

# The Caliphate of Imam Ali

Lesson 5



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ENRICHING THE SOUL

# The Arbitration

- When Muawiyah felt that he was on the brink of defeat, him and Amr b. al-A'as devised a plan to thwart the army of Imam Ali.
- They commanded their soldiers to place copies of the Quran on their spears and demand arbitration through the Quran.
- There was a division within the army of Imam Ali. Some of them said that the enemy has invited them to the arbitration of the Qur'an and so it was no longer permissible to continue fighting. The Imam opposed their views and told them that this was just a deception.

# Arbitration

- However, under the pressures by some people in his army, including al-Ash'ath b. Qays al-Kindi, and his tribe, the Imam wrote a letter to Muawiyah and officially accepted the arbitration with the qualification that Muawiyah was not a "man of the Quran"
- People of Syria elected Amr b. al-A'as as their representative and arbitrator. Al-Ash'ath b. Qays and some others suggested Abu Musa al-Ash'ari as the arbitrator from Kufa.
- But Imam Ali suggested Abdullah b. Abbas or Malik al-Ashtar.

# Arbitration

- Imam Ali's suggestions were opposed by al-Ash'ath and his friends; they refused Malik al-Ashtar on the grounds that he is pro-war, and they rejected Abdullah b. Abbas on the grounds that Amr b. al-A'as is from a Yemeni tribe so his interlocutor should be from Yemen.
- There are two reasons behind selection of Abu Musa as the arbitrator: First, he was from Yemen and second, he refused to attend the Battle of Siffeen. Abu Musa stayed out of the military conflict and advised other people not to attend the battle; but when he was informed of the cessation of the fight, he thanked God for that. Then when he was told that Imam's soldiers chose him as the arbitrator, he accepted to enter Imam's camp.

# Arbitration

- When the cease-fire agreement was being drafted, an incident occurred which harked back to Treaty of Hdaybiyya.
- The secretary wrote the words: “This is an agreement between Ali b. Abi Talib, the Commander of the Faithful, and Muawiyah b. Abi Sufyan...” Amr b. al-A’as, the representative of Muawiyah, raised an objection, and said: “Delete the words, ‘the Commander of the Faithful.’ If we had acknowledged Ali as the Commander of the Faithful, we would not be fighting against him.”

# Arbitration

- Thereupon, Imam Ali remarked: “How true was the Messenger of God when he foretold this very incident. When the Treaty of Hudaibiyya was being drafted, and I had written the words, ‘This is a Treaty between Muhammad, the Messenger of God, and ...’ the idolaters interrupted me, and said that if they had acknowledged Muhammad as the Messenger of God, then they would not be fighting against him, and they insisted upon the deletion of the words, ‘Messenger of God,’ from the text of the Treaty.”

# Arbitration

- At Hdaybiyya, the Prophet had deleted the words “Messenger of God” from the draft treaty; at Siffeen, Imam Ali, following the Prophet’s example, allowed the words “the Commander of the Faithful” to be deleted from the draft treaty.
- The cease-fire agreement was duly signed and witnessed by both sides, and copies were exchanged for preservation in the archives.

# Arbitration

- The terms of the cease-fire agreement were:
  - Both arbiters would be subject to the rule that their decisions would be taken in the light of the Book of God. If they are unable to decide anything on this basis, then they would take their decision in the light of the precedents and traditions of the Messenger of God.
  - The decision of the arbiters, if based upon the Book of God, would be binding on both sides.
  - The arbiters would investigate the causes that led to the murder of Uthman, and the civil war of the Muslims.
  - The arbitrators would publish their decisions within six months from the date of the cease-fire.



# Arbitration

- They would protect the arbiters who would have complete freedom of movement in the country.
- The arbiters would meet at a place on the frontier between Iraq and Syria.
- The most important clause in this agreement was that the arbiters would make the Book of God their guide, and that they would not be governed by their own lusts and desires.

# Arbitration

- After days of negotiations, Abu Musa proposed to remove both Imam Ali and Muawiyah from the caliphate and appoint Abdullah b. Abbas as the caliph of the Muslims which was confirmed by Amr b. al-A'as.
- However, when they decided to announce the verdict, Amr b. al-A'as tricked Abu Musa to begin the talk. As it was agreed between both of them, Abu Musa announced the removal of Imam Ali from the caliphate, while on the other hand Amr b. al-A'as refused to remove Muawiyah, and he announced Muawiyah as the caliph.

# The Khawarij

- The Khawarij were a group within the army of Imam Ali that emerged during the arbitration in the Battle of Siffeen.
- This group opposed the idea of arbitration from the beginning and regarded it as turning their back to religion and developing doubt in faith.
- They regarded accepting arbitration as infidelity and repented for it. They asked Imam to repent from this infidelity and break the conditions he made with Muawiyah!
- There were 12,000 of these men who repudiated their oath of loyalty to Imam Ali after the battle of Siffeen.

# The Khawarij

- But Imam did not accept and said, "We have accepted something that we cannot break."
- Also about arbitration, the Imam said, "I was against arbitration, and when later I accepted it due to the pressure of people forcing me to do so, I made a condition that if they rule according to the Book of God, I would follow it, because in fact we have accepted the judgment of the Quran, not the judgment of people."

# The Khawarij

- After the battle of Siffeen was discontinued and Imam returned to Kufa and Muawiyah returned to Syria, those who were against arbitration separated themselves from Imam Ali and went to a village near Kufa. This way, a group called Khawarij [literally meaning "those who exit"] emerged.
- Imam Ali sent Abdullah b. Abbas to debate with them. According to one account, 2000 or 4000 of Khawarij were convinced and returned to Kufa.

# The Khawarij

- Khawarij expressed their opposition in Kufa. They considered everyone who had accepted arbitration to be an unbeliever. Moreover, they considered as an unbeliever everyone who did not take Imam Ali to be an unbeliever.
- They not only rejected the two arbiters, but also any Islamic ruler.
- In public places, particularly in the Mosque of Kufa, they explicitly expressed their opposition to the Arbitration, accused the Imam (a) of being an unbeliever, threatened him to murder, and chanted slogans during the Imam's sermons.

# The Khawarij

- Characteristics of the Khawarij:
  - Memorizing the Quran without reflecting on it,
  - Worshipping God without true faith
  - Pretending asceticism
  - Ignorance and narrow-mindedness
  - Unfamiliarity with the Prophet's tradition and the rulings of Islam
  - Misunderstanding the Quran and misapplication of its verses to their own purposes in a very superficial way
  - Arrogance and self-righteousness, and thus, considering other Muslims to be misguided

# The Khawarij

- Desire to have controversies, instead of making arguments,
- Prejudice and bias in their views and beliefs,
- Violent towards those who disagree with them
- Lack of organization
- Hostility to Imam Ali even after his martyrdom
- Combativeness, courage, tolerance in spite of difficulties, and military discipline



# The Khawarij

- The Khawarij killed many people on their way to Nahrawan including Abdullah b. Khabbab b. Aratt, whose father was among the companions of the Prophet.
- The Khawarij killed him along with his wife who was pregnant at that time in a ruthless manner.
- Reports of these crimes reached Imam Ali and he mobilized an army to fight them.

# The Battle of Nahrawan

- The Imam was preparing for another military confrontation with Muawiyah because he had violated the terms of the arbitration. The Imam had mobilized 65,000 to fight Muawiyah.
- Imam Ali wanted to deal with the Khawarij after defeating Muawiah, but the likes of al-Ash'ath b. Qays insisted that the families of the soliders would not be safe if the Khawarij were not annihilated first.
- The concern of al-Ash'ath demoralized the army of Imam Ali and thus the Imam was forced to reroute and put an end to the violence of the Khawarij.

# The Battle of Nahrawan

- Imam Ali meets with the Khawarij at Nahrawan and addresses them.
- Many of the Khawarij joined the Imam after hearing his words but approximately 2500.
- Imam Ali told his men that no more than 10 of you will be killed and no more than 10 of them will be left.
- The Imam decimated the Khawarij in the Battle of Nahrawan.
- The wounded who were about 400 were sent back to their families.
- From all the army of Khawarij in Nahrawan, less than 10 people could escape unscathed, one of whom was Ibn Muljam, who later martyred Imam Ali.

# The Assassination of Imam Ali

- Imam Ali was assassinated by one of the Khawarij by the name of Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Amr b. Muljam al-Murādī
- He pledged allegiance to Imam Ali when he became the caliph of Muslims.
- Also he fought alongside Imam Ali (a) in the Battle of the Camel, however, after the arbitration after the Battle of Siffen, Ibn Muljam joined the Kharijites.
- Ibn Muljam fought against Imam Ali (a) in the Battle of Nahrawan and he was among the few surviving Kharijites.

# The Assassination of Imam Ali

- After Kharijites were defeated in the Battle of Nahrawan, three surviving members, 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muljam and two other men
- They gathered in Makkah and planned to simultaneously assassinate Imam Ali, Muawiyah, and Amr b. al-A'as.
- Abd al-Rahman was set for assassination of Imam Ali then he traveled to Kufa where he met his Kharijite allies.
- Some historical accounts mention that he fell in love with a beautiful woman named Qutaam and proposed to her. Her father and brother were killed in the Battle of Nahrawan; therefore, she accepted his proposal under some conditions; one of them was the assassination of Imam Ali.

# The Assassination of Imam Ali

- Imam Ali was struck by Ibn Muljam on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month of Ramadan while the Imam was leading the morning prayer in the Mosque of Kufa.
- Ibn Muljam was arrested and brought to the home of Imam Ali.
- He was given shelter and food until the Imam died on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month of Ramdan in the year 40AH.

# The Assassination of Imam Ali

ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ، لَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَخْرُجُوا دِمَاءَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ خَوْضًا، تَقُولُونَ: قُتِلَ  
أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. إِلَّا لَا تَقْتُلُنَّ بِي إِلَّا قَاتِلِي. انظُرُوا إِذَا أَنَا مَاتٌ مِنْ ضَرْبَتِهِ هَذِهِ، فَاصْرَبُوا ضَرْبَةَ  
بِضْرَبَةٍ، وَلَا يُمَثَّلُ بِالرَّجُلِ، فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) يَقُولُ: "إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْمَثَلَةَ  
وَلَوْ بِالْكَلْبِ الْعَقُورِ"

- O sons of Abd al-Muttalib, certainly I do not wish to see you plunging harshly into the blood of Muslims shouting "The Commander of the Faithful has been killed." Beware, do not kill on account of me except my killer. Wait till I die by from his blow. Then strike him one strike for his strike and do not dismember the limbs of the man, for I have heard the Messenger of God saying, "Avoid cutting limbs even though it may be a rabid dog."