

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام) إلى أخيه عقيل بن أبي طالب في ذكر جيش أنفذه إلى بعض الأعداء، وهو جواب كتاب كتبه إليه عقيل

To his brother 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib, [1] in reply to his letter which contained a reference to the army Amīr al-mu'minīn had sent to some enemy.

فَسَرَّ حَتَّى إِلَيْهِ جَيْشًا كَثِيفًا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، فَلَمَّا بَلَغَهُ ذَلِكَ شَمَّرَ هَارِبًا، وَنَكَصَ نَادِمًا، فَلَحِقُوهُ بِبَعْضِ الطَّرِيقِ، وَقَدْ طَفَلَتِ الشَّمْسُ لِلْأَيَّامِ، فَاقْتَتَلُوا شَيْئًا كَلًا وَلَا، فَمَا كَانَ إِلَّا كَمَوْقِفٍ سَاعَةٍ حَتَّى نَجَا جَرِيضًا بَعْدَمَا أَخَذَ مِنْهُ بِالْمَخْنَقِ، وَلَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْهُ غَيْرُ الرَّمَقِ، فَلَا يَأْبَى مَا نَجَا.

I had sent towards him a large army of Muslims. When he came to know of it he fled away and retreated repenting. They met him on the way when the sun was about to set. They grappled for a while like nothing. It was about an hour and then he rescued himself half-dead as he had almost been taken by the neck and only the last breath had remained in him. In this way, he escaped in a panic.

فَدَعُ عَنْكَ قُرَيْشًا وَتَرَكَاضَهُمْ فِي الضَّلَالِ، وَتَجَوَّاهُ فِي الشُّقَاقِ، وَجَمَّاهُمْ فِي التَّيِّهِ، فَإِنَّهُمْ قَدْ أَجْمَعُوا عَلَيَّ حَرْبِي كَاجْمَاعِهِمْ عَلَى حَرْبِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (صلى الله عليه وآله) قَبْلِي، فَجَزَتْ قُرَيْشًا عَنِّي الْجَوَازِي! فَقَدْ قَطَعُوا رَحِمِي، وَسَلَبُونِي سُلْطَانَ ابْنِ أُمِّي.

Leave the Quraysh in their rushing into misguidance, their galloping in disunity and their leaping over destruction. They have joined together to fight me as they had joined to fight the Messenger of Allāh (S) before me. I wish the Quraysh will get the reward of their treatment of me. For they disregarded my kinship and deprived me of the power due to me from the son of my mother (i.e., the Holy Prophet).

وَأَمَّا مَا سَأَلْتَ عَنْهُ مِنْ رَأْيِي فِي الْقِتَالِ، فَإِنَّ رَأْيِي قِتَالُ الْمُحِلِّينَ حَتَّى أَلْقَى اللَّهَ، لَا يَزِيدُنِي كَثْرَةَ النَّاسِ حَوْلِي عِزَّةً، وَلَا تَفَرُّهُمْ عَنِّي وَحْشَةً، وَلَا تَحْسِبُنِ ابْنَ أَبِيكَ وَلَوْ أَسْلَمَهُ النَّاسُ مَتَضَرِّعًا مَتَخَشِّعًا، وَلَا مَقْرًا لِلضَّيْمِ وَاهِنًا، وَلَا سِلْسَ الزَّمَامِ لِلْقَائِدِ، وَلَا وَطِيءَ الظَّهْرِ لِلرَّائِبِ الْمُقْتَعِدِ، وَلَكِنَّهُ كَمَا قَالَ أَخُو بَنِي سَلِيمٍ:

As for your enquiry about my opinion to fight till I die, I am in favour of fighting those who regard fighting lawful. The crowd of men around me does not give me strength nor does their dispersal from me cause any loneliness. Surely, do not consider the son of your father weak or afraid, even though all people have forsaken him, bow down submissively before injustice or hand over his reins into the hand of the puller, or allow his back to be used by the rider to sit upon. But he is as the man of Banū Salīm has said:

فَإِنْ تَسَأَلْنِي كَيْفَ أَنْتَ فَإِنَّنِي * صَبُورٌ عَلَى رَيْبِ الزَّمَانِ صَلِيبٌ
يَعِزُّ عَلَيَّ أَنْ تَرَى بِي كَابَةً * فَيَشْمَتُ عَادٍ أَوْ يَسَاءَ حَبِيبٌ

If you enquire how I am, then listen that I am enduring and strong against the vicissitudes of time.

I do not allow myself to be grieved lest the foe feels joyful and the friend feels sorry.

Footnote :

[1] When after arbitration Mu'āwiyah started a campaign of killing and devastation, he sent a force of four thousand under aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays al-Fihri to attack Amīr al-mu'minīn's cities. When Amīr al-mu'minīn came to know of his activities he roused the people of Kūfah to put up a defence, but they began to offer lame excuses. At last Ḥujr ibn 'Adī al-Kindī rose with a force of four thousand men and, chasing the enemy, overtook him at Tadmur. The two parties had only a few grappings when darkness came in and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk fled away under its cover. This was the time when 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib had come to Mecca for 'umrah. When he came to know that after attacking al-Ḥīrah, aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk had escaped alive and that the people of Kūfah were afraid of war and all their activities had come to a stop, he sent a letter to Amīr al-mu'minīn through 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn 'Ubayd al-Azdī offering his help. In reply to that Amīr al-mu'minīn wrote this letter wherein he complains of the behaviour of the people of Kūfah and mentions the flight of aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk.