šamer b. Dī'l-Jawšan advised him, however, not to allow Ḥosayn to



escape from his territory without having submitted to his authority, since this would be a sign of weakness on his part and an acknowledgment of the power of Ḥosayn's position; but if Ḥosayn and his followers submitted, the governor could either punish or forgive them. 'Obayd-Allāh now changed his mind and wrote to 'Omar b. Sa'd that he had not sent him to hold him off from fighting Ḥosayn and to intercede on his behalf. If Ḥosayn and his supporters submitted to his authority, 'Omar could send them to Kufa in peace. Otherwise, he should fight, kill, and disfigure them, as they deserved that. If Ḥosayn was killed, he should make the horses trample on his chest and back since he was a disobedient rebel, an evil wrongdoer who split the community, since he, 'Obayd-Allāh, had made a vow to do that to Ḥosayn in case he was killed. If 'Omar refused to comply with these instructions, he should surrender the command to Šamer b. Dī'l-Jawšan, with whom 'Obayd-Allāh sent the letter. On reading it, 'Omar b. Sa'd cursed Šamer but agreed to carry out the orders himself.

'Omar b. Sa'd now prepared for immediate battle in the evening of 9 Moḥarram/9 October. Ḥosayn was sitting in front of his tent when his brother 'Abbās informed him that the enemy was advancing towards them. He asked 'Abbās to inquire about the cause of the change of their attitude. They told him that an order of the governor had arrived to attack unless Ḥosayn and his followers submitted to his authority. Ḥosayn asked for a delay until next morning so they would have time to decide on the option. The account stresses that he did so only in order to arrange his affairs and give counsel to his family. 'Omar b. Sa'd was consulted and, on the advice of some of the army leaders, agreed to the postponement. Ḥosayn once more encouraged all his supporters to leave and scatter in the desert under cover of the night, releasing them from their oath of allegiance. They might also take the members of his family along. He suggested that the enemy was looking only for him and would not search for them once they found him. Nearly all his followers, however, decided to stay and fight and to protect him. They spent the night in prayer and preparation for the battle. On the next morning, as 'Omar b. Sa'd arranged the Kufan army in battle order, Ḥorr b. Yazid challenged him and went over to Ḥosayn. He vainly addressed the Kufans, rebuking them for their treachery to the grandson of the Prophet, and was killed in the battle.

The battle of Karbalā' lasted from morning till sunset on 10 Moḥarram 61/10 October 680. 'Omar b. Sa'd, evidently hoping to isolate Ḥosayn and force him to



surrender, did not order a general attack that would inevitably have resulted in a quick massacre. The reports rather describe numerous incidents of single combat, skirmishes, assaults, and retreat. Ḥosayn ordered heaps of wood and reeds to be burnt in a ditch behind the tents to prevent an attack from the rear. From the front he was protected by his men, and he was not involved in actual fighting until close to the end. As the Kufans also suffered losses because of the self-sacrificing bravery of Ḥosayn's followers, the fighting gradually became more brutal. In one attack the enemy set the tents on fire, but the flames at first hindered their own advance. Šamer (Šemr) b. Dī'l-Jawšan is mostly described as the moving spirit, viciously driving on the assault. Ḥosayn was first wounded by an arrow hitting his mouth or throat as he was trying to reach the Euphrates to drink. After receiving further wounds, he eventually was stabbed with a spear by Senān b. Anas Naḳa'ī. As he fell, Senān and Kawali b. Yazid Ašbaḥī joined to cut his head off. In accordance with 'Obayd-Allāh b. Zīād's instructions, 'Omar ordered his body to be trampled by horses. Later he was buried by the Banu Asad of the nearby village of Ġāzeriya in the spot where the sanctuary of Ḥosayn arose. His head was carried to 'Obayd-Allāh b. Zīād in Kufa and then to Yazid in Damascus. Later there were claims in regard to several locations to be its burial place.

The dead on the side of Ḥosayn are said to have numbered seventy or seventy-two. At least twenty descendants of Abu Ṭāleb were among them. The first one of these to be killed was Ḥosayn's own son 'Alī Akbar. As a nephew of the caliph Yazid he was offered a safe-conduct, but he refused it, proudly proclaiming that he valued his descent from the Prophet more highly (Ebn Sa'd, p. 73; Zobayri, p. 58). Ḥosayn's son 'Abd-Allāh was still a child and is described as having been killed by an arrow while placed on his father's knees. He can, however, hardly have been a baby as claimed in some accounts. Six of Ḥosayn's paternal brothers, sons of 'Alī, fell. Four of them were sons of Omm Banin bt. Ḥezām of the Banu Kelāb. Her brother's son, 'Abd-Allāh b. Abi Moḥell b. Ḥezām, obtained a letter of safety for them from 'Obayd-Allāh b. Zīād, but they rejected it. Three sons of Ḥasan and three sons of 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far were killed, as well as three sons and three grandsons of 'Aqil b. Abi Ṭāleb. Ebn Sa'd (p. 77) lists among the dead two other Hashemites, a descendent of Abu Lahab, and a descendent of Abu Sofyān b. Ḥāreṭ b. 'Abd-al-Moṭṭaleb. Among the survivors of the Prophet's family, being led off as captives, he mentions two sons of Ḥasan, a son of 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far, a son of 'Aqil, and five women. According to Abu'l-Faraj Eṣfahānī (*Maqātel*, p. 119), three sons of Ḥasan survived, among them Ḥasan b. Ḥasan, who was severely



wounded. Ḥosayn's other son named 'Ali survived because he was sick and unable to fight on the battle day. He was brought as a captive before 'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād and then before Yazid in Damascus. The latter treated him well and sent him with the women to Medina. He thus became recognized as the fourth Imam of the Shi'ites.

The impact of the tragedy of Karbalā' on the religious conscience of Muslims has ever been deep and goes beyond its consecration of the passion and penitence motives in Shi'ism. The motivation of the major actors in it have often been debated. It is evident that Ḥosayn cannot be viewed as simply a reckless rebel risking his and his family's lives for his personal ambition. He refused to break his oath of allegiance to Mo'āwia despite his severe reproof of his conduct. He did not pledge allegiance to Yazid, who had been appointed successor by Mo'āwia in violation of his treaty with Ḥasan, and most likely never agreed to do so. Yet he also did not actively seek martyrdom. He offered to leave Iraq as soon as it became clear that he no longer had any support in Kufa. It was 'Obayd-Allāh who vainly sought to provoke him to start the fighting. His initial determination to follow the invitation of the Kufan Shi'ites in spite of the numerous warnings he received and his visions of the Prophet reflect a religious conviction of a mission that left him no choice, whatever the outcome. Like his father he was firmly convinced that the family of the Prophet was divinely chosen to lead the community founded by Moḥammad, as the latter had been chosen, and had both an inalienable right and an obligation to seek this leadership.

The accounts of the early sources tend to put the responsibility for the death of Ḥosayn mostly on 'Obayd-Allāh b. Ziād and to exonerate the caliph Yazid, who is described as cursing his governor and stating that if he had been present he would have spared Ḥosayn. 'Obayd-Allāh certainly was eager to humiliate and kill Ḥosayn, as is evident from his vow to have his body trampled by horses. His hatred ultimately sprang from the denunciation of Mo'āwia's recognition of Ziād as his brother by the grandsons of the Prophet in the name of Islam. The prime responsibility for the death of Ḥosayn, however, lay with Yazid, who knew that the grandson of the Prophet would constitute a menace to his reign as long as he was alive, even if temporarily forced to submission. Yazid wanted him dead but, as a caliph of Islam, could not afford to be seen as having ordered his death. He was aware of 'Obayd-Allāh's hatred of Ḥosayn when he appointed him governor of Kufa and hinted in a letter to him that Ḥosayn would reduce him to slave status again (Balāḍori, II, p. 464). He



commended 'Obayd-Allāh highly for the execution of Moslem b. 'Aqil, and the governor could not be in any doubt as to what was expected of him. When the caliph sought in public, however, to place the onus for the slaughter of the Prophet's grandson on him, 'Obayd-Allāh reacted with resentment and declined Yazid's wish that he next lead the assault on 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayr in the Ka'ba (Ṭabari, II, p. 408, tr. p. 204).

The family of Ḥosayn. Ḥosayn's first marriage was with Rabāb, daughter of Emra'-al-Qays b. 'Adi, a chief of the Banu Kalb. Her father came to Medina early during the caliphate of 'Omar and was appointed by him amir over all tribesmen of Qoḏā'a who would convert to Islam. 'Ali proposed to him to establish marriage ties, and he agreed to give three of his daughter to 'Ali, Ḥasan, and Ḥosayn in marriage. Ḥasan and Ḥosayn, and no doubt the daughters of Emra'-al-Qays, were too young for the wedding to take place immediately, and Ḥasan may never actually have married the girl chosen for him. Ḥosayn later married Rabāb, and in the later years of 'Ali's caliphate, Emra'-al-Qays and his kin were referred to as his in-laws (*aṣḥār*; Ṭaqafi, p. 426). Rabāb remained Ḥosayn's favorite wife, even though she was childless for many years. Probably after 'Ali's death, she bore him a daughter Āmena (Amina, Omayma), commonly known as Sokayna. According to Sokayna, Ḥasan reproached Ḥosayn for his excessive favors to Rabāb, but in response Ḥosayn declared his great love for her and Sokayna in three lines of poetry (Abu'l-Faraj Eṣfahāni, *Aḡāni* XIV pp. 163-64). Later Rabāb bore him his son 'Abd-Allāh, who was still a child when he was killed at Karbalā'. He presumably had saved his own patronymic (*konya*), Abu 'Abd-Allāh, for a son by her. In some late Shi'ite sources 'Abd-Allāh is called 'Ali Aṣḡar (q.v.), but this is without historical foundation. After Ḥosayn's death, Rabāb is said to have spent a year in grief at his grave and to have refused to remarry. No details are known about Ḥosayn's marriage to Solāfa, a woman of the tribe Bali of Qoḏā'a. She bore him a son named Ja'far, who died during Ḥo-sayn's lifetime.

Of Ḥosayn's two sons named 'Ali, the one who survived him, known as Zayn al-'Ābedin, the fourth Imam of the Shi'ites, was the elder and probably his first-born son. He was twenty-three at the time of the battle of Karbalā' and thus was born during the caliphate of 'Ali. His mother was a slave woman, probably from Sind (see 'ALĪ B. AL-ḤOSAYN). She was later married to a client of Ḥosayn and had a son with him, 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayd, who was thus a maternal brother of 'Ali Zayn-al-'Ābedin. The descendants of 'Abd-Allāh b. Zobayd later lived in Yanbo' (Ebn Sa'd, p. 17). Whereas Zayn-al-'Ābedin is



called 'Ali al-Aṣḡar in the early Sunnite sources, Moḥammad Mofid (pp. 236-37) and other Shi'ite authors are probably correct in calling him 'Ali Akbar. The second 'Ali, called 'Ali Akbar in the Sunnite sources but 'Ali Aṣḡar by Shaikh Mofid, was nineteen when he was killed at Karbalā'. His mother was Laylā, daughter of Morra b. 'Orwa Ṭaqafi and Maymuna bt. Abi Sofyān, sister of the caliph Mo'āwia. The marriage must have taken place soon after Ḥasan's surrender to Mo'āwia, as it would not have been possible during the lifetime of 'Ali. Ḥosayn evidently named his son by Laylā also 'Ali since he, because of his aristocratic Arab mother, had precedence over his elder son by a non-Arab slave woman to become his primary heir. Mo'āwia is even quoted as observing that 'Ali b. Ḥosayn was the one most suited for the caliphate, since he combined the bravery of the Banu Hāšem, the munificence of the Banu Omayya, and the pride of Ṭaqif (Abu'l-Faraj Eṣfahāni, *Maqātel*, p. 80).

After the death of Ḥasan, Ḥosayn married Omm Eshāq, daughter of the prominent Companion Ṭalḥa. She bore Ḥosayn's daughter Fāṭema. Contrary to some reports, Fāṭema must have been younger than Sokayna. At the time of her father's death, she was probably engaged, but not yet married, to Ḥasan b. Ḥasan, the primary heir of Ḥasan b. 'Ali.

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