

## Sermon 124: Put the armoured man forward....

*Exhorting his followers to fight 1*

ومن كلام له (عليه السلام)

في حضّ أصحابه على القتال

Put the armoured man forward and keep the unarmoured one behind. Grit your teeth because this will make the swords skip off the skull, and dodge on the sides of the spears for it changes the direction of their blades. Close the eyes because it strengthens the spirit and gives peace to the heart. Kill the voices because this will keep off spiritlessness.

فَقَدِّمُوا الدَّارِعَ، وَأَخِّرُوا الحَاسِرَ، وَعَضُّوا عَلَى الأَضْرَاسِ فَإِنَّهُ أَنْبَى لِلسُّيُوفِ عَنِ  
الْهَامِ، وَالتَّوَّأوا فِي أطْرَافِ الرِّمَاحِ فَإِنَّهُ أَمُورٌ لِلأَسِنَّةِ، وَعُغِضُوا الأَبْصَارَ فَإِنَّهُ أَرْبَطُ  
لِلْجَاشِ وَأَسْكَنُ لِلْقُلُوبِ، وَأَمِيتُوا الأصْوَاتَ فَإِنَّهُ أطرْدُ لِلْفَشْلِ.

Do not let your banner bend down, nor leave it alone. Do not give it to anyone except the brave and the defenders of honour among you because they alone endure the befalling of troubles; they surround the banners and encircle them on both sides, their rear and their front. They do not separate from them lest they give them over (to the enemy). They do not go ahead of them lest they leave them alone. Everyone should deal with his adversary and also help his comrade by his own life, and should not leave the adversary to his comrade lest both his own adversary and his comrade join against him.

وَرَايَتِكُمْ فَلَا تُمِيلُوهَا وَلَا تُخْلُوهَا، وَلَا تَجْعَلُوهَا إِلَّا بِأَيْدِي شُجْعَانِكُمْ، وَالْمَانِعِينَ  
الذِّمَارَ مِنْكُمْ، فَإِنَّ الصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى نُزُولِ الْحَقَائِقِ هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَحْفُونَ بِرَايَاتِهِمْ،  
وَيَكْتَنِفُونَهَا: حَفَافِيهَا، وَوَرَاءَهَا، وَأَمَامَهَا، لَا يَتَأَخَّرُونَ عَنْهَا فَيَسْلِمُوهَا، وَلَا  
يَتَقَدَّمُونَ عَلَيْهَا فَيُفْرِدُوهَا. أَجْزَأُ امْرُؤٌ قَرْنَهُ، وَأَسَى أَخَاهُ بِنَفْسِهِ، وَلَمْ يَكِلْ قَرْنَهُ إِلَى  
أَخِيهِ فَيَجْتَمِعَ عَلَيْهِ قَرْنُهُ وَقَرْنُ أَخِيهِ.

By Allah, even if you run away from the sword of today you would not remain safe from the sword of the next world. You are the foremost among the Arabs and great figures. Certainly in running away there is the wrath of Allah, unceasing disgrace and lasting shame.

And certainly a runner-away does not lengthen his life, nor does any thing come to intervene between him and his day (of death). Who is there to go towards Allah like the thirsty going to the water? Paradise lies under the edges of spears. Today the reputations (about the valour of warriors) will be tested.

By Allah! I am more eager to meet them (in combat) than they are for (returning to) their houses. O My God! If they reject truth disperse their group, divide their words (opinion) and destroy them on account of their sins.

وَإِيْمُ اللّٰهِ لَئِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِنْ سَيْفِ الْعَاجِلَةِ، لَا تَسْلَمُوا مِنْ سَيْفِ الْآخِرَةِ، أَنْتُمْ لَهَا مِيمُ  
الْعَرَبِ، وَالسَّنَامُ الْأَعْظَمُ، إِنَّ فِي الْفِرَارِ مَوْجِدَةَ اللّٰهِ، وَالذَّلَّ اللَّازِمَ، وَالْعَارَ الْبَاقِيَّ،  
وَإِنَّ الْفَارَّ لَغَيْرُ مَزِيدٍ فِي عُمُرِهِ، وَلَا مَحْجُوزَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ يَوْمِهِ. مَنْ رَاحَ إِلَى اللّٰهِ  
كَالظَّمَانِ يَرُدُّ الْمَاءَ؟ الْجَنَّةُ تَحْتَ أَطْرَافِ الْعَوَالِي ! الْيَوْمَ تُبْلَى الْأَخْبَارُ! وَاللّٰهِ لَأَنَا  
أَشْوَقُ إِلَى لِقَائِهِمْ مِنْهُمْ إِلَى دِيَارِهِمْ . اللّٰهُمَّ فَإِنْ رَدُّوا الْحَقَّ فَافْضُضْ جَمَاعَتَهُمْ،  
وَشَتِّتْ كَلِمَتَهُمْ، وَأَبْسِلْهُمْ بِخَطَايَاهُمْ.

They will not budge from their stand till the continuous striking of spears causes piercings (of wounds) through which wind may pass, and the hitting of swords cuts through the skull, cleaves bones and breaks forearms and legs, till they are attacked by contingent after contingent and assaulted by detachments which are followed by reserves for support, till their cities are continuously assailed by force after force, and till the horses trample even the extreme ends of the lands, the tracks of their beast and their meadows.

إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَزُولُوا عَنْ مَوَاقِفِهِمْ دُونَ طَعْنِ دِرَاكٍ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ النَّسِيمُ، وَضَرْبِ يَفْلِقُ

الْهَامَ، وَيُطِيحُ الْعِظَامَ، وَيُنْدِرُ السَّوَاعِدَ وَالْأَقْدَامَ، وَحَتَّى يُرْمَوْا بِالْمَنَاسِرِ تَتْبَعُهَا  
الْمَنَاسِرُ، وَيُرْجَمُوا بِالْكَتَائِبِ، تَقْفُوهَا الْحَلَائِبُ حَتَّى يُجْرَّ بِبِلَادِهِمُ الْخَمِيسُ يُتْلُوهُ  
الْخَمِيسُ، وَحَتَّى تَدْعُقَ الْخِيُولُ فِي نَوَاحِرِ أَرْضِهِمْ، وَبِأَعْنَانِ مَسَارِيهِمْ  
وَمَسَارِحِهِمْ.

**As-Sayyid ar-Radi says:** "ad-da`q" means trampling, e.g., "taduququl-khuyulu bihawafiriha ardahum" (the horses trample the ground with their hoofs). "nawahini ardihim" means lands opposite each other, it is said, "manazilu bani fulanin tatanaharu" meaning the 'houses of so-and-so are opposite each other.'

قال الشريف: الدّعقُ: الدقُّ، أي: تدقُّ الخيولُ بحوافرها أرضهم. نواحر أرضهم: متقابلاتها، يُقال: منازل بني فلان تتناحر، أي: تتقابل.

## Alternative Sources for Sermon 124

- (1) Nasr ibn Muzahim, *Siffin*, 235;
- (2) al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 9, events of 37 H.;
- (3) al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, V, 39;
- (4) Ibn A`tham al-Kufi, *al-Futuh*, III, 73;
- (5) Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, I, 583;
- (6) Al-Tawhidi, *al-Basa'ir*, 185;
- (7) al-Mufid, *al-'Irshad*, 154.

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1. Amir al-mu'minin delivered this Sermon on the occasion of the battle of Siffin. This battle was fought in the year 37 A.H. between Amir al-mu'minin and the Governor of Syria (ash-Sham), Mu`awiyah, for the so-called avenging for the killing of Caliph `Uthman. But in reality it was nothing more than Mu`awiyah who had been the Autonomous Governor of Syria from Caliph `Umar's days not wanting to lose that position by swearing allegiance to Amir al-mu'minin but wanting to keep his authority intact by exploiting the killing of Caliph `Uthman, for later events proved that after securing the government he did not take any practical step to avenge `Uthman's blood, and never spoke, not even through omission, about the killers of `Uthman.

Although from the first day Amir al-mu'minin realised that war was inevitable, it was still necessary to exhaust all pleas. Therefore when on Monday the 12th Rajeb, 36 A.H. he returned to Kufah after the battle of Jamal he sent Jarir ibn `Abdallah al-Bajali with a letter to Mu`awiyah at Damascus wherein he wrote that the muhajirun and the ansar had sworn

allegiance to him and that he too should first swear him allegiance and thereafter place the case of `Uthman's killing before him so that he could pass verdict thereon according to the Qur'an and Sunnah. But Mu`awiyah detained Jarir on several pretexts and after consulting `Amr ibn al-`As staged a revolt on the excuse of `Uthman's killing, and with the help of important persons of Syria convinced the ignorant people that the liability for `Uthman's life lay on `Ali (p.b.u.h) and that he, with his conduct had encouraged the besiegers and had given them protection. Meanwhile he hung the blood-stained shirt of `Uthman and the amputated fingers of his wife Na'ilah bint al-Farafisah on the pulpit in the Central Mosque of Damascus around which seventy thousand Syrians cried and swore the pledge to avenge `Uthman's blood. When Mu`awiyah had roused the feelings of the Syrians to such an extent that they were determined to lay down their lives and be killed, he secured their allegiance on the cause of avenging `Uthman's blood and busied himself in equipping for the battle. Thereafter, he showed all this to Jarir and then sent him back mortified.

When Amir al-mu'minin learnt of these matters through Jarir ibn `Abdallah al-Bajali he was forced to rise against Mu`awiyah, and ordered Malik ibn Habib al-Yarbu'i to mobilise the forces in the valley of An-Nukhaylah. Consequently, people from the suburbs of Kufah began arriving there in large numbers, till they exceeded eighty thousand. First of all, Amir al-mu'minin sent a vanguard contingent, eight thousand strong, under Ziyad ibn an-Nadr al-Harithi and another of four thousand strong under Shurayh ibn Hani al-Harithi towards Syria. After the departure of this vanguard contingent he himself set out for Syria at the head of the remaining army on Wednesday the 5th of Shawwal. When he was out of the boundary of Kufah he offered zuhr (noon) prayer and after staying at Dayr Abi Musa, Nahr (river) Nars, Qubbat Qubbin, Babil, Dayr Ka`b, Karbala', Sabat, Bahurasini, al-Anbar and al-Jazirah arrived at ar-Riqqah. The people of this place were in favour of `Uthman, and at this very place Simak ibn Makhtamah al-Asadi was putting up with his eight hundred men. These people had left Kufah to join Mu`awiyah after deserting Amir al-mu'minin; when they had seen Amir al-mu'minin's force they had dismantled the bridge over the River Euphrates so that Amir al-mu'minin's army should not cross over to the other side of the River. But at the threatening of Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'i they were frightened, and after consultations among themselves they put the bridge together again and Amir al-mu'minin passed over it with his army. When he alighted on the other side of the River he saw that Ziyad and Shurayh were also putting up there along with their men since both of them had adopted the land route. When, on reaching here, they found that Mu`awiyah was advancing with his armies towards the Euphrates and thinking that they would not be able to face him, they stopped there waiting for Amir al-mu'minin. When they had given the reason for their stopping there, Amir al-mu'minin accepted their plea and sent them forward. When they reached Sur ar-Rum they found that Abu al-A`war as-Sulami was camping there with his army. Both of them informed Amir al-mu'minin of this, whereupon he despatched Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'i in their wake as the Officer in Command and cautioned him not to initiate the fighting but to try to counsel them and apprise them of the correct position as far as possible. In this way, on reaching there Malik al-Ashtar encamped a little distance away. Fighting could have commenced any moment, but he did not interfere with the other side nor did he take any step by which fighting could have been commenced. But Abu al-A`war suddenly attacked them at night, whereupon they took their swords out of the sheaths and prepared to repulse them. Clashes between the two sides went on for sometime but in the end, taking benefit of the darkness of night Abu al-A`war fled away. Since fighting had already commenced, soon after the appearance of dawn an Iraqi commander, Hashim ibn `Utba al-Mirqal az-Zuhri, took his position in the battlefield. From the other side also a contingent came to face him, and the flames of fighting rose high. At last Malik al-Ashtar challenged Abu al-A`war to fight him, but he did not dare to face him, and towards the evening Malik al-Ashtar went onwards with his men. The next day Amir al-mu'minin reached there with his force and set off for Siffin with the vanguard contingent and other forces. Mu`awiyah had already reached there and had set up his bases. He had also placed a guard on the Euphrates and had occupied it. On reaching there Amir al-mu'minin sent him word to remove the guard from Euphrates, but he refused, whereupon the Iraqis took out their swords and in a courageous attack captured the Euphrates. When this stage was over Amir al-mu'minin sent Bashir ibn `Amr al-Ansari, Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani and Shabath ibn Rib'i at-Tamimi to Mu`awiyah to apprise him of the consequences of war and to make him agree to settlement and allegiance. But his reply was that they could not by any means let `Uthman's blood remain neglected, and that now the sword alone would arbitrate between them. Consequently in the month of Dhi'l-hijjah 36 A.H. both the parties decided on war and warriors from each side came out into the field to face their adversary. Those who entered the battlefield from Amir al-mu'minin's side were: Hujr ibn `Adi al-Kindi, Shabath ibn Rib'i at-Tamimi, Khalid ibn al-Mu`ammar, Ziyad ibn an-Nadr al-Harithi,

Ziyad ibn Khasafah at-Taymi, Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani, Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari and Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar an-Nakha'i while from the Syrians there were, 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Khalid ibn Walid al-Makhzuni, Abu al-A'war as-Sulami, Habib ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, 'Abdallah ibn Dhi'l-Kala' al-Himyari, 'Ubaydallah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, Shurahbil ibn Simt al-Kindi, and Hamzah ibn Malik al-Hamdani. When the month of Dhi'l-hijjah came to end the fighting had to be stopped for Muharram, but from the first of Safar fighting was resumed and both parties arrayed themselves opposite each other, equipped with swords, spears and other weapons. On Amir al-mu'minin's side Malik al-Ashtar was in command of the horsemen and 'Ammar ibn Yasir of the foot soldiers of Kufah while Sahl ibn Hunayf al-Ansari was in command of the horsemen and Qays ibn Sa'd of the foot soldiers of Basrah. The banner of the army was given to Hashim ibn 'Utbah. In the army of the Syrians on the right hand contingent Ibn Dhi'l-Kala' was in command, while on the left hand contingent Habib ibn Maslamah, on horsemen 'Amr ibn al-'As and on foot soldiers ad-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Fihri were in command.

On the first day Malik ibn al-Ashtar entered the battle-field with his men, and from the other side Habib ibn Maslamah came out with his men to face him and from both sides a fierce battle ensued. Throughout the day swords clashed with swords and spears with spears.

Next day, Hashim ibn 'Utbah came out with 'Ali's army and from the other side Abu al-A'war with his footmen came to face him. When the two armies approached near to each other, horsemen fell upon horsemen and footmen upon footmen and continued attacking each other. and they endured with great patience and steadfastness.

On the third day, 'Ammar ibn Yasir and Ziyad ibn an-Nadr came out with horsemen and foot soldiers and from the other side 'Amr ibn al-'As came forward with a big force. Ziyad attacked the horsemen of the opposite side and Malik al-Ashtar attacked the foot soldiers so furiously that the enemy's men lost ground and, failing to offer resistance, returned to their camps.

On the fourth day Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah appeared on the battle-field with his men. From the other side 'Ubaydallah ibn 'Umar came forward with the Syrian army and both the armies had a serious encounter.

On the fifth day 'Abdallah ibn 'Abbas came forward and from the other side al-Walid ibn 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt came to face him. 'Abdallah ibn 'Abbas carried the assaults with great steadfastness and courage and gave such a brave fight that the enemy left the field in retreat.

On the sixth day Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari came forward with the army and to face him Ibn Dhi'l-Kala' came out with his contingent, and such a severe fighting ensued that at every step bodies were seen falling and blood flowing like streams. At last the darkness of the night separated the two armies.

On the seventh day Malik al-Ashtar came out and to face him, Habib ibn Maslamah came forward with his men, and fighting raged till zuhr (noon).

On the eighth day Amir al-mu'minin himself came out with the army and made such an assault that the entire battlefield quaked, and piercing through the ranks and warding off shots of arrows and spears he came and stood between both the lines. Then he challenged Mu'awiyah, whereupon the latter, along with 'Amr ibn al-'As, came a bit closer. Then Amir al-mu'minin said to him: "Come out and face me. Let whoever kills the other be the ruler." Whereupon 'Amr ibn al-'As said to Mu'awiyah: "Ali is right. Gather up a little courage and face him. Mu'awiyah replied: "I am not prepared to waste my life at your taunting." Saying this he went back. When Amir al-mu'minin saw him retreating he smiled and himself too returned. The daring with which Amir al-mu'minin led the attacks in Siffin can only be called a miraculous feat. Thus, whenever he came out challenging in the battlefield, the enemy lines were dispersed into utter disarray and confusion, and even courageous combatants hesitated to appear against him. That is why on a few occasions he came onto the battlefield in changed dress so that the enemy should not recognise him and someone should be prepared to engage with him personally. Once 'Arar ibn Ad'ham came from the other side to engage with al-'Abbas ibn Rabi'ah al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. They remained engaged but neither could defeat the other, until al-'Abbas chanced to see that a link of his adversary's armour was loose. With a swift stroke he entangled the point of his sword in it, and then with a quick jerk he cut through a few more links. Then with true aim he gave such a blow that his sword went straight into his bosom. Seeing this, people raised the call of takbir. Mu'awiyah was startled at this noise and on coming to know that 'Arar ibn Ad'ham had been slain he was much disturbed and shouted if there was anyone to take revenge for 'Arar ibn Ad'ham and kill al-'Abbas, whereupon some tired swordsmen of the tribe of Lakhm came out challenging al-'Abbas. Al-'Abbas said he would come after taking his Chief's permission. Saying al-'Abbas came to Amir al-mu'minin to seek permission. Amir al-mu'minin

detained him, put on al-`Abbas's dress. and riding on al-`Abbas's horse entered the battlefield. Taking him to be al-`Abbas, the Lakhms said: "So you have got your Chief's permission." In reply Amir al-mu'minin recited the following verse: Permission (to fight) is given unto those upon whom war is made for they have been oppressed, and verily, to help them, Allah is Most Potent. (Qur'an, 22:39)

Now one man came out from the other side shouting like an elephant, ran amok and assaulted Amir al-mu'minin, but he avoided the blow and then gave such a clean cut with his sword to the other's back that he was split into two. People thought the blow had gone without avail, but when his horse jumped his two separate parts fell on the ground. After him another man came out but he too was finished in the twinkling of an eye. Then Amir al-mu'minin challenged others but from the strokes of his sword the enemy came to know that it was Amir al-mu'minin in the dress of al-`Abbas and so none dared come to face him.

On the ninth day the right wing was under the command of `Abdullah ibn Budayl and the left wing under that of `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas. In the centre was Amir al-mu'minin himself. On the other side Habib ibn Maslamah commanded the Syrian army. When both the lines had come face to face with each other, the valiant soldiers drew out their swords and pounced upon one another like ferocious lions, and fighting raged on all sides. The banner of the right wing Amir al-mu'minin's army was revolving in the hands of Banu Hamdan. Whenever anyone of them fell, martyred, someone else would pick up the banner. First of all Kurayb ibn Shurayh raised the banner, on his fall Shurahbil ibn Shurayh took it up, then Marthad ibn Shurayh, then Hubayrah ibn Shurayh then Yarim ibn Shurayh, then Sumayr ibn Shurayh and after the killing of all these six brothers the banner was taken up by Sufyan, then `Abd, then Kurayb, the three sons of Zayd, who all fell martyred. After that the banner was lifted by two brothers (sons) of Bashir namely `Umayr and al-Harith and when they too fell martyred, Wahb ibn Kurayb took up the banner. On this day the enemy's greater attention was on the right wing and its assaults were so fierce that the men lost ground and began to retreat from the battlefield. Only three hundred men remained with the Officer in Command `Abdullah ibn Budayl. On seeing this Amir al-mu'minin asked Malik al-Ashtar to call them back and challenge them as to where they were fleeing. "If the days of life are over they cannot avoid death by running away." Now the defeat of the right wing could not be without effect on the left wing, so Amir al-mu'minin turned to the left wing and advanced forward, forcing through the enemy lines, whereupon a slave of Banu Umayyah named Ahmar said to him, "Allah may make me die if I fail to slay you today." On hearing this Amir al-mu'minin's slave Kaysan leapt over him but was killed by him. When Amir al-mu'minin saw this he caught him by the skirt of his armour and, picking him up, threw him down so forcefully that all his joints were smashed, whereupon Imam Hasan (p.b.u.h.) and Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah came forward and despatched him to Hell. Meanwhile, after having been called to Malik al-Ashtar and his having made them feel ashamed, the retreaters came back and again assaulted so steadfastly that pushing back the enemy they reached the place where `Abdullah ibn Budayl was surrounded by the enemy. When he saw his own men he picked up courage and leapt towards Mu`awiyah's tent with drawn sword. Malik al-Ashtar tried to stop him but he couldn't, and, killing seven Syrians, he reached the tent of Mu`awiyah. When Mu`awiyah noticed him close by he ordered him to be stoned, as a result of which he was overpowered and the Syrians crowded over him and killed him. When Malik al-Ashtar saw this he proceeded forward with the combatants of Banu Hamdan and Banu Madh'hij for an attack on Mu`awiyah, and began dispersing the contingent on guard around him. When, out of the five circles of his guards only one remained to be dispersed, Mu`awiyah put his foot in the stirrup of his horse in order to run away, but on someone's encouragement again stopped. On another side of the battlefield a tumult was raging from one end to the other by the swords of `Ammar ibn Yasir and Hashim ibn `Utbah. From whatever side `Ammar passed, the companions (of the Holy Prophet) flocked around him and then made such a joint assault that destruction spread throughout the enemy lines. When Mu`awiyah saw them advancing he threw his fresh forces towards them. But he continued displaying the excellence of his bravery under the storm of swords and spears. At last Abu al-`Adiyah al-Juhani hit him with a spear from which he could not balance himself and then Ibn Hawiy (Jawn as-Saksiki) came forward and slew him. `Ammar ibn Yasir's death caused tumult in Mu`awiyah's ranks because about him they had heard the Holy Prophet (S) having said: " `Ammar will be killed at the hands of a rebellious party." Thus before he fell as martyr Dhu'l-Kala` had said to `Amr ibn al-`As: "I see `Ammar on `Ali's side; are we that rebellious party?" `Amr ibn al-`As had assured him that eventually `Ammar would join them, but when he killed fighting on `Ali's side the rebellious party stood exposed and no scope was left for any other interpretation. Nevertheless Mu`awiyah started telling the Syrians that: "We did not kill `Ammar, but `Ali did it because he brought him to the battlefield." When Amir

al-mu'minin heard this cunning sentence he remarked: "In that case the Holy Prophet (S) killed Hamzah as he had brought him to the battlefield of Uhud." Hashim ibn `Utbah also fell in this conflict. He was killed by al-Harith ibn Mundhir at-Tanukhi. After him the banner of the contingent was taken over by his son `Abdullah.

When such fearless warriors were gone Amir al-mu'minin said to the warriors from the tribes of Hamdan and Rabi`ah: "To me you are like armour and spear. Get up and teach these rebels a lesson. " Consequently, twelve thousand combatants of the tribes of Rabi`ah and Hamdan stood up, swords in hand. The banner was taken up by Hudayn ibn al-Mundhir. Entering the lines of the enemy, they used their swords in such a way that heads began to drop, bodies fell in huge heaps and on every side streams of blood flowed. And the assaults of these swordsmen knew no stopping till the day began to end with all its devastation and the gloom of eve set in, ushering in that fearful night which is known in history as the night of al-Harir, wherein the clashing of weapons, the hoofs of horses and the hue and cry of the Syrians created such noise that even voices reaching the ears could not be heard. On Amir al-mu'minin's side, his wrong-crushing slogans raised waves of courage and valour, and on the enemy's side they shook the hearts in their bosoms. The battle was at its zenith. The quivers of the bowmen had become empty. The stalks of the spears had been broken. Hand to hand fighting went on with swords only and dead bodies collected in heaps, till by morning the number of killed had exceeded thirty thousand. On the tenth day Amir al-mu'minin's men showed the same morale. On the right wing Malik al-Ashtar held the command and on the left wing `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas.

Assaults went on like the assaults of new soldiers. Signs of defeat appeared on the Syrians, and they were about to leave the battlefield and run away, when five hundred Qur'ans were raised on spears changing the entire face of the battle.

Moving swords stopped, the weapon of deceit was successful, and the way was clear for wrong to hold its sway.

In this battle forty-five thousand Syrians were killed while twenty-five thousand Iraqis fell as martyrs. (Kitab Siffin by Nasr ibn Muzahim al-Minqari [d. 212 A.H.] and at-Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 1, pp. 3256-3349).

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