

Bahlool's Advice to Fazl bin Rabi'

Fazl bin Rabi' was passing by on his way somewhere when he saw Bahlool sitting with his head bowed, deep in thought. Fazl loudly said, "Bahlool! What are you doing?"

Bahlool raised his head, saw Fazl, and said, "I am thinking about your end. Your resurrection will be like that of Jafar Barmaki."

Fazl's heart started beating faster because he was so frightened at these words. He said, "O Bahlool! I have heard about Jafar's death, but not from your tongue. I want you to tell me about his death without adding or hiding anything."

Bahlool said, "During the Khalifate of Mansoor's son Mehdi, Khalid Barmaki's son Yahya was Haroun Rashid's scribe and permanent reader. Soon Haroun, Yahya, and his son Jafar became very attached to each other. Haroun had so much affection for Jafar that he did his Nikah (engagement) with his sister Abbasa, but ordered Jafar not to be violent toward her. Jafar opposed Haroun's wishes and made Abbasa a concubine. When Haroun heard about this, his entire affection for Jafar was swallowed up by enmity and discord. Now, day and night he searched for an excuse to kill Jafar, and thus destroy the Barmaki family.

"Finally, one night he said to his slave Masroor, 'Tonight I want you to cut off Jafar's head off and bring it to me.'

Masroor started trembling at this and worriedly bowed his head. Haroun asked, 'Why are you so quiet, what are you thinking?'

Masroor replied, 'This is a very big deed. O! Would my death come before I would do this.'

Haroun said, 'If you don't obey my command, you will be subject to my anger and wrath, and I will beat you in such a way that even pigeons will cry for you.'

"Masroor helplessly went to Jafar's house and conveyed the tyrant Khalifa's dangerous command. Jafar said, 'Possibly the Khalifa gave this order while he was drunk, and when his mind clears, he will regret it.

That is why I want you to go back and give the Khalifa news of my murder. If by morning there is no sign of regret in him, then I will, myself, bow down my head in front of your sword.'

“Masroor didn't have the courage to accept Jafar's condition. He said, 'Come with me to the curtain that separates us from the king's quarters. Maybe your love will make Haroun helpless and will change his decision.'

“Jafar agreed to Masroor's idea and walked towards his sorrowful demise. When these two arrived behind the curtain, Masroor started hiccuping and became very frightened. He went and stood in front of the Khalifa.

“Haroun asked, 'Masroor, what? What!'

“Masroor replied, 'I have brought Jafar. He is here, standing behind the curtain.'

'If you show the least bit of slowness or leniency in obeying my order, I will have you killed first!'

“There was no way to linger after these words. Masroor ran toward Jafar and cut off his head--the head of the handsome militant youth who was famous for being among the most well-mannered, and excelled in virtue and talent; he was a leader of generosity and beneficence. Masroor put Jafar's head on top of his own and presented it to Haroun. The unmerciful Khalifa did not think that this was enough, so he ordered the whole Barmaki family to be destroyed, and their entire wealth to be seized. Jafar's body was hung on the fort of Baghdad; a few days later it was burned.”

Bahloul continued, “Now O Fazl! I fear for your end. I tremble at the thought that your demise may be like Jafar's.”

Fazl became very frightened at Bahloul's words. He said, “Pray for my safety.”

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