

Sermon 51: They ask you to feed them ...

When in Siffin the men of Mu`awiyah overpowered the men of Amir al-mu`minin and occupied the bank of River Euphrates and prevented them from taking its water, Amir al-mu`minin said:

ومن كلامه (عليه السلام)

لَمَّا غَلَبَ أَصْحَابُ مُعَاوِيَةَ أَصْحَابَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ عَلَى شَرِيعَةِ الْفَرَاتِ بِصَفِينٍ
وَمَنْعُوهُمْ الْمَاءَ

They¹ are asking you morsels of battle. So either you remain in ignominy and the lowest position or drench your swords with blood and quench your thirst with water. Real death is in the life of subjugation while real life is in dying as subjugators. Beware, Mu`awiyah is leading a small group of insurgents and has kept them in dark about the true facts with the result that they have made their bosoms the targets of death.

قَدْ اسْتَطَعَمُوكُمُ الْقِتَالَ، فَأَقْرُوا عَلَى مَذَلَّةٍ، وَتَأْخِيرِ مَحَلَّةٍ، أَوْ رَوُّوا السُّيُوفَ مِنْ
الدِّمَاءِ تَرَوُّوا مِنَ الْمَاءِ، فَالْمَوْتُ فِي حَيَاتِكُمْ مَقْهُورِينَ، وَالْحَيَاةُ فِي مَوْتِكُمْ
قَاهِرِينَ. أَلَا وَإِنَّ مُعَاوِيَةَ قَادَ لُئِمَّةٍ مِنَ الْغُوَاةِ وَعَمَسَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَرَ، حَتَّى جَعَلُوا
نُحُورَهُمْ أَغْرَاضَ الْمَنِيَّةِ.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 51

(1) Nasr, *Siffin*, see Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh, I, 329.

1. Amir al-mu'minin had not reached Siffin when Mu`awiyah posted forty thousand men on the bank of the River to close the way to the watering place, so that none except the Syrians could take the water. When Amir al-mu'minin's force alighted there they found that there was no watering place except this one for them to take water. If there was one it was difficult to reach there by crossing high hillocks. Amir al-mu'minin sent Sa`sa`ah ibn Suhan al-`Abdi to Mu`awiyah with the request to raise the control over water. Mu`awiyah refused. On this side Amir al-mu'minin's army was troubled by thirst. When Amir al-mu'minin noticed this position he said, "Get up and secure water by dint of sword." Consequently, these thirsty persons drew their swords out of sheaths, put arrows in their bows and dispersing Mu`awiyah's men went right down into the River and then hit these guards away and occupied the watering place themselves.

Now, Amir al-mu'minin's men also desired that just as Mu`awiyah had put restriction on water by occupation of the watering place, the same treatment should be accorded to him and his men and no Syrian should be allowed water and everyone of them should be made to die of thirst. But Amir al-mu'minin said, "Do you want to take the same brutal step which these Syrians had taken? Never prevent anyone from water. Whoever wants to drink, may drink and whoever wants to take away may take away." Consequently, despite occupation of the River by Amir al-mu'minin's army no one was prevented from the water and everyone was given full liberty to take water.

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