

وَمِنْ خُطْبَةٍ لَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

From one of his sermons

وَقَدْ تَوَاتَرَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْأَخْلَابُ بِاسْتِيْلَاءِ أَصْلِحَابِ مُعَاوِيَةَ عَلَى الْبِلَادِ، وَقَدِمَ عَلَيْهِ عَامِلَاهُ عَلَى الْيَمَنِ - وَهُمَا عَيْبِدُ اللَّهِ بِلَنْ عَبَّاسٍ [فِي بَعْضِ النسخ: اللَّعْبَاسِ] وَسَعِيدِ بِلَنْ نَمْرَانَ - لَمَّا غَلِبَ عَلَيْهِمَا [فِي بَعْضِ النسخ: عَلَيْهِمَا] بِسَلْمِ بِلَنْ أَبِي أَرْطَاةَ، فَقَامَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) إِلَى [فِي بَعْضِ النسخ: عَلَى] اللَّامِنِ بِرِضْجِرَا بِنْتِاقِلِ أَصْلِحَابِهِ عَنِ الْجِهَادِ، وَمَخَالَفَتِهِمْ لَهُ فِي الرَّأْيِ، فَقَالَ [فِي بَعْضِ النسخ: وَقَالَ]:

When Amīr al-Mu'minīn received successive news that Mu'āwiyah's men were occupying cities, [1] and his own officers in Yemen, namely 'Ubayd Allāh ibn al-'Abbās and Sa'īd ibn Numrān, came to him retreating after being overpowered by Busr ibn Abī Arṭāh, he was much disturbed by the slackness of his own men in jihād and their difference with his opinion. Proceeding to the pulpit, he said:

مَا هِيَ إِلَّا الْكُوفَةُ، أَقْلِبُضُهَا وَأَبْطِطُهَا، إِنْ لَمْ تَكُونِي إِلَّا أَنْذَلْتِ، تَهْبُ أَعَا صَبْرِكَ، فَفَبَحَكَ اللَّهُ!

Nothing (is left to me) but Kūfah which I can hold and extend (which is in my hand to play with). (O Kūfah) if this is your condition that whirlwinds continue blowing through you, then Allāh may destroy you.

وَتَمَثَّلَ [فِي بَعْضِ النسخ: وَتَمَثَّلَ بِقَوْلِ الشَّاعِرِ]: لَعَمْرُؤُا أَبَيْكَ الْخَيْلِ يَا عَمْرُؤُا إِنِّي \*\*\* عَلَى وَضْرٍ مِنْ ذَا الْإِنَاءِ قَلِيلِ

Then he illustrated with the verse of a poet: O 'Amr! By your good father's life. I have received only a small bit of fat from this pot (fat that remains sticking to it after it has been emptied).

ثُمَّ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: أَنْبِئْتِ بَسْرًا قَدْ اطَّلَعَ الْيَمَنِ، وَإِنِّي وَاللَّهِ! لِأَطْنُّ هُوَ لَاءِ الْقَوْمِ سَيِّدُ الْوَنِّ مِنْكُمْ بِاجْتِمَاعِهِمْ عَلَى بَاطِلِهِمْ، وَتَفَرُّقِهِمْ عَنْ حَقِّكُمْ، وَبِمَعْلُصِيَّتِكُمْ إِمَامِكُمْ فِي الْحَقِّ، وَطَاعَتِهِمْ إِمَامِهِمْ فِي الْبَاطِلِ، وَبِأَدَائِهِمْ الْأَمَانَةَ إِلَى صَاحِبِهِمْ وَخِيَانَتِكُمْ، وَبِصَلَاحِهِمْ فِي بِلَادِهِمْ وَفَسَادِكُمْ،

Then he continued: I have been informed that Busr has overpowered Yemen. By Allāh, I have begun thinking about these people that they would shortly snatch away the whole country through their unity on their wrong and your disunity from your own right, and separation, your disobedience of your Imām in matters of right and their obedience to their leader in matters of wrong, their fulfilment of the trust in favour of their master and your betrayal, their good work in their cities and your mischief.

فَلَوْ اِنَّ تَمَمَّتْ اُحَدَكُمُ عَلٰى قَعَبٍ لَّخَشِيْتُ اَنْ يَذَّهَبَ بِعِلَاقَتِهِ.

Even if I give you charge of a wooden bowl I fear you would run away with its handle.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي قَدْ مَلَلْتُهُمْ وَمَلُونِي، وَسَمِمْتُهُمْ وَسَمُّونِي، فَأَبَدِلْ لِي بِهِمْ خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ، وَأَبَدِلْ لَهُمْ بِي شَرًّا مِنِّي،

O my Allāh they are disgusted of me and I am disgusted of them. They are weary of me and I am weary of them. Change them for me with better ones and change me for them with worse one.

اللَّهُمَّ مِثْ قُلُوبِهِمْ كَمَا يُمَاطُ الْمِلْحُ فِي الْمَاءِ،

O my Allāh melt their hearts as salt melts in water.

أَمَا وَاللَّهِ! لَوْ دِدَّتْ أَنْ لِي بِكُمْ أَلْفَ فَارِسٍ مِنْ بَنِي فِرَاسٍ بَلَنْ غَنَامٍ:

By Allāh I wish I had only a thousand horsemen of Banū Firās ibn Ghanam (as the poet says):

هُنَالِكَ، لَوْ دَعَوْتِ، أَتَاكَ مِنْهُمْ \*\*\* فَوَارِسٌ مِثْلُ أَرْمِيَةِ الْحَمِيمِ

If you call them the horsemen would come to you like the summer cloud.

ثُمَّ نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مِنَ الْمِنْبَرِ.

Thereafter Amīr al-Mu'minīn alighted from the pulpit.

قال السيد الشريف: قلتُ أنا: والأرْمِيَةُ [في بعض النسخ: قال سيد الشريف: أقول: والإرْمِيَةُ، أو: قال السيد: قلتُ أنا: والأرْمِيَةُ، أو: قال السيد الشريف: أقول الأرْمِيَةُ، أو: أقول: الأرْمِيَةُ] جَمَلٌ «رَمِيٌّ» وهو: السَّحَابُ، وَالْحَمِيمُ هَاهُنَا وَقَلَّتِ الصَّيْلُفُ [في بعض النسخ: وَالْحَمِيمُ فِي هَذَا الْمَوْضِعِ: وَقَلَّتِ الصَّيْلُفُ]، وَإِنَّمَا خَصَّ الشَّاعِرُ سَحَابَ الصَّيْلُفِ بِالذِّكْرِ لِأَنَّهُ أَشَدُّ جَفُولًا وَأَسْلَرَعَ خَفُوفًا، لِأَنَّهُ لَا مَاءَ فِيهِ، وَإِنَّمَا يَكُونُ السَّحَابُ ثَقِيلَ السَّيْرِ لِأَنَّ تَلَاتِهِ بِالْمَاءِ؛ وَذَلِكَ لَا يَكُونُ فِي الْأَكْثَرِ إِلَّا زَمَانَ [في بعض النسخ: إِلَّا فِي أَرْزَمَانَ] الشَّتَاءِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَرَادَ الشَّاعِرُ وَصْلَهُمْ بِالسَّرْعَةِ إِذَا دَعَا، وَالْإِغَاثَةَ إِذَا اسْتَنْغِيثُوا، وَالذَّلِيلَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ: «هُنَالِكَ، لَوْ دَعَوْتِ، أَتَاكَ مِنْهُمْ...».

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: In this verse the word “armiyah” is plural of “ramiyy” which means cloud, and “ḥamīm” here means summer. The poet has particularised the cloud of summer because it moves swiftly. This is because it is devoid of water, while a cloud moves slowly when it is laden with rain. Such clouds generally appear

(in Arabia) in winter. By this verse the poet intends to convey that when they are called and appealed to for help, they approach with rapidity, and this is borne by the first line “if you call them they will reach you.”

Notes:

[1] When, after arbitration, Mu‘āwiyah’s position was stabilised, he began thinking of taking possession of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn’s cities and extend his domain. He sent his armies to different areas in order that they might secure allegiance for Mu‘āwiyah by force. In this connection, he sent Busr ibn Abī Arṭāh to Ḥijāz, where he shed blood of thousands of innocent persons; from Ḥijāz up to Yemen he burnt alive tribes after tribes in fire, and killed even children, so much so that he butchered two young boys of ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, the Governor of Yemen, before their mother Ḥurayyah bint Khālid ibn Qaraz al-Kināniyyah.

When Amīr al-Mu‘minīn came to know of his slaughtering and bloodshed, he thought of sending a contingent to crush him; but due to continuous fighting, people had become weary and showed heartlessness instead of zeal. When Amīr al-Mu‘minīn observed their shirking from war, he delivered this sermon, wherein he roused them to enthusiasm and self-respect, and prompted them to jihād by describing before them the enemy’s wrongdoing and their own shortcomings. At last, Jāriyah ibn Qudāmah al-Sa’dī responded to his call and, taking an army of two thousand, set off in pursuit of Busr, and chased him out of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn’s domain.