

A Little About Bahlool

Bahlool was born in Kufa and his real name is Wahab bin Amr. Haroun Rashid feared for the safety of his Khalifate and kingdom from the 7th Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.); therefore, he tried to destroy the Imam. Haroun thought of a trick by which he could kill the Holy Imam.

He put the blame of rebellion upon the Imam and demanded a judicial decree from the pious people of his time--which included Bahlool. Everyone gave the decree except Bahlool, who opposed the decision. He immediately went to the Imam and informed him of the circumstances, and asked for advice and guidance. Then and there the Imam told him to act insanely.

Because of the situation, Bahlool acted insanely by the Imam's order. By doing this, he was saved from Haroun's punishment. Now, without any fear of danger, and in amusing ways, Bahlool protected himself from tyrannies. He insulted the notorious Khalifa and his courtiers just by talking. Nevertheless, people acknowledged his superior wisdom and excellence. Even today many of his stories are narrated in assemblies and teach the listeners valuable lessons.

According to a more popular tradition, some of the Holy Imam's companions and special friends came to him because the Khalifa was angry with them, and asked him for advice. The Imam answered with the sole letter (jim) ; all of them understood that that was it and asked no further questions.

Each person understood the Holy Imam's advice in his own different way. One person took (jim) to mean (jala watan) --exile. Another thought of (jabl) --mountain. Bahlool took it to mean (jinoon) --insanity. This is how all of the Imam's companions were saved from calamity.

Before becoming insane, Bahlool lived a life of influence and power, but after obeying the Imam's order, he turned his face away from the majesty and splendor of the world. In reality, he became crazy over Allah. He dressed in rags, preferred desolate places over Haroun's palaces, lived on a bite of stale bread. He did not accept favors from or depend upon Haroun or those like him. Bahlool considered himself better than the Khalifa and his courtiers because of his way of life.

(A Poem)

Those with kingly temperaments deserve respect from
the chiefs of the kingdom.

This is a ragged king whose slaves are great and powerful
kings like Jamsheed and Khaqan.

Today he overlooked the goodness of this world, tomorrow
he will not even give importance to Paradise.

Don't look scornfully at these beggars with no shoes on their feet!

They are dearer to wisdom than eyes which shed tears from
fear of Allah.

If Adam sold Paradise for two grains of wheat, then truly know
that these people will not buy it for even one grain.

Bahloul was sincerely devoted to Allah; he was an intelligent and virtuous scholar. He was the master of the mind and manners; he spoke with the best of answers ready on his lips; he protected his faith and the Shariah. Bahloul became insane at the Imam's command for the love of Ahlul Bayt, and so he could enforce the rights of which they had been wronged.

There was no other way for Bahloul to protect his life. For example, Haroun told his vizier, Yahya bin Khalid Barmaki, that listening to the words of Imam Jafar Sadiq's student Hisham bin Hikam --who proved Imam Musa Kazim's Imamate-- was more dangerous to him than 100,000 swords. Haroun said, "Even then it amazes me that Hisham is alive and I am in power."

Haroun planned to kill Hisham. Hisham learned of this and fled from Kufa, and hid in a friend's house, but after a short while he died.

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