

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام) في حضّ أصحابه على القتال

To exhort his followers to fight [1]

فَقَدِّمُوا الدَّارِعَ، وَأَخِّرُوا الْجَاسِرَ، وَعَضُّوا عَلَى الْأَضْرَاسِ فَإِنَّهُ أَنْبَى لِلْسُّيُوفِ عَنِ الْهَامِ، وَالتَّوَوُّا فِي أَطْرَافِ الرِّمَاحِ فَإِنَّهُ أَمُورٌ لِلْأَسِنَّةِ، وَغَضُّوا الْأَبْصَارَ فَإِنَّهُ أَرْيَطُ لِلْجَاشِ وَأَسْكَنُ لِلْقُلُوبِ، وَأَمِيتُوا الْأَصْوَاتَ فَإِنَّهُ أَطْرَدُ لِلْفُشْلِ.

Put the armoured man forward and keep the unarmoured one behind. Grit your teeth because this will make the swords skip off the skull, and dodge on the sides of the spears for it changes the direction of their blades. Close the eyes because it strengthens the spirit and gives peace to the heart. Kill the voices because this will keep off spiritlessness.

وَرَايَتَكُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوهَا وَلَا تَخْذِلُوهَا، وَلَا تَجْعَلُوهَا إِلَّا بِأَيْدِي شُجْعَانِكُمْ، وَالْمَانِعِينَ الذِّمَارَ مِنْكُمْ، فَإِنَّ الصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى نَزُولِ الْحَقَائِقِ هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَحْفَوْنَ بِرَايَاتِهِمْ، وَيَكْتَفُونَهَا: حَفَافِيهَا، وَوَرَاءَهَا، وَأَمَامَهَا، لَا يَتَأَخَّرُونَ عَنْهَا فَيَسْلِمُوهَا، وَلَا يَتَقَدَّمُونَ عَلَيْهَا فَيَفِرُّوهَا. أَجْزَأُ أَمْرُهُ قَرْنَهُ، وَأَسَى أَخَاهُ بِنَفْسِهِ، وَلَمْ يَكِلْ قَرْنَهُ إِلَى أَخِيهِ فَيَجْتَمِعَ عَلَيْهِ قَرْنُهُ وَقَرْنُ أَخِيهِ.

Do not let your banner bend down, nor leave it alone. Do not give it to anyone except the brave and the defenders of honour among you because they alone endure the befalling of troubles; they surround the banners and encircle them on both sides, their rear and their front. They do not separate from them lest they give them over (to the enemy). They do not go ahead of them lest they leave them alone. Everyone should deal with his adversary and also help his comrade by his own life, and should not leave the adversary to his comrade lest both his own adversary and his comrade's join against him.

وَإِيْمُ اللَّهِ لئنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِنْ سَيْفِ الْعَاجِلَةِ، لَا تَسْلَمُوا مِنْ سَيْفِ الْآخِرَةِ، أَنْتُمْ لَهَا مِيمُ الْعَرَبِ، وَالسَّيِّئُ الْأَعْظَمُ، إِنَّ فِي الْفِرَارِ مَوْجِدَةَ اللَّهِ، وَالذِّلَّ الْإِلَازِمَ، وَالْعَارَ الْبَاقِيَّ، وَإِنْ الْفَارَ لَغَيْرِ مَزِيدٍ فِي عَمْرِهِ، وَلَا مَحْجُوزٍ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ يَوْمِهِ، مَنْ رَاحَ إِلَى اللَّهِ كَالظَّمْآنِ يَرِدُ الْمَاءَ؟ الْجَنَّةُ تَحْتَ أَطْرَافِ الْعَوَالِي! الْيَوْمُ تَبْلَى الْأَخْبَارُ! وَاللَّهِ لَنَا أَشَوْقٌ إِلَى لِقَائِهِمْ مِنْهُمْ إِلَى دِيَارِهِمْ. اللَّهُمَّ فَإِنْ رَدُّوا الْحَقَّ فَافْضُضْ جَمَاعَتَهُمْ، وَشَتِّ كَلِمَتَهُمْ، وَأَسْلِهِمْ بِخَطَايَاهُمْ.

By Allāh, even if you run away from the sword of today you would not remain safe from the sword of the next world. You are the foremost among the Arabs and great figures. Certainly in running away there is the wrath of Allāh, unceasing disgrace and lasting shame. And certainly a runner-away does not lengthen his life, nor does anything come to intervene between him and his day (of death). Who is there to go towards Allāh like the thirsty going to the water? Paradise lies under the edges of spears. Today the reputations (about the valour of warriors) will be tested. By Allāh! I am more eager to meet them (in combat) than they are for (returning to) their

houses. O my Allāh! If they reject truth disperse their group, divide their words (opinion) and destroy them on account of their sins.

إِنَّهُمْ لَنُيْزِلُوا عَنْ مَوَاقِفِهِمْ دُونَ طَعْنِ دِرَاكِ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الدَّسِيمُ، وَضَرْبِ يَفْلِقِ الْهَامَ، وَيَطِيحُ الْعِظَامَ، وَيَنْدِرُ السَّوَادَ وَالْأَقْدَامَ، وَحَتَّى يَرْمُوا بِالْمَنَاسِرِ تَتَّبِعُهَا الْمَنَاسِرُ، وَيَرْجُمُوا بِالْكَتَائِبِ، تَقْفُوها الْحَلَائِبُ حَتَّى يَجْرَ بِبِلَادِهِمُ الْخَمِيسُ يَتْلُوهُ الْخَمِيسُ، وَحَتَّى تَدْعُقَ الْخِيُولُ فِي نَوَاحِرِ أَرْضِهِمْ، وَبِأَعْنَانٍ مَسَارِيهِمْ وَمَسَارِحِهِمْ.

They will not budge from their stand till the continuous striking of spears causes piercings (of wounds) through which wind may pass, and the hitting of swords cuts through the skull, cleaves bones and breaks forearms and legs, till they are attacked by contingent after contingent and assaulted by detachments which are followed by reserves for support, till their cities are continuously assailed by force after force, and till the horses trample even the extreme ends of the lands, the tracks of their beast and their meadows.

قَالَ الشَّرِيفُ : الدَّعْقُ : الدَّقُّ ، أَيُ : تَدْقُ الْخِيُولُ بِحَوَافِرِهَا أَرْضَهُمْ. نَوَاحِرُ أَرْضِهِمْ : مُتَقَابِلَاتُهَا. يُقَالُ : مَنَازِلُ بَنِي فُلَانٍ تَنَاحَرُ، أَيُ : تَتَقَابَلُ.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says : “ad-da‘q” means trampling, e.g., “taduququ’l-khuyūlu biḥawāfirihā ardāhum” (the horses trample the ground with their hoofs). “nawāḥini arḍihim” means lands opposite each other, it is said, “manāzilu banī fulānini tatanāḥaru” meaning the ‘houses of so-and-so are opposite each other.’

Footnote :

[1] Amīr al-mu‘minīn delivered this Sermon on the occasion of the battle of Şiffin. This battle was fought in the year 37 A.H. between Amīr al-mu‘minīn and the Governor of Syria (ash-Shām), Mu‘āwiyah, for the so-called avenging for the killing of Caliph ‘Uthmān. But in reality it was nothing more than Mu‘āwiyah who had been the Autonomous Governor of Syria from Caliph ‘Umar’s days not wanting to lose that position by swearing allegiance to Amīr al-mu‘minīn but wanting to keep his authority intact by exploiting the killing of Caliph ‘Uthmān, for later events proved that after securing the government he did not take any practical step to avenge ‘Uthmān’s blood, and never spoke, not even through omission, about the killers of ‘Uthmān.

Although from the first day Amīr al-mu‘minīn realized that war was inevitable, it was still necessary to exhaust all pleas. Therefore when on Monday the 12th Rajab, 36 A.H. he returned to Kūfah after the battle of Jamal he sent Jarīr ibn ‘Abdillāh al-

Bajalī with a letter to Mu'āwiyah at Damascus wherein he wrote that the muhājirūn and the anṣār had sworn allegiance to him and that he too should first swear him allegiance and thereafter place the case of 'Uthmān's killing before him so that he could pass verdict thereon according to the Qur'ān and sunnah. But Mu'āwiyah detained Jarīr on several pretexts and after consulting 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ staged a revolt on the excuse of 'Uthmān's killing, and with the help of important persons of Syria convinced the ignorant people that the liability for 'Uthmān's life lay on 'Alī (a.s.) and that he, with his conduct, had encouraged the beseigers and had given them protection. Meanwhile he hung the blood-stained shirt of 'Uthmān and the amputated fingers of his wife Nā'ilah bint al-Farāfiṣah on the pulpit in the Central Mosque of Damascus around which seventy thousand Syrians cried and swore the pledge to avenge 'Uthmān's blood. When Mu'āwiyah had roused the feelings of the Syrians to such an extent that they were determined to lay down their lives and be killed, he secured their allegiance on the cause of avenging 'Uthmān's blood and busied himself in equipping for the battle. Thereafter, he showed all this to Jarīr and then sent him back mortified.

When Amīr al-mu'minīn learnt of these matters through Jarīr ibn 'Abdillāh al-Bajalī he was forced to rise against Mu'āwiyah, and ordered Mālik ibn Ḥabīb al-Yarbū'ī to mobilize the forces in the valley of an-Nukhaylah. Consequently, people from the suburbs of Kūfah began arriving there in large numbers, till they exceeded eighty thousand. First of all, Amīr al-mu'minīn sent a vanguard contingent, eight thousand strong, under Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Hārithī and another of four thousand strong under Shurayḥ ibn Hānī al-Hārithī towards Syria. After the departure of this vanguard contingent he himself set out for Syria at the head of the remaining army on Wednesday the 5th of Shawwāl.

When he was out of the boundary of Kūfah he offered zuhr (noon) prayer and after staying at Dayr Abī Mūsā, Nahr (river) Nars, Qubbat Qubbīn, Bābil, Dayr Ka'b, Karbalā', Sābāt, Bahurasīnī, al-Anbār and al-Jazīrah arrived at ar-Riqqah. The people of this place were in favour of 'Uthmān, and at this very place Simāk ibn Makhtamah al-Asadī was putting up with his eight hundred men. These people had left Kūfah to join Mu'āwiyah after deserting Amīr al-mu'minīn; when they had seen Amīr al-mu'minīn's force they had dismantled the bridge over the River Euphrates so that Amīr al-mu'minīn's army should not cross over to the other side of the River. But at the threatening of Mālik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'ī they were frightened, and after consultations among themselves they put the bridge together again and Amīr al-mu'minīn passed over it with his army. When he alighted on the other side of the River he saw that Ziyād and Shurayḥ were also putting up there

along with their men since both of them had adopted the land route. When, on reaching here, they found that Mu'āwiyah was advancing with his armies towards the Euphrates and thinking that they would not be able to face him, they stopped there waiting for Amīr al-mu'minīn. When they had given the reason for their stopping there, Amīr al-mu'minīn accepted their plea and sent them forward. When they reached Sūr ar-Rūm they found that Abū al-A'war as-Sulamī was camping there with his army. Both of them informed Amīr al-mu'minīn of this, whereupon he despatched Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'ī in their wake as the Officer in Command and cautioned him not to initiate the fighting but to try to counsel them and apprise them of the correct position as far as possible. In this way, on reaching there Mālik al-Ashtar encamped a little distance away. Fighting could have commenced any moment, but he did not interfere with the other side nor did he take any step by which fighting could have been commenced. But Abū al-A'war suddenly attacked them at night, whereupon they took their swords out of the sheaths and prepared to repulse them. Clashes between the two sides went on for sometime but in the end, taking benefit of the darkness of night Abū al-A'war fled away. Since fighting had already commenced, soon after the appearance of dawn an Iraqi commander, Hāshim ibn 'Utbah al-Mirqāl az-Zuhrī, took his position in the battlefield. From the other side also a contingent came to face him, and the flames of fighting rose high. At last Mālik al-Ashtar challenged Abū al-A'war to fight him, but he did not dare to face him, and towards the evening Mālik al-Ashtar went onwards with his men. The next day Amīr al-mu'minīn reached there with his force and set off for Şifḥīn with the vanguard contingent and other forces. Mu'āwiyah had already reached there and had set up his bases. He had also placed a guard on the Euphrates and had occupied it. On reaching there Amīr al-mu'minīn sent him word to remove the guard from the Euphrates, but he refused, whereupon the Iraqis took out their swords and in a courageous attack captured the Euphrates. When this stage was over Amīr al-mu'minīn sent Bashīr ibn 'Amr al-Anṣārī, Sa'īd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī and Shabath ibn Rib'ī at-Tamīmī to Mu'āwiyah to apprise him of the consequences of war and to make him agree to settlement and allegiance. But his reply was that they could not by any means let 'Uthmān's blood remain neglected, and that now the sword alone would arbitrate between them. Consequently in the month of Dhi'l-ḥijjah 36 A.H. both the parties decided on war and warriors from each side came out into the field to face their adversary. Those who entered the battlefield from Amīr al-mu'minīn's side were: Ḥujr ibn 'Adī al-Kindī, Shabath ibn Rib'ī at-Tamīmī, Khālīd ibn al-Mu'ammār, Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr al-Ḥārithī, Ziyād ibn Khaṣafah at-Taymī, Sa'īd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī, Qays ibn Sa'd al-Anṣārī and Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'ī while from the Syrians there were, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Khālīd ibn Walīd al-Makhzūnī, Abū al-A'war as-Sulamī, Ḥabīb ibn



Maslamah al-Fihri, ‘Abdullāh ibn Dhi’l-Kalā’ al-Ḥimyarī, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Shuraḥbīl ibn Simṭ al-Kindī, and Ḥamzah ibn Mālīk al-Hamdānī. When the month of Dhi’l-ḥijjah came to end the fighting had to be stopped for Muḥarram, but from the 1st of Ṣafar fighting was resumed and both parties arrayed themselves opposite each other, equipped with swords, spears and other weapons. On Amīr al-mu’mīnīn’s side Mālīk al-Ashtar was in command of the horsemen and ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir of the foot soldiers of Kūfah while Sahl ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī was in command of the horsemen and Qays ibn Sa’d of the foot soldiers of Baṣrah. The banner of the army was given to Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah. In the army of the Syrians, on the right hand contingent Ibn Dhi’l-Kalā’ was in command, while on the left hand contingent Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah, on horsemen ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and on foot soldiers aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays al-Fihri were in command.

On the first day Mālīk ibn al-Ashtar entered the battle-field with his men, and from the other side Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah came out with his men to face him and from both sides a fierce battle ensued. Throughout the day swords clashed with swords and spears with spears.

Next day, Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah came out with ‘Alī’s army and from the other side Abū al-A‘war with his footmen came to face him. When the two armies approached near to each other, horsemen fell upon horsemen and footmen upon footmen and continued attacking each other, and they endured with great patience and steadfastness.

On the third day, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir and Ziyād ibn an-Naḍr came out with horsemen and foot soldiers and from the other side ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ came forward with a big force. Ziyād attacked the horsemen of the opposite side and Mālīk al-Ashtar attacked the foot soldiers so furiously that the enemy’s men lost ground and, failing to offer resistance, returned to their camps.

On the fourth day Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah appeared on the battle-field with his men. From the other side ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umar came forward with the Syrian army and both the armies had a serious encounter.

On the fifth day ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās came forward and from the other side al-Walīd ibn ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Mu‘ayt came to face him. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās carried the assaults with great steadfastness and courage and gave such a brave fight that the enemy left the field in retreat.

On the sixth day Qays ibn Sa'd al-Anṣārī came forward with the army and to face him Ibn Dhi'l-Kalā' came out with his contingent, and such a severe fighting ensued that at every step bodies were seen falling and blood flowing like streams. At last the darkness of the night separated the two armies.

On the seventh day Mālik al-Ashtar came out and to face him, Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah came forward with his men, and fighting raged till ḡuhr (noon).

On the eighth day Amīr al-mu'minīn himself came out with the army and made such an assault that the entire battlefield quaked, and piercing through the ranks and warding off shots of arrows and spears he came and stood between both the lines. Then he challenged Mu'āwiyah, whereupon the latter, along with 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, came a bit closer. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn said to him: "Come out and face me. Let whoever kills the other be the ruler." Whereupon 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ said to Mu'āwiyah: "Alī is right. Gather up a little courage and face him." Mu'āwiyah replied: "I am not prepared to waste my life at your taunting." Saying this he went back. When Amīr al-mu'minīn saw him retreating he smiled and himself too returned. The daring with which Amīr al-mu'minīn led the attacks in Sīffīn can only be called a miraculous feat. Thus, whenever he came out challenging in the battlefield, the enemy lines were dispersed into utter disarray and confusion, and even courageous combatants hesitated to appear against him. That is why on a few occasions he came onto the battlefield in changed dress so that the enemy should not recognize him and someone should be prepared to engage with him personally. Once 'Arār ibn Ad'ham came from the other side to engage with al-'Abbās ibn Rabī'ah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. They remained engaged but neither could defeat the other, until al-'Abbās chanced to see that a link of his adversary's armour was loose. With a swift stroke he entangled the point of his sword in it, and then with a quick jerk he cut through a few more links. Then with true aim he gave such a blow that his sword went straight into his bosom. Seeing this, people raised the call of takbīr. Mu'āwiyah was startled at this noise and on coming to know that 'Arār ibn Ad'ham had been slain he was much disturbed and shouted if there was anyone to take revenge for 'Arār ibn Ad'ham and kill al-'Abbās, whereupon some tired swordsmen of the tribe of Lakhm came out challenging al-'Abbās. al-Abbās said he would come after taking his Chief's permission. Saying this al-'Abbās came to Amīr al-mu'minīn to seek permission. Amīr al-mu'minīn detained him, put on al-'Abbās's dress, and riding on al-'Abbās's horse entered the battlefield. Taking him to be al-'Abbās, the Lakhms said: "So you have got your Chief's permission." In reply Amīr al-mu'minīn recited the following verse : Permission (to fight) is given unto

those upon whom war is made for they have been oppressed, and verily, to help them, Allāh is Most Potent. (Qur'ān, 22:39)

Now one man came out from the other side shouting like an elephant, ran amok and assaulted Amīr al-mu'inīn, but he avoided the blow and then gave such a clean cut with his sword to the other's back that he was split into two. People thought the blow had gone without avail, but when his horse jumped his two separate parts fell on the ground. After him another man came out but he too was finished in the twinkling of an eye. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn challenged others but from the strokes of his sword the enemy came to know that it was Amīr al-mu'minīn in the dress of al-'Abbās and so none dared come to face him.

On the ninth day the right wing was under the command of 'Abdullāh ibn Budayl and the left wing under that of 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās. In the centre was Amīr al-mu'minīn himself. On the other side Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah commanded the Syrian army. When both the lines had come face to face with each other, the valiant soldiers drew out their swords and pounced upon one another like ferocious lions, and fighting raged on all sides. The banner of the right wing of Amīr al-mu'minīn's army was revolving in the hands of Banū Hamdān. Whenever anyone of them fell, martyred, someone else would pick up the banner. First of all Kurayb ibn Shurayḥ raised the banner, on his fall Shurahbīl ibn Shurayḥ took it up, then Marthad ibn Shurayḥ, then Hubayrah ibn Shurayḥ, then Yarīm ibn Shurayḥ, then Sumayr ibn Shurayḥ and after the killing of all these six brothers the banner was taken up by Sufyān, then 'Abd, then Kurayb, the three sons of Zayd, who all fell martyred. After that the banner was lifted by two brothers (sons) of Bashīr namely 'Umayr and al-Ḥārith and when they too fell martyred, Wahb ibn Kurayb took up the banner. On this day the enemy's greater attention was on the right wing and its assaults were so fierce that the men lost ground and began to retreat from the battlefield. Only three hundred men remained with the Officer in Command 'Abdullāh ibn Budayl. On seeing this Amīr al-mu'minīn asked Mālīk al-Ashtar to call them back and challenge them as to where they were fleeing. "If the days of life are over they cannot avoid death by running away." Now the defeat of the right wing could not be without effect on the left wing, so Amīr al-mu'minīn turned to the left wing and advanced forward, forcing through the enemy lines, whereupon a slave of Banū Umayyah named Aḥmar said to him, "Allāh may make me die if I fail to slay you today." On hearing this Amīr al-mu'minīn's slave Kaysān leapt over him but was killed by him. When Amīr al-mu'minīn saw this he caught him by the skirt of his armour and, picking him up, threw him down so forcefully that all his joints were smashed, whereupon Imām Ḥasan (a.s.) and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah came forward and dispatched him

to Hell. Meanwhile, after having been called to Mālik al-Ashtar and his having made them feel ashamed, the retreaters came back and again assaulted so steadily that pushing back the enemy they reached the place - here ‘Abdullāh ibn Budayl was surrounded by the enemy. When he saw his own men he picked up courage and leapt towards Mu‘āwiyah’s tent with drawn sword. Mālik al-Ashtar tried to stop him but he couldn’t, and, killing seven Syrians, he reached the tent of Mu‘āwiyah. When Mu‘āwiyah noticed him close by he ordered him to be stoned, as a result of which he was overpowered and the Syrians crowded over him and killed him. When Mālik al-Ashtar saw this he proceeded forward with the combatants of Banū Hamdān and Banū Madh’ḥij for an attack on Mu‘āwiyah, and began dispersing the contingent on guard around him. When, out of the five circles of his guards only one remained to be dispersed, Mu‘āwiyah put his foot in the stirrup of his horse in order to run away, but on someone’s encouragement again stopped.

On another side of the battlefield a tumult was raging from one end to the other by the swords of ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir and Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah. From whatever side ‘Ammār passed, the companions (of the Holy Prophet) flocked around him and then made such a joint assault that destruction spread throughout the enemy lines. When Mu‘āwiyah saw them advancing he threw his fresh forces towards them. But he continued displaying the excellence of his bravery under the storm of swords and spears. At last Abū al-‘Ādiyāh al-Juhanī hit him with a spear from which he could not balance himself and then Ibn Ḥawiy (Jawn as-Saksikī) came forward and slew him. ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir’s death caused tumult in Mu‘āwiyah’s ranks because about him they had heard the Holy Prophet having said: “‘Ammār will be killed at the hands of a rebellious party.” Thus before he fell as martyr Dhu’l-Kalā’ had said to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ : “I see ‘Ammār on ‘Alī’s side; are we that rebellious party?” ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ had assured him that eventually ‘Ammār would join them, but when he was killed fighting on ‘Alī’s side the rebellious party stood exposed and no scope was left for any other interpretation. Nevertheless Mu‘āwiyah started telling the Syrians that: “We did not kill ‘Ammār, but ‘Alī did it because he brought him to the battlefield.” When Amīr al-mu’mīnīn heard this cunning sentence he remarked: “In that case the Holy Prophet killed Ḥamzah as he had brought him to the battlefield of Uḥud.” Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah also fell in this conflict. He was killed by al-Ḥārith ibn Mundhir at-Tanūkhī. After him the banner of the contingent was taken over by his son ‘Abdullāh.

When such fearless warriors were gone Amīr al-mu’mīnīn said to the warriors from the tribes of Hamdān and Rabī’ah: “To me you are like armour and spear. Get up and teach these rebels a lesson.” Consequently, twelve thousand combatants of



the tribes of Rabī'ah and Hamdān stood up, swords in hand. The banner was taken up by H[ud]ayn ibn al-Mundhir. Entering the lines of the enemy, they used their swords in such a way that heads began to drop, bodies fell in huge heaps and on every side streams of blood flowed. And the assaults of these swordsmen knew no stopping till the day began to end with all its devastation and the gloom of eve set in, ushering in that fearful night which is known in history as the night of al-Harīr, wherein the clashing of weapons, the hoofs of horses and the hue and cry of the Syrians created such notice that even voices reaching the ears could not be heard. On Amīr al-mu'minīn's side, his wrong-crushing slogans raised waves of courage and valour, and on the enemy's side they shook the hearts in their bosoms. The battle was at its zenith. The quivers of the bowmen had become empty. The stalks of the spears had been broken. Hand to hand fighting went on with swords only and dead bodies collected in heaps, till by morning the number of killed had exceeded thirty thousand.

On the tenth day Amīr al-mu'minīn's men showed the same morale. On the right wing Mālik al-Ashtar held the command and on the left wing 'Abdullāh ibn al-'Abbās. Assaults went on like the assaults of new soldiers. Signs of defeat appeared on the Syrians, and they were about to leave the battlefield and run away, when five hundred Qur'āns were raised on spears changing the entire face of the battle. Moving swords stopped, the weapon of deceit was successful, and the way was clear for wrong to hold its sway.

In this battle forty-five thousand Syrians were killed while twenty-five thousand Iraqis fell as martyrs. (Kitāb Šiffīn by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī [d. 212 A.H.] and at-Tārīkh, at-Ṭabarī, vol. I, pp. 3256- 3349).