

Sermon 44: May God disgrace Masqalah, ...

When Masqalah¹ ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybani fled to Mu`awiyah because he had purchased some prisoners of Banu Najiyah from an executive of Amir al-mu`minin, but when he demanded the price the latter avoided and ran to Syria, Amir al-mu`minin said:

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

لَمَّا هَرَبَ مَصْنُقَةَ بَنُ هُبَيْرَةَ الشَّيْبَانِي إِلَى مَعَاوِيَةَ، وَكَانَ قَدْ ابْتَاعَ سَبْيَ بَنِي نَاجِيَةَ
مِنْ عَامِلِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) وَأَعْتَقَهُمْ، فَلَمَّا طَالَبَهُ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) بِالْمَالِ
خَاسَ بِهِ وَهَرَبَ إِلَى الشَّامِ،

Allah may be bad to Masqalah. He acted like the noble but fled away like a slave. Before his admirer could speak (about him) he silenced him and before his eulogist could testify to his good deeds he closed his mouth. If he had stayed behind we would have taken from him what he could easily pay and waited for the balance till his money increased.

قَبَّحَ اللَّهُ مَصْنُقَةَ! فَعَلَ فِعْلَ السَّادَةِ، وَفَرَّ فِرَارَ الْعَبِيدِ! فَمَا أَنْطَقَ مَا دَحَهُ حَتَّى
أَسْكَتَهُ، وَلَا صَدَّقَ وَاصِفَهُ حَتَّى بَكَتَهُ، وَلَوْ أَقَامَ لِأَخْذِنَا مَيْسُورَهُ، وَانْتَظَرْنَا بِمَالِهِ
وُفُورَهُ.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 44

- (1) Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 65–77,
- (2) al-Thaqafi, *al-Gharat*, 329–372;
- (3) al-Baladhuri, *Ansab*, 411–417;
- (4) Ibn `Asakir, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 55 in the account of Masqalah ibn Hubayrah;
- (5) al-Mas`udi, *Muruj*, III, 419;
- (6) Abu al-Faraj, *al-Aghani*, IX, 100–106.

1. When after Arbitration the Kharijites rose, a man of Bani Najiyah from them named al-Khirrit ibn Rashid an-Naji stood up for instigating people and set off towards al-Mada'in with a group killing and marauding. Amir al-mu'minin sent Ziyad ibn Khasafah with three hundred men to check him. When the two forces met at al-Mada'in they attacked each other with swords. Only one encounter or so had taken place when the gloom of evening prevailed and the battle had to be stopped. When morning appeared Ziyad's men noticed that five dead bodies of the Kharijites were lying and they themselves had cleared off the battlefield. Seeing this Ziyad set off for Basrah along with his men. There he came to know that the Kharijites had gone to Ahwaz. Ziyad did not move onwards for paucity of force and informed Amir al-mu'minin of it. Amir al-mu'minin called back Ziyad and sent Ma`qil ibn Qays ar-Riyah'i with two thousand experienced combatants towards Ahwaz and wrote to the governor of Basrah `Abdullah ibn `Abbas to send two thousand swordsmen of Basrah for the help of Ma`qil. Consequently, the contingent from Basrah also joined them at Ahwaz and after proper organisation they got ready for attacking the enemy. But al-Khirrit marched on along with his men to the hills of Ramhurmuz. These people also followed him and overtook him near these hills. Both arrayed their forces and started attacking each other. The result of this encounter was also that three hundred and seventy Kharijites were killed in the battlefield while the rest ran away. Ma`qil informed Amir al-mu'minin of his performance and of the enemy's running away when Amir al-mu'minin directed him to chase them and so to shatter their power that they should not be able to raise heads again. On receipt of this order he moved on and overtook him on the coast of the Persian gulf where al-Khirrit had by persuasion secured the co-operation of the people and enlisting men from here and there, had collected a considerable force. When Ma`qil reached there, he raised the flag of peace and announced that those who had collected from here and there should get away. They would not be molested. The effect of this announcement was that save for his own community all others deserted him. He organised those very men and commenced the battle but valorous combatants of Basrah and Kufah displayed such excellent use of swords that in a short time one hundred and seventy men of the insurgents were killed while an-Nu`man ibn Suhban ar-Rasibi encountered al-Khirrit (ibn Rashid an-Naji) and eventually felled him and killed him. Soon upon his fall the enemy lost ground and they fled away from the battlefield. Thereafter Ma`qil collected all the men, women and children from their camps at one place. From among them those who were Muslims were released after swearing of allegiance. Those who had turned heretics were called upon to resume Islam. Consequently except one old Christian all others secured release by accepting Islam and this old man was killed. Then he took with him those Christians of Bani Najiyah who had taken part in this revolt together with their families. When Ma`qil reached Ardashir Khurrah (a city of Iran) these prisoners wailed and cried, before its governor Masqalah ibn Hubayrah ash-Shaybani and beseeched humiliatively to do something for their release. Masqalah sent word to Ma`qil through Dhuhl ibn al-Harith to sell these prisoners to him. Ma`qil agreed and sold those prisoners to him for five hundred thousand Dirhams and told him to dispatch the price immediately to Amir al-mu'minin. He said that he was sending the first instalment at once and the remaining instalments would also be sent soon. When Ma`qil met Amir al-mu'minin he related the whole event before him. Amir al-mu'minin ratified this action and waited

for the price for some time, but Masqalah observed such deep silence as if nothing was due from him. At last Amir al-mu'minin sent a messenger to him and sent him word to either send the price or to come himself. On Amir al-mu'minin's order he came to Kufah and on demand of the price paid two hundred thousand Dirhams but to evade the balance went away to Mu`awiyah's who made him the governor of Tabarastan. When Amir al-mu'minin came to know all this he spoke these words (as in this sermon). Its sum total is that, "If he had stayed we would have been considerate to him in demanding the price and would have waited for improvement of his financial condition, but he fled away like slaves after displaying a showy act. Talk about his high perseverance had just started when people began to discuss his baseless and lowliness."

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