

وَمِنْ خُطْبَةٍ لَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

From one of his sermons

بَعْدَ التَّحْكِيمِ وَمَا بَلَغَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ الْحَكَمِينَ

Amīr al-Mu'minīn said after Arbitration. [1]

وَفِيهَا حَمْدُ اللَّهِ عَلَى بَلَاءِهِ، ثُمَّ بَيَانُ سَبَبِ الْبَلَاءِ

[الحمد على البلاء:] الحمد لله الذي أتى الدهر بالخطيب الفادح، والحدث الجليل. وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله، وزاد في بعض النسخ: وحده لا شريك له [في بعض النسخ: لا شريك له]]. ليلس معه إله غيره، وأن محمدا عبده ورسوله صلى الله عليه وآله.

All praise is due to Allāh even though time has brought (for us) crushing calamity and great occurrence. And I stand witness that there is no god but Allāh, the One; there is no partner for Him, nor is there with Him any god other than Himself, and that Muḥammad is His slave and His Prophet (may Allāh's blessing and greeting be upon him and his progeny).

[سبب البلوى:] أما بعد! فإن معلية الناصح الشفيق العالم المجرب تورث الحسرة، وتلقب الندامة، وقد كنت أمرتكم في هذه الحكومة أمري، ونخلت لكم مخزون رأيي، لو كان يطاع لقصير أمر! فأبيتم علي إباء المخالفين الجفاة، والمنايذين العصاة، حتى ارتاب الناصح بنصاحه، وضم الزناد بقدمه.

So now, certainly the disobedience of sympathetic counsellor who has knowledge as well as experience brings about disappointment and result in repentance. I had given you my orders about this arbitration and put before you my hidden view, if Qāṣir's [2] orders were fulfilled; but you rejected it (my orders) like rough opponents and disobedient insurgents, till the counsellor himself fell in doubt about his counsel and the flint (of his wit) ceased to give flame.

فَكُنْتُ أَنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ [في بعض النسخ: فكننت وإياكم] كما قال أخو هوازن:

Consequently, mine and your position became as the poet of Hawāzin says:

أمرتكم أمري بمنع عرج اللوى *** فلم تسببنا النصح إلا ضحى الغد

I gave you my orders at Mun'araj al-Liwā, but you did not see the good of my

counsel till the noon of next day (when it was too late). [3]

Notes:

[1] When the Syrians' spirit was broken by the bloody swords of the Iraqis, and the incessant attacks of the night of al-Ḥarīr lowered their morale and ended their aspirations 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ suggested to Mu'āwiyah the trick that the Qur'ān should be raised on spears and shouts urged forth to treat it as the arbitrator. Its effect would be that some people would try to stop the war and others would like to continue it. We would thus divide them, and be able to get the war postponed for another occasion. Consequently, copies of the Qur'ān were raised on spears. The result was that some brainless persons raised hue and cry and created division and disturbance in the army, and the efforts of simple Muslims turned slowed after having been near victory. Without understanding anything, they began to shout that they should prefer the verdict of the Qur'ān over war.

When Amīr al-Mu'minīn saw the Qur'ān being the instrument of their activities, he said: "O people do not fall in this trap of deceit and trickery. They are putting up this device only to escape the ignominy of defeat. I know the character of each one of them. They are neither adherents of the Qur'ān, nor have they any connection with the faith or religion. The very purpose of our fighting has been that they should follow the Qur'ān and act on its injunctions. For Allāh's sake, do not fall in their deceitful device. Go ahead with determination and courage, and stop only after vanquishing the dying foe."

Nevertheless, the deceitful instrument of falsehood had worked. The people took to disobedience and rebellion. Sa'd ibn Fadakī al-Tamīmī and Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭā'ī, each with twenty thousand men, came forward and said to Amīr al-Mu'minīn, "O 'Alī, if you do not respond to the call of the Qur'ān, we will deal with you in the same manner as we did with 'Uthmān. You end the battle at once and bow before the verdict of the Qur'ān." Amīr al-Mu'minīn tried his best to make them understand, but Satan was standing before them in the garb of the Qur'ān. He did not allow them to do so, and they compelled Amīr al-Mu'minīn that he should send someone to call Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar from the battlefield. Being obliged, Amīr al-Mu'minīn sent Yazīd ibn Hānī to call Mālik back. When Mālik heard this order, he was bewildered and said, "Please tell him that this is not the occasion to leave the position. He may wait a bit, then I will come to his audience with the tidings of victory." Hānī conveyed this message on return, but people shouted that Amīr al-Mu'minīn must have sent word to him secretly to continue. Amīr al-

Mu'minīn said he never got any occasion to send any secret message to him. Whatever he said was said before them. People said he should be sent again and that, if Mālik delayed his return, Amīr al-Mu'minīn should forsake his life. Amīr al-Mu'minīn again sent Yazīd ibn Hānī and sent word that rebellion had occurred, he should return in whatever condition he was. So Hānī went and told Mālik, "You hold victory dear or the life of Amīr al-Mu'minīn? If his life is dear, you should raise hands off the battle and go to him." Leaving the chances of victory, Mālik stood up and came to the audience of Amīr al-Mu'minīn with grief and disappointment. Chaos raged there. He rebuked the people very much, but matters had taken such a turn that could not be corrected.

It was then settled that either party should nominate an arbitrator so that they should settle the (matter of) Caliphate according to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. From Mu'āwiyah's side, "Amr ibn al-Āṣ was decided upon and from Amīr al-Mu'minīn's side people proposed the name of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. Seeing this wrong selection, Amīr al-Mu'minīn said, "Since you have not accepted my order about arbitration, at least now agree that do not make Abū Mūsā the arbitrator. He is not a man of trust. Here is 'Abd Allāh ibn al-'Abbās and here is Mālik al-Ashtar; select one of them." But they did not at all listen to him and struck to his name. Amīr al-Mu'minīn then said, "All right, do whatever you want. The day is not far when you will cut your own hands through your misdeeds."

After the nomination of arbitrators, when the deed of agreement was being written, then with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) the word Amīr al-Mu'minīn was also written. 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ said, "This should be rubbed off. If we regarded him Amīr al-Mu'minīn, why should this battle have been fought?" At first, Amīr al-Mu'minīn refused to rub it off, but when they did not in any way agree, he rubbed it off and said, "This incident is just similar to the one at al-Hudaybiyyah, when the unbelievers stuck on the point that the words 'Rasūl Allāh (Prophet of Allāh)' with the name of the Prophet should be removed, and the Prophet did remove it." On this, 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ got angry and said, "Do you treat us as unbelievers?" Amīr al-Mu'minīn said, "On what day have you had anything to do with believers, and when have you been their supporters?" However, after this settlement, the people dispersed, and, after mutual consultation, these two arbitrators decided that by removing both 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah from the Caliphate the people should be accorded the power to choose whomever they desired. When time came to its announcement there was a meeting at Dūmat al-Jandal, a place between Iraq and Syria, and then two arbitrators also reached there to announce the judgement on the fate of the Muslims. Acting cunningly, 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ said to Abū Mūsā, "I regard it ill manner to precede you.

You are older in age and years; so first you make the announcement.” Abū Mūsā succumbed to his flattery, and came out proudly and stood before the gathering. Addressing them, he said, “O Muslims! We have jointly settled that ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and Mu‘āwiyah should be removed and the right to choose a Caliph be accorded to the Muslims. They should choose whomever they like.” Saying this, he sat down. Now the turn was for ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, and he said, “O Muslims! you have heard that Abū Mūsā has removed ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. I also agree with it. As for Mu‘āwiyah, there is no question of removing him. Therefore, I place him in his position.” No sooner that he said this there were cries all round. Abū Mūsā cried hoarse that it was a trick, a deceit and told ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ that, “You have played a trick, and your example is that of a dog on which if you load something he would gasp, or leave him he would gasp.” ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ replied, “Your example is like the ass on whom books are loaded.” However, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ’s trick was effective and Mu‘āwiyah’s shaking feet were again stabilised.

This was the short sketch of the Arbitration whose basis was laid in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. But was it a verdict of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, or the result of those deceitful contrivances which people of this world always employ to retain their authority? Could these pages of history be made a torch-guide for the future, and that the Qur’ān and the Sunnah be not used as a means of securing authority or as an instrument of worldly benefits.

When Amīr al-Mu‘minīn got the news of this lamentable result of arbitration, he climbed on the pulpit and delivered this sermon, every word of which savours of his grief and sorrow and, at the same time, it throws light on soundness of his thinking, correctness of his opinion, and fore-sighted sagacity.

[2] This is a proverb which is used on an occasion where the advice of a counsellor is rejected and afterwards it is repented. The fact of it was that the ruler of al-Ḥīrah, namely Jadhīmah al-Abrash, killed the ruler of al-Jazīrah named ‘Amr ibn Ḍarīb, whereafter his daughter az-Zabbā’ was made the ruler of al-Jazīrah. Soon after accession to the throne, she thought out this plan to avenge her father’s blood, that she sent a message to Jadhīmah that she could not alone carry on the affairs of the state, and that if he could become her patron by accepting her as his wife, she would be grateful. Jadhīmah was more than puffed up at this proposal, and prepared himself to set off for al-Jazīrah with a thousand horsemen. His slave, Qaṣīr, strongly advised him that this was just a deceit and trick, and that he should not place himself in this danger; but his wit had been so blinded that he could not think over why az-Zabbā’ should select the murderer of her father for her life

companionship. Anyhow, he set off. When he reached the borders of al-Jazīrah, although az-Zabbā's army was present for his reception, but she neither gave any special reception nor offered any warm welcome. Seeing this state, Qaṣīr was again suspicious and he advised Jadhīmah to get back, but nearness to the goal had further fanned his passion. He paid no heed, and stepping further, entered the city. Soon on arrival there, he was killed. When Qaṣīr saw this, he said, "Had the advice of Qaṣīr been followed." From that time this proverb gained currency.

[3] The poet of Banū Hawāzin implies Durayd ibn aṣ-Ṣimmah. He wrote this couplet after the death of his brother 'Abd Allāh ibn aṣ-Ṣimmah. Its facts are that 'Abd Allāh, along with his brother, led an attack against Banū Bakr ibn Hawāzin and drove away many of their camels. On return, when they intended to rest at Mun'araj al-Liwā, Durayd said it was not advisable to stay there lest the enemy attacks from behind, but 'Abd Allāh did not agree and stayed there. The result was that as soon as dawn appeared, the enemy attacked and killed 'Abd Allāh on the spot. Durayd also received wounds but he slipped away alive, and after this he wrote a few couplets out of which one couplet is this wherein he has referred to the destruction resulting from his advice having been rejected.