

In the Court of the Oppressive Umayyad caliph

Hisham ibn `Abd ul-Malik was an oppressive Umayyad caliph. He considered himself the successor of the Prophet, but he was unjust to the people and oppressed them, and spent the public purse and wealth of the nation on his own desires and on strengthening his power. Many, many Muslims lived in poverty during his reign while he built for himself palaces and mansions. In addition, so that the people would not rise up against him, he kept them uninformed and ignorant.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A.S.) lived at this time in Madinah. There he used to broaden the awareness of the people and teach them the true concepts of religion. He used to speak badly of injustice and oppression and encourage the people in their natural desire for justice. He used to teach the people the value of rising up against oppressors to acquire one's rights and to establish the true Islam in society, and to give the oppressors their just what they deserve. News of Imam Baqir's teachings reached Hisham, and he saw his government to be in danger. He was angry and ordered that Imam Baqir (A.S.) be brought from Medina to his capital at Damascus.

The government ministers and leading men of Damascus were present when Imam Baqir (A.S.) was brought in. Imam Baqir entered and sat down without paying any attention to Hisham. Hisham became even angrier at this behavior of the Imam and with shouts and a display of irritation tried to make the Imam feel threatened.

"O Muhammad ibn Ali", he said, "I have heard reports of your encouraging the people to rise up against my government.

"If this is `rue", he continued, `you had better stop it at once. Otherwise your life will be in danger."

Following this, the vile ministers and courtiers who surrounded Hisham added their own words in order to threaten and frighten the Imam.

Imam Baqir (A.S.) stood up. He began his speech in the Name of God and by thanking and praising Him. Then he addressed the people in the hall, saying:

"O ignorant, deceived people, around what type of person have you gathered? Whose pleasure have you acquired? You have made God angry with you and purchased degradation in the world and punishment in the Hereafter. Do you know who has been threatened in your presence? Do you know who I am? I am the son of your Prophet. I am the Imam and leader of the Muslims. God has entrusted me with this responsibility. I understand Islam. I know the contents of the Quran. I know the path to your prosperity and success. Why do you support this tyrant? Don't you see his injustice and oppression? Are you unaware of the poverty and need of the people? Are you not Muslims that you sit silently in the face of injustice and oppression and quietly endorse it? Fear God and rise up for Him and destroy this oppressive government. In this way you will acquire for yourselves felicity and honor in this world and in the Hereafter."

Hearing these words of Imam Baqir (A.S.), Hisham became enraged and ordered the Imam to be imprisoned. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A.S.) did not remain silent, even in prison. He used to speak to the prisoners and call them to rise up for God. The prisoners listened to him and liked him and began to revolt against the government of the tyrant Hisham within the prison walls.

**Hisham then felt the pressure of danger from all sides,
and he finally considered it better to have Imam Baqir (A.S.)
sent back to Madinah, which he did.**