

Sermon 189: One belief is that which is firm and steadfast in hearts....

Steadfast and transient belief and the obligation of migration (hijrah)

(ومن خطبته (عليه السلام

في الايمان ووجوب الهجرة

One belief is that which is firm and steadfast in hearts, and one is that which remains temporarily in the heart and the breast up to a certain time. If you were to acquit (yourself) before any person, you should wait till death approaches him, for that is the time limit for being acquitted.

فَمِنَ الْاِيْمَانِ مَا يَكُونُ ثَابِتًا مُسْتَقَرًّا فِي الْقُلُوبِ، وَمِنْهُ مَا يَكُونُ عَوَارِي بَيْنَ الْقُلُوبِ وَالصُّدُورِ، اِلَى اَجَلٍ مَّعْلُومٍ، فَاِذَا كَانَتْ لَكُمْ بَرَاءَةٌ مِنْ اَحَدٍ فَقَفُوهُ حَتَّى يَحْضُرَهُ الْمَوْتُ، فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ يَقَعُ حَدُّ الْبَرَاءَةِ.

The obligation of migration

وجوب الهجرة

And migration stands as its original position. Allah has no need towards him who secretly accepts belief or him who openly does so. Migration will not apply to any one unless he recognises the proof (of Allah) on the earth. Whoever recognises him and acknowledges him would be a *muhajir* (migrant). *Istid'af* (i.e. the state of being deemed weak and therefore free from the obligation of migration) does not apply to him to whom the proof (of Allah) reaches and who hears it and his heart preserves it. [1](#)

وَالْهَجْرَةَ قَائِمَةً عَلَى حَدِّهَا الْأَوَّلِ، مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى فِي أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ حَاجَةً مِنْ مُسْتَسِرِّ الْأُمَّةِ وَمُعَلِّنِهَا، لَا يَقَعُ اسْمُ الْهَجْرَةِ عَلَى أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِمَعْرِفَةِ الْحُجَّةِ فِي الْأَرْضِ، فَمَنْ عَرَفَهَا وَأَقْرَبَهَا فَهُوَ مُهَاجِرٌ، وَلَا يَقَعُ اسْمُ الْأَسْتِضْعَافِ عَلَى مَنْ بَلَغَتْهُ الْحُجَّةُ فَسَمِعَتْهَا أُذُنُهُ وَوَعَاَهَا قَلْبُهُ.

Arduousness of belief

صعوبة الايمان

Certainly, our case is difficult and complicated. No one can bear it except a believer whose heart Allah has tried with belief. Our traditions will not be preserved except by trustworthy hearts and (men of) solid understanding.

إِنَّ أَمْرَنَا صَعِبٌ مُسْتَصْعَبٌ، لَا يَحْتَمِلُهُ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ اِمْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ لِلْإِيمَانِ، وَلَا يَعِي حَدِيثَنَا إِلَّا صُدُورٌ أَمِينَةٌ، وَأَحْلَامٌ رَزِينَةٌ.

The knowledge of the successor (wasi), his challenge "Ask me before you miss me" and prophecy about the Umayyads

علم الوصي

O people! Ask me before you lose me, because certainly I am acquainted with the passages of the sky more than the passages of the earth,² and before that mischief springs upon its feet which would trample even the nosestring and destroy the wits of the people.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، سَلُونِي قَبْلَ أَنْ تَفْقِدُونِي، فَلَنَا بِطُرُقِ السَّمَاءِ أَعْلَمُ مِنِّْي بِطُرُقِ الْأَرْضِ، قَبْلَ أَنْ تَشْعَرَ بِرِجْلِهَا فِتْنَةً تَطَأُ فِي خَطَامِهَا وَتَذْهَبُ بِأَحْلَامِ قَوْمِهَا.

Alternative Sources for Sermon 189

- (1) Al-Tha'alibi, *al-l'jaz*, 32;
- (2) al-Saffar, *Basa'ir*, 31; on p. 202 from (3)
- (3) Mas'adah ibn Sadaqah, *Khutab Amir al-Mu'minin (A)*;
- (4) al-Saduq, *Uyun*, I, 164;

- (5) al-Saduq, *al-Khisal*, II, 164;
- (6) al-'Amidi, *Ghurar*, 80, narrated by (7)
- (7) al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, II, 466;
- (8) Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, *Jami'*, I, 114;
- (9) Ibn Hajar, *al-Isabah*, II, 509;
- (10) al-Tabari, *al-Riyad*, 198;
- (11) al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 124;
- (12) Dahlan, *al-Futuhah*, II, 337;
- (13) al-Qunduzi, *Yanabi' al-mawaddah*, 224.

1. This is the interpretation of the word "muhajir" and "mustad`af" as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

Verily those whom the angels take away (at death) while they are unjust to their (own) selves (in sin), they (the angels) shall ask (the sinning souls): "In what state were ye?" They shall reply, "Weakened (mustad`af – and oppressed) were we in the land;" They (angels) will say "Was not the land of Allah vast (enough) for you to immigrate therein?" So these (are those) whose refuge shall be Hell; and what a bad resort it is. Except the (really) weakened ones from among the men and the women and the children, who have not in their power the means (to escape from the unbelievers) and nor do they find the (right) way. So these, may be, Allah will pardon them; and Allah is the Clement, the Oft-forgiving. (4:97-99)

The meaning of Amir al-mu'minin here is that hijrah (migration) was not only obligatory during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, but it is a permanent obligation. This migration is even now obligatory for attaining the proof of Allah and the true religion. Therefore, if one has attained the proof of Allah and believed in it, even if he is in midst of the unbelievers of his locality, he is not duty bound to migrate.

The "mustad`af" (weakened) is one who is living among the unbelievers and is far from being informed of the proofs of Allah, and at the same time he is unable to migrate in order to attain the proofs of Allah.

2. Some people have explained this saying of Amir al-mu'minin to mean that by the passages of the earth he means matters of the world and by passages of the sky matters of religious law and that Amir al-mu'minin intends to say that he knows the matters of religious law and commandments more than the worldly matters. Thus, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani writes (in *Sharh Nahjul Balaghah*, vol. 4, pp. 200-201):

It is related from al-'Allamah al-Wabari, that he said that Amir al-mu'minin's intention is to say that the scope of his religious knowledge is larger than his knowledge about matters of the world.

But taking the context into account, this explanation cannot be held to be correct because this sentence (which is the subject of explanation) has been used as the cause of the sentence "Ask me before you miss me", and after it, is the prophesy about revolt. In between these two the occurrence of the sentence that "I know religious matters more than worldly matters", makes the whole utterance quite uncoupled, because Amir al-mu'minin's challenge to ask whatever one likes is not confined to matters of religious law only so this sentence could be held as its cause. Then, after that, the prophesy of the rising up of the revolt has nothing to do with matters of religious law, so that it could be put forth as a proof of more knowledge of religious matters. To ignore the clear import of the words and to interpret them in a way which does not suit the occasion, does not exhibit a correct spirit, when from the context also the same meaning accrues which the words openly convey. Thus, it is to give a warning about the Umayyad's mischief that Amir al-mu'minin uttered the words: "Ask me whatever you like"; because I know the paths and courses of divine destiny more than the passages of the earth. So, even if you ask me about matters which are recorded in the 'preserved tablet' and concern divine destiny I can tell you,

and a serious mischief is to rise against me in those matters in which you should have doubt, because my eyes are more acquainted with those ethereal lines which concern the occurrence of events and mischiefs than, with what I know about live appearing on the earth. The occurrence of this mischief is as certain as an object seen with eyes. You should therefore ask me its details and the way to keep safe from it, so that you may be able to manage your defence when the times comes." This meaning is supported by the successive sayings of Amir al-mu'minin which he uttered in connection with the unknown, and to which the future testified. Thus, Ibn Abi'l Hadid comments on this claim of Amir al-mu'minin as follows: Amir al-mu'minin's claim is also supported by his sayings about future events which he uttered not once or a hundred times but continuously and successively, from which there remains no doubt that whatever he spoke was on the basis of knowledge and certainly and not in the way of chance. (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 13, p. 106)

In connection with this saying of Amir al-mu'minin it has already been shown and explained (in Sermon 92, Foot-note No. 2) that no one else dared advance such a claim, and those who made such a claim had to face only disgrace and humility. About the prophecies made by Amir al-mu'minin see Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol. 7, pp. 47-51; al-Qadi Nuru'l-Lah al-Mar`ashi, Ihqaq al-haqq (New ed.), vol. 8, pp. 87-182.

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