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# Chapter Nine: Warfare Policies

## 9.1 Endeavors in Military Training

### A. Training the Troops

466. Imam Ali (a.s.) – from his commandments to Ziyad b. Nadr when he assigned him as the commander of his army in the battle of Siffin: "You should know that the vanguards are the harbingers, and the harbingers are the front. If you leave your country and approach your enemy, you should not feel weary from addressing the front to every side and to some of the defiles, woods, and secret places as well as every area so that your enemies will not raid or trap you."

"Do not give the orders of directing the battalions and tribes from morning to evening unless there are covering powers beyond them."

"If a matter occurs or a trouble befalls you, your camp should be on the heights, versants, or in rivers so that they will form fortresses for you and will prevent your enemies from reaching you. Your fighting should be in one or two faces. Order the harbingers to settle on the summits of mountains, heights, and on the edges of rivers. They should oversee for you so that the enemies will not attack you from an expected or secured place."

"If you want to reside, you should reside collectively, and when you want to continue your march, you should continue collectively. When you reside at night, you should encompass your camp with spears and armors. The archers should protect the carriers of armors so that you will not be taken surprisingly or inattentively."

"Guard your army yourself. Beware, you should not sleep unbrokenly and should not pass a night with deep sleep. You should keep up this tradition until you meet your enemy."

"You should be slow in fighting. You may hurry only when a good opportunity arises for you. Do not fight before the enemy attacks you or you receive my order. Peace and Allah's Mercy be upon you."[1]

467. Imam Ali (a.s.) – from his commandments to Ma'qal b. Qays Riyahi when he was dispatched to Syria at the head of a vanguard contingent three thousand strong: "Fear Allah before Whom attendance is inevitable, and with other than Whom there is no meeting. Do not fight except with those who fight you. Travel in the two cool periods (i.e. morning and evening). Let the men have midday sleep. March easily and do not travel during the early night for Allah has made it for resting and has ordained it for staying, nor for journeying.

Therefore give rest to your body in the night and let your carrier-beasts also rest. When you are sure that morning has appeared and when dawn has dawned commence your journey with Allah's blessings. If and when you face the enemy stand in the midst of your comrades. Do not get too near the foe, like the one who wants to commence the fighting, nor remain too distant like him who is afraid of action, till you receive my orders. Hatred for them should not lead you to fight before inviting them (to guidance) and exhausting your pleas before them."[2]

468. Imam Ali (a.s.) – from his letter to some of his chiefs of army: "If they [the enemies] return to the umbrella of obedience, then this Is all that we want. But if the condition of these people points out towards disruption and disobedience, then, taking with you those who obey you, rush upon those who disobey you. And while you have those with you who follow you do not worry about those who hold back from you, because the absence of a halfhearted man is better than his presence, and his sitting down is better than his rising up."[3]

469. Imam Ali (a.s.): "If the enemy launches an assault upon you, then array your troops on the gates of the ditches for there exists nothing save swords; and stand firm on the ground after arraying the troops. Do not look at the enemies in the face and their number should not scare you, look to your own land [and front] instead. If they assault you, bend over on your horses and hide yourselves behind your shields like an impenetrable stronghold; and if they turn their back on you, launch an attack on them with your swords. If they stand still, and you stand still on the other side too. And if they run away, rush on them and catch them."[4]

470. Imam Ali (a.s.): "If, God forbid, you happen to face a defeat, hold a gathering and remember Allah and remember how the deserters of the battlefield are promised [to be punished], and reproach the one whom you see turning his back on the enemy. Gather the banners and unite them. The roughriders must hasten to bring the fugitives back to the troops and the army; and anyone hiding in the hideaways is to come back to you. When the dispersed troops were gathered and your power was reclaimed and defeat state left you, hand over the troops to the commanders, mobilize the forces and fight. Seek assistance from Allah and be patient, for there is great reward for perseverance at the time of defeat and for the brave man's surprise attack on the enemy."[5]

471. Tarikh Damishq – related by Ibn 'Abbas: "Women fail to give birth to the like of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.) any longer. By Allah, I neither see nor heard of any chief to be compared to him. I saw him at the battle of Siffin wearing a turban with the folders on both sides let down. His two eyes looked

[glazing] like two fiery lights. He was standing before a small group and inciting them to fight until he reached me while I was standing amid the people."

"Then he said, 'O Gathering of the Muslims! Feel the fear of Allah, lower the voices, put on tranquility, wield your spears, and before drawing your sword give it a good shake. Wave your swords to the left and right, and strike them with their sharp edges. Coordinate your swords with your steps and your arrows with your spears. Certainly, you are in the sight of Allah and in the company of the Prophet's cousin."

"Launch your assaults consecutively and be ashamed of deserting, for it is a great shame that will remain in the groups and generations, and it is [turned into] fire on the Resurrection."

"Keep yourselves lively and delighted, and step toward death readily and lightheartedly. Aim at the bulk of the [enemy's] troop and the tent whose ropes are stretched around and aim at their hearts, for the Satan has mounted the unruly camel and has extended his arms, holding one hand forward to attack and a foot backward to run away. So stay firm and persevere, so as the Light of Allah may shine on you, as (***...and when you have the upper hand and Allah is with you, and He will not stint*** [***the reward of***] ***your works.***)[6]"[7]

472. Imam Ali (a.s.): "Do not let your banners bend down, nor leave it alone. Do not give it to anyone except the brave and the defenders of honor among you because they alone endure the befalling of troubles.... And know that the guardians are those who surround the banners and encircle them on both sides, their rear and their front, and do not let it be ruined. They do not separate from them lest they give them over to the enemy, nor they go ahead of them lest they leave them alone."[8]

## B. Arrangement the Troops

473. Da'a'im al-Islam – about Ali (a.s.): "When preparing for combat, he would arrange the troops into the left, the right and the middle flanks, with himself stationing in the middle. He would appoint liaisons for them, would send forth harbingers and would order them to lower their voices, to pray, to be one in the heart, to draw their swords, to display their power. He would also order every group to be stationed in their own positions and that everyone who would make a raid should return to his position after the raid."[9]

474. Da'a'im al-Islam – about Ali (a.s.): "Verily, when he prepared to go on a battle, he would prepare the battalions and separate among the tribes. He would appoint a person over every group, array the troops, and divide them into groups. Then he would set off for the battle."[10]

475. Imam Ali (a.s.) – on how to wage a war: "Send the infantry and the archers ahead to storm them [the enemy] with arrows, while the two flanks raid on them with spears. Set the riders and the elite forces as the support of the banner and the forerunners; and do not leave your positions for a rider from the enemy who has been left alone."[11]

476. Imam Ali (a.s.) – in his commandment to the troops when dispatching them to confront the enemy: " When you proceed towards the enemy or he proceeds towards you, the position of your forces should be on the high ground or on the mountain slopes or the bends of rivers so that it may serve you as shelter and a place to return to and hindrance to the enemy. Your encounter should be from one side or two sides. Place watchers on the peaks of mountains and the raised sides of the high ground so that the enemy my not approach you from any place, whether of danger or safety. And know that the vanguard of an army serves as their eyes, and the eyes of the vanguard are their informers."

"Beware of dispersal. When you halt do so together, and when you move you should move together. When night comes fix your spears in a circle and do not sleep except for dosing or napping."12

## C. Enjoining to Get Hold of One's Weapon in Battles

477. Da'a'im al-Islam: "Verily, he [Ali (a.s.)] did not like a man to drop his weapon while in combat. When pointing out the 'Prayer of Fear', Allah said, (***The faithless are eager that you should be oblivious of your weapons and your baggage, so that they could assault you all at once.***)13"

"So, the best thing for those who are in combat is not to separate their weapon from themselves by any means."14 See The Encyclopedia of Amir al-Mu'minin, VII, 100, (Martyrdom of Muhammad b. Abi Bakr), and 104, (the sorrow of the Imam).

## D. Exploiting the Opportunities

478. Imam Ali (a.s.) – about batting: "The one who notices a chance from the enemy should raid on him and take advantage of the opportunity – of course after strengthening his position – and when his goal is achieved he should return to his position."15

479. Waq'atu Siffin: [in the battle of Siffin], Ahnaf b. Qayth Sa'di addressed the people and said, "O people of Iraq! By Allah, You will not confront this issue with your necks more lowered than [you are] today. They lifted the veils of shame from before your eyes, and they do not fight for the religion nor do they resist except out of shamefulness. So, proceed!"

"They said, 'If we proceed today, [it will be the same way as] we proceeded yesterday, too. O Amir al-Mu'minin! What do you say?'"

"The Imam said, 'At the time of proceeding, do proceed; and at the time of withdrawal, withdraw. Proceed before they proceed toward you."16

## E. Tactical Withdrawal

480. Imam Ali (a.s.): "Retreat at the right time is the same as victory in its time."17

481. Imam Ali (a.s.) – he would say to his companions at the time of battle: "The retreat after which

return is intended and the withdrawal after which attack is in view should not make you unhappy."[18]

## 9.2 Forming Especial Forces

482. Al-Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.): "The elite army included six thousand of Ali (a.s.)'s companions."[19]

483. Al-Ikhtisas - related by 'Ali b. al-Hakam: "Amir al-Mu'minin's companions were those to whom he said, 'Swear [your] allegiance! I do swear allegiance to you by the Paradise, rather than by gold and silver. Our Prophet said in the past: Swear allegiance as I do not swear allegiance to you except by the Paradise'."

"And they [Amir al-Mu'minin's companions] included: Salman al-Farsi; Al-Miqdad; Abudhar al-Ghaffari; 'Ammar b. Yasir; Abu Sasan and Abu 'Amr al-Ansariyan; Sahl (Badri) and 'Uthman, the sons to Hanif al-Ansari; and Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari."

"And from among his companions were: 'Amr b. al-Hamq al-Khaza'i, the Arab; Maytham al-Tammar – Maytham b. Yahya, the freed slave – Rushid al-Hijri; Habib b. Mazhar al-Asadi; and Muhammad b. Abi Bakr."

"His friends included: Al-'Im al-Azdi; Suwayd b. Ghafla al-Ja'fi; al-Harith b. 'Abd Allah al-A'ur al-Hamdani; Abu 'Abd Allah al-Jadli, Abu Yahya Hakim b. Sa'd al-Hanafi."

"His elite forces included: Abu al-Radi 'abd Allah b. Yahya al-Khadrami; Salim b. Qays al-Hilali; and 'Ubayda al-Salmani al-Muradi, the Arab."

"The elect among his friends included: Tamim b. Hadhim al-Naji (who was killed as a martyr with Ali (a.s.); Qanbar (a slave freed by Ali b. Abi Talib – a.s.); Abu Fakhta (freed slave by Bani Hashim); and 'Abd Allah b. Abi Rafi' (who was Ali (a.s.)'s secretary)."[20]

484. Rijal al-Kashshi - related by Abu Jarud: "I said to Asbagh b. Nabata: What is the status of this man [Ali (a.s.)] among you?"

"He said, 'I do not know what you say; but our swords were on our shoulders, whomever he beckoned we would strike by sword. Ali (a.s.) would say to us: Swear [your] allegiance! I do swear allegiance to you by the Paradise, rather than by gold and silver, and your allegiance is but for death. Certainly a group of the ancients from the Bani Isra'il swore allegiance among themselves. None of them departed from the world except that he was a prophet to his folk or his village or himself; and you are like them, except that you are not prophets.'"[21]

485. Rijal al-Kashshi: "It is related from Amir al-Mu'minin that he told 'Abd Allah b. Yahya al-Hadrami in the battle of Jamal: Joyful tidings to you O son of Yahya! For you and your father are indeed among the elite forces. The Messenger of Allah informed me that you and your father are named among the elite

forces. Allah through the Prophet's tongue called you the elite forces, and said 'Elite forces consist of six or five thousand people.'"[22]

## 9.3 Paying Special Attention to the Armed Forces

486. Imam Ali (a.s.) – in his instructions to Malik al-Ashtar: "Then inspect the affairs of the soldiers as parents inspect their own child. Never let anything through which you have strengthened them distress you, and disdain not a kindness you have undertaken for them, even if it were small, for it will invite them to counsel you sincerely and trust you. Do not leave aside the examination of their minor affairs while depending upon (the examination of) the great, for there is a place where they will profit from a trifling kindness, and an occasion in which they cannot do without the great."

"Among the chiefs of your army favor most him who assists the soldiers with his aid and bestows upon them what is at his disposal to the extent that suffices both them and the members of their families left behind. Then their concern in battle with the enemy will be a single concern, for your kind inclination toward them will incline their hearts to you.

Verily the foremost delight of the eye for rulers is the establishment of justice in the land and the appearance of love for them among the subjects. But surely the subjects' love will not appear without the well-being of their breasts, and their sincerity (toward rulers) will not become free from blemishes unless they watch over their rulers, find their governments of little burden and cease to hope that their period (of rule) will soon come to an end."

"Therefore let their hopes be expanded, and persist in praising them warmly and taking into account the (good) accomplishments of everyone among them who has accomplished, for frequent mention of their good deeds will encourage the bold and rouse the indolent, God willing."

"Then recognize in every man that which he has accomplished, attribute not one man's accomplishment to another and fall not short (of attributing) to him the full extent of his accomplishment. Let not a man's eminence invite you to consider as great an accomplishment that was small, nor a man's lowliness to consider as small an accomplishment that was great."[23]

## 9.4 Caring for the Troops Morale

### A. Encouragement

487. Al-Kafi - related by Abu Sadiq: "I heard Ali (a.s.) encouraged people [to war in] three places: Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan."

"He would say, 'O Servants of Allah! Be wary of Allah, cast down your eyes, lower your voices, cut down your words; and prepare yourselves for battle, conflict, confrontation, struggle, warfare, involvement, and

tough combat; and be steadfast, (***...and remember Allah greatly so that you may be felicitous. And obey Allah and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or you will lose heart and your power will be gone. And be patient; indeed Allah will be with the patient.***)24"25

Imam Ali (a.s.) – "Delivered in the Battle of Jamal when Amir al-Mu'minin gave the banner to his son Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya: "Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself to Allah). Plant your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succor is but from Allah, the Glorified."26

489. Imam Ali (a.s.) – to his followers at the time of battle: "The retreat after which return is intended and the withdrawal after which attack is in view should not make you unhappy. Do justice with the swords (Allow your swords to do their duties). Keep ready a place for the falling of bodies (of your foe); prepare yourselves for hurling strong spears and striking swords with full force; and keep your voices down as that keeps off cowardice. By Him Who broke open the seed (for growing) and created living beings, they [the hypocrites] had not accepted Islam but they had secured safety (by verbally professing it) and had hidden their disbelief. Consequently, when they found helpers for their disbelief they disclosed it."27

490. Imam Ali (a.s.) – exhorting his followers to fight: "Put the armored men forward and keep the unarmored ones 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. Do not let your banner bend down, nor leave it alone. Do not give it to anyone except the brave and the defenders of honor 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."

"By Allah, even if you run away from the sword of today you would not remain safe from the sword of the world to come. 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 valor 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 Allah! If they reject truth, disperse their group, divide their words (opinions) and destroy them on account of their sins. They will not budge from their stand till the continuous striking of spears causes piercing (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."28

491. Al-Kafi - related by Malik b. A'yan: Amir al-Mu'minin – May the blessings of Allah be upon him – exhorted people in Siffin and said, "Allah guided you to a transaction that will deliver you from painful torments and persuade you to the good and the faith in Allah. And He has set aside as rewards for this the forgiveness of your sins and agreeable abodes in the Garden of Eden. Allah, the Exalted said, (***Indeed Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as if they were a compact structure.***)29"

"Then, put the armored men forward and keep the unarmored ones 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 and is better for enhancing dignity."30

492. Imam Ali (a.s.) – in the aphorisms attributed to him: "No one will practice forbearance in war and veraciously face it except three groups: Those who are insightful in religion; or those who are zealous over sanctities; or those to whom degradation is torturous."31

## B. Watchword

493. Imam Ali (a.s.): "Verily, the Messenger of Allah commanded to proclaiming watchwords before [launching] war and said, 'Let there be one of Divine names in your watchwords.'"32

494. Waq'atu Siffin – related by Asbaq b. Nabata: Ali (a.s.) never set out to fight except that he would cry "Kaf, Ha, Ya, 'Ayn, Sad."33

495. Al-Imam al-Sadiq: Our watchword is "O Muhammad, O Muhammad!"

And the watchword of the Muslims in the battle of Badr was "O Divine Triumph come nigh, come nigh!"

And the watchword of the Muslims in the battle of Uhud was "O Divine Triumph come nigh!"

And the watchword of the battle of Bani Nadir was "O Holy Ghost comfort!"

And the watchword of the battle of Bani Qaynaqa' was "O Our Lord! Never will they overpower You!"

And the watchword of the battle of Ta'if was, "O Ridwan (O Approver)!"

And the watchword of the battle of Hunayn was "O Sons of 'Abd Allah! O Sons of 'Abd Allah!"

And the watchword of the battle of Ahzab was "Ha, Mim, they do not see!

And the watchword of the battle of Bani Qurayza was "O Salam! Keep them safe!"

And the watchword of the battle of Marisi‘, i.e., the battle of Bani Mustalaq was “Look, things return to Allah!”

And the watchword of the battle of Hudyabiya was “Look, may Allah’s curse be on the unjust!”

And the watchword of the battle of Khaybar, i.e., the battle of al-Qamus[34] was “O Ali, forgive them out of dignity!”

And the watchword of the battle of Tabuk was “O Ahad (One)! O Samad (All-Embracing)!”

And the watchword of the battle of Bani Maluh was “Cause them to die! Cause them to die!”

And the watchword of the battle of Siffin was “O Divine triumph!”

And the watchword of Husayn (a.s.) was “O Muhammad!”

And our watchword was “O Muhammad!”[35]

496. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha – related by Salam b. Suwayd from Imam Ali (a.s.) concerning the phrase ‘Allahu Akbar (Allah is the greatest)!’: “This is the sign of triumph.”

[Salam says:] “Allahu Akbar” was Ali (a.s.)’s watchword that he uttered in battles and then launched his attacks. By Allah, he would lead whoever followed him or contested him to the fountainheads of death.”[36]

497. Waq‘atu Siffin – related by Tamim: Whenever set out on a battle, Ali (a.s.) would utter the name of God when mounting.... Then he would say, “Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar! La ilaha ill-Allah wa Allahu Akbar (There is no god except Allah and Allah is the greatest!) O Allah! O Ahad! O Samad! O Lord of Muhammad! In the Name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful!

There is no power and no strength save in Allah, the All-Exalted, the All-Supreme. (***All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds, the Compassionate the Merciful, Master of the Day of Retribution. You*** [***alone***] ***do we worship, and to You*** [***alone***] ***do we turn for help.***[37]) O Allah! Keep away from us the power and strength of the oppressors!” This was Ali (a.s.)‘s watchword in the battle of Siffin.[38]

498. Waq‘atu Siffin: The sign of the people of Iraq in [the battle of] Siffin was a white piece of wool cloth worn over their heads and shoulders and their watchword was “O Allah! O Ahad! O Samad! O Lord of Muhammad! O Compassionate, O Merciful!”

And the sign of the people of Sham was piece of yellow cloth worn over their heads and shoulders and their watchword was “We are the slaves of Allah indeed, indeed; O Avengers for ‘Uthman’s blood!”[39]

## C. Inculcation of Victory

499. Al-Jamal – related from ‘Amr b. Dinar: Amir al-Mu’minin siad to his son Muhammad, “Hold the banner and move on!” And Ali (a.s.) was following behind him. Then Ali (a.s.) called him, “O Abu al-Qasim!”

He replied, “Yes. O Father!”

He said, “My son! What you see should not frighten you. I carried the banner whereas I was smaller than you were and the enemy did not frighten me for I did not confront anyone except that I inculcated in myself that I would kill him. So, with the help of Allah implant in your mind that you will triumph over them; and do not let mistrust in yourself bring you to your knees, as it is the worst degradations.”

[Muhammad said:] I said: “O Father! I hope I will be the way you like me to be. God willing!”40

## D. Warning against Escape from the Battleground

500. Imam Ali (a.s.): “Escape from battle is among the great sins.”41

501. Imam Ali (a.s.): “Escape is one of degradations.”42

502. Imam Ali (a.s.): “Launch successive attacks, and feel ashamed of escape for it is disgrace among generations (to come) and (cause of awarding you) fire on the Day of Judgment. Give your lives (to Allah) willingly and walk towards death with ease.”43

503. Imam Ali (a.s.): “The escapee (from the battle) should know that he has infuriated Allah and is destroying himself. Verily, in escape there is enmity to Allah, perpetual degradation, eternal disgrace, and depravity of life. The escapee will not live long, nor will there come an interval between him and the day he is destined to die, nor will he please Allah. Man’s dying in honesty and truthfulness before committing such practice [escape from battle] is better than involving in these practices and accepting them.”44

504. Al-Kafi – related by Malik b. A‘yan: Amir al Mu’inin exhorted to [battle of] Siffin saying, “…May Allah have mercy on he who helps his brother and does not leave the adversary to his comrade lest both his own adversary and his comrade join against him. This way he will be condemned and will come to baseness; and why should it not be so when his brother fights with two people whereas he has given up and left his adversary to his brother and while fleeing looks back at the enemy and his brother. Every one who does so, Allah will regard him as His enemy. Then, do not expose yourselves to enmity with Allah for you will certainly be moving toward Him.

Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, said, (***Flight will not avail you should you flee from death of from being killed, and then you will be let to enjoy only for a little while.***)45

“By Allah, if you flee from the sword of the world, you will not be secure against the swords of the world to come. Take recourse in patience and truthfulness, for triumph would verily follow patience. And wage jihad for the sake of Allah, jihad which is worthy of Him; and there is no power and no strength save in Allah.”46

### E. Hiding away whatever that Ruins the Troops’ Morale

505. Waq‘atu Siffin – related by Abu Rawq: Ziyad b. al-Nadr al-Harithi said to ‘Abd Allah b. Badil b. Warqa’: Certainly our day and theirs is so hard. No one will be patient with it except the one who is brave-hearted, well-intended and steadfast. By Allah, I do not suppose that today anyone would survive except the villainous.

‘Abd Allah b. Badil said, “By Allah, I do think so, too.”

Ali (a.s.) said, “Let this word be hidden in your hearts. Do not express it, and nobody should hear it from you. Verily, Allah has destined some group to be killed and some to die; every one will receive his death as it is ordained. So, happy are those who fight in the way of Allah and those who are killed in obeyance to Him.”47

## 9.5 Deception

506. Imam Ali (a.s.): “Whenever I relate a hadith from the Prophet, I swear by Allah, that it is more likeable to me to fall off [such a high place as] heaven than to pass a lie upon him; it is [also] true when I talk among you: Verily war is deception48.”49

507. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.): Verily Ali (a.s.) would say, “I would like it more If the birds snatch me away than I pass a lie upon the messenger of Allah that he has not said. I heard from the Prophet saying on the day of [the battle of] Khandaq: ‘War is deception.’ He would say, ‘Speak in any way you wish’ [when in battle].”50

508. Imam Ali (a.s.) – in the aphorisms attributed to him: “In the battle trust your deceptions more than you trust your strength; [also] be more delighted at your vigilance than at your valor, for the war is the war of the fearless and to the advantage of the vigilant.”51

509. Al-Kafi - related from ‘Adi b. Hatam: Indeed, when Amir al-Mu’minin confronted Mu‘awiya in Siffin he would raise his voice so that his companions hear him and say, “By Allah, I will kill Mu‘awiya and his companions!” Then, he would lower his voice and day, “God willing!”

I was near him and said, ‘O Amir al-Mu’minin! You have truly sworn to do it. And then you said “God willing”. What did you mean by this?’

He said, “War is deception, and I am not a liar to the faithful. I wanted to incite my comrades against the

enemy so as not to show weakness and to encourage them [to fight] against the enemy. Then in future the wisest of them will benefit from this word. God willing!"[52]

510. Tafsir al-Qummi - in the report about the battle of Khandaq: While trotting, Amir al Mu'minin passed by...'Amr [b. 'Abduwud] asked him who he was.

He said, "I am Ali b. Abi Talib, cousin to the Messenger of Allah and his son-in-law."

'Amr said, "By Allah, your father was an old friend of mine and I do not like to kill you. When your cousin sent you to me, wasn't he afraid that I would snatch you up with my lance and leave you in the air, neither killed nor alive?!"

Amir al Mu'minin told him, "My cousin knew that if you killed me I would enter paradise; but if I killed you, you would abide in the fire [of the hell] and I in the paradise."

'Amr said, "Both of them would be to your benefit, O Ali! And this is not a fair dividing!"

He said, "Leave it aside for now! I heard you say while holding on to the curtain of the Ka'ba: 'No one will presents three request to me in battle except that I would answer to one of them.' And [now] I have three requests from you, and you answer to one of them."

'Amr said, "Say what they are O Ali!"

He said, "One is that you bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger."

'Amr said, "Give it up and ask for the second one!"

He said, "That you go back and turn this army [of yours] away from [confronting] the Messenger of Allah. If he [the Prophet] is truthful, you will be honored too because of him; and if he is a liar, the Arab robbers and rascals will suffice [to kill] him."

'Amr said, "Wouldn't the Quraysh women, then, say to each other and the poets [say] that I as afraid of battle and retreated? [In that case] I wouldn't have assisted those who had selected me as their chief."

Amir al-Mu'minin said, "My third [request] is that you dismount [your horse] so that I would fight with you, as you are mounted and I am on foot."

Then he dismounted his horse and hamstrung it and said, "This is a trait that I did not suppose any of the Arabs would have me do it. Then he started [the battle] and struck his sword at Ali (a.s.)'s head. Amir al-Mu'minin held his head behind his shield, but the sword rent the shield and hit his head.

Ali (a.s.) said to him, "O 'Amr! Is it not too much for you that I am fighting with you who are an Arab warrior, and you are being assisted?"

‘Amr turned his face back and Amir al-Mu’minin delivered a swift blow on his both knees and cut them off. A huge cloud of dust rose around them. The hypocrites said Ali b. Abi Talib was killed.

Then the dust settled for them to see. At this moment, they saw Amir al-Mu’minin sitting on ‘Amr’s chest holding his beard and going to cut his head off. Then he cut off his head and took it to the Prophet, while his own head was bleeding due to the hit of ‘Amr’s sword and his sword was dripping with blood. Holding ‘Amr’s head in his hand, he began ranting:

“I am Ali, son of ‘Abd al-Muttalib,

Death is better for the knight that flight.”

Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah said, “Did you play a trick on him?”

He replied, “Yes. O Messenger of Allah! War is deception.”53

## 9.6 Ethics of War

### A. Avoidance of Initiating a Battle

511. Tarikh al-Tabari - related from Jundab al-Uzdi: Truly, whenever in the company of Ali (a.s.) we confronted the enemy, he would command us: “Do not fight them until they start; because you are, by the grace of Allah, in the right, and letting them initiate the fighting will be another point from your side against them. Then, whenever you fight with them and defeat them, do not kill the runner away, do not murder the wounded, do not slander, nor mutilate the dead.

When you reach the encampment of the enemy do not plunder nor enter a house without permission. Do not seize anything from them unless what you find in their military base. Do not inflict pain on women by persecuting them even if they attack your honor with filthy words and abuse your officers, as they [the women] are weak in power and lacking in willpower.”54

512. Imam Ali (a.s.) – in his instructions to Malik al-Ashtar after the battle of Siffin: “Beware of initiating war with this group unless they begin it, until you encounter them and hear their words. Their evils should not prompt you to fight before inviting them [to guidance] and repeatedly avert them from seeking pretexts.”55

513. Imam Ali (a.s.) – in his instructions to his army before confronting the enemy in Siffin: “

Do not fight them unless they initiate the fighting because, by the grace of Allah, you are in the right and to leave them till they begin fighting will be another point from your side against them. If, by the will of Allah, the enemy is defeated then do not kill the runner away, do not strike a helpless person, do not finish off the wounded.”56

## B. Avoidance of Calling to Power

514. Imam Ali (a.s.) – to his son, Imam Hasan (a.s.): "Do not call out for fighting, but if you are called to it do respond, because the caller to fighting is a rebel and the rebel deserves destruction."[57]

## C. Diplomatic Immunity of Envoys

515. Imam Ali (a.s.): "If you triumph over a man of the enemy and he claimed to be an envoy to you, in case it proved to be true and he brought a witness to it, then do not do any harm to him until he delivers his message and return to his comrades; but if you find no witness to his claim, do not accept his assertion." [58]

## D. Raising an Argument before a Battle

516. Al-Sunan al-Kubra - related by Bara' b. 'Azib: "Ali (a.s.) dispatched me to [fight against] Hawarij in Nahrawan. Before the battle I invited them [to guidance] thrice."[59]

517. Imam Ali (a.s.) – from his letter to the people of San'a and Janad who were hostile and perfidious: "When my envoy comes to you, disperse and go to your residences, so that I grant you amnesty, forgive your ignorance, protect those of you who are away, and treat you by the ordinances of the Qur'an. But if you do not do so, be prepared to face a mighty army with a great number of cavalrymen who will head for those who have rebelled and disobeyed, and you will be crushed as in a mill."

(***Whoever does good, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil it is to its detriment, and your Lord is not tyrannical to the servants***[60]).[61]

## E. Supplication before a Battle

518. Waq'atu Siffin Indeed, when Amir al-Mu'minin set out for a battle, he would recite the following supplication:

"O Allah! Verily You showed a way of Your ways and set aside Your pleasure in it, and called Your friends to it and made it Your best of ways for reward, the noblest for returning [to You], and the most favorable to You as a conduct. Then, in this way you bought from them their souls and property for the paradise to fight in the way of Allah, to kill and to be killed; [and this is] a rightful promise from You."

"So, make me one of those from whom You have bought his soul, and he fulfilled his commitment to Your dealing with him. He did not break a pact, nor violated or altered it; rather he made it a response to Your loving kindness and as approximation to You."

"So, make it the end of my acting and ordain the end of my life in this way. Bestow upon me in it a martyrdom, which causes Your pleasure and removes my blunders. Place me among those who are living and provided for by the enemies and the rebels [through being martyred by them] under the

banner of righteousness and guidance; as one who is moving along the path of triumph over them, who does not turn his back [on the fighting], and who does not create doubts."

"O Allah! I seek refuge in You at this moment from cowardice in case of terrors, from indolence in the time of the champions' assault, and from the sins that would ruin my actions. Then, [in that case] I would be enfeebled out of doubt, or pass on without certitude, [thereby] my attempts would be futile, and actions unaccepted."62

519. Waq'atu Siffin – related by Tamim: Whenever set out for the battle, he [Ali (a.s.)] would utter the name of God when mounting [his horse] and say, "Thanks Allah for His bounties to us and His immense Grace! (***Immaculate is He who has disposed this for us, and we*** [***by ourselves***] ***were no match for it. Indeed we shall return to our Lord.***)63"

Then, he would face the qibla, raise his hands towards heaven and say, "O Allah! The steps were taken toward You, the bodies tired out, the hearts inclined to You, the hands raised up and the eyes turned keen. (***Our Lord! Judge justly between us and our people, and you are the best of judges!***)64"

Then he would say, "Allah is the greatest! Allah is the greatest! There is no god apart from Allah! Allah is the greatest! O Allah! O Ahad! O Samad! O Lord of Muhammad! (***All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful, Master of the Day of Retribution, You*** [***alone***] ***do we worship, and to You*** [***alone***] ***do we return for help.***)65 O Lord! Prevent from us the oppression of the oppressors."66

## F. Starting the Battle in the Afternoon

520. Waq'atu Siffin: Amir al-Mu'minin, upon whom be blessings from Allah, would not start fighting except in the afternoon and would say, "At this time the doors of heaven open up, mercy is accepted and victory is won."

And he would say, "This time [afternoon] is closer to the evening and it is more fitting for the killing to be decreased, the warriors to disengage [from] chasing the enemy], and the defeated to be saved."67

## G. Helping the Feeble

521. Imam Ali (a.s.) – to his companions on the battlefield in Siffin: "Whoever among you feels spiritedness of heart during the action and finds any of his comrades feeling disheartened should ward off (the enemies) from him just as he would do from himself, because of the superiority he enjoys over the other, For if Allah had willed He would have made the former also like him."68

522. Imam Ali (a.s.): "Whenever in the war you find any of your brothers wounded, or someone afflicted with an injury, or someone who has been targeted [to be attacked] by the enemy, strengthen him by your souls [spirit]."69

## H. Good Conduct toward the Reminder of the Enemy Troop

523. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi - related by Isma'il b. 'Ali: "The first person who learned how to fight with the people of qibla was Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.). He would not kill the captives, would not chase after the defeated, and would not finish off the wounded. "70

524. Al-'Aqd al-Farid – related by Abu al-Hasan – in the reports concerning the events of the battle of Siffin: "Ali (a.s.)'s herald would come out every day and call out: O People! Do not finish off the wounded; do not chase after those who have turned their back to the battlefield; do not rob the killed; and those who have laid down their weapons are [to be] secure."71

525. Al-Kafi - related by 'Abd Allah b. Sharik from his father: When the people (Kharijis) were defeated in the battle of Jamal, Amir al-Mu'minin said, "Do not chase after those who have turned their back to the battlefield and do not finish off the wounded. The one who shuts his house door is secure."

When the battle of Siffin took place, he killed the warriors as well as those who had turned their back on the battlefield, and finished off the wounded. Aban b. Taghlab said to 'Abd Allah b. Sharik, "These two treatments of contradictory."

He [Ali (a.s.)] said, "In the battle of Jamal, [their commanders] Talha and Zubayr were killed but [in Siffin] Mu'awiya himself is standing up and commanding."72

526. Al-Sunan al-Kubra - related by Abu Fakhta: In the battle of Siffin, a captive was brought to Ali (a.s.). He [the captive said], "Do not torture me to death."

Ali (a.s.) said, "I will not torture you to death. Verily, I fear Allah the Lord of the worlds." He let him go and then said, "Is there any good in you to swear allegiance?"73

527. Al-Musannif – related by Yazid b. Balal: I was in the company of Ali (a.s.) in Siffin. When a captive was brought to him he would say, "I will not torture you to death. Verily, I fear Allah the Lord of the worlds." He would take his weapon and swear him not to fight against him [any longer]; and he would grant him four dirhams."74

528. Al-Musannif – related by Abu Ja'far: In the battle of Siffin, whenever a captive was brought to Ali (a.s.), he would take his mount and weapon and made him promise not to return. Then he would free him."75

529. Imam Ali (a.s.) – to the army before confronting the enemy at Siffin, "Do not mutilate the dead; when you reach the encampment of the enemy do not plunder nor enter a house [without permission]. Do not seize anything from them unless what you find in their military base. Do not inflict pain on women by persecuting them even though they may attack your honor with filthy words and abuse your officers, because they are weak in character, mind, and intelligence. We have been ordered to desist from them

although they may be unbelievers. [For] If a man struck a woman with a stone or a stick he was rebuked along with his posteriors after him."76

530. Tarikh al-Tabari - in the report on the battle of Jamal: Ahnaf b. Qays and the children of Sa'd rushed toward Ali (a.s.), while dissuading Harqus b. Zahir (they did not approve of fighting with Ali b. Abi Talib - a.s.).

Then he [Harqus] said, "O Ali! Our people in Basra presume that if you triumph over them tomorrow, you will kill their men and take their women captive!"

He said, "There should be no fear of the like of me for such matters. Will it be perpetrated by anyone except him who turns back [from the religion of Allah] and disbelieves? Have you not heard the word of Allah saying, (***And [you are] not a taskmaster over them, except him who turns back and disbelieves.***)"77

531. Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh: There were four hundred wounded among the Kharijis. Ali (a.s.), then, ordered them to be taken inside Kufa and treated."78

1. Tuhaf al-'Uqul: 191, Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 11, Waq'atu Siffin: 123, Al-Akhbar al-Tawal: 166.
2. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 12.
3. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 4, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/67/46, Tadhkira al-Khawas: 166.
4. Da'a'm al-Islam: 1/373.
5. Da'a'm al-Islam: 1/373.
6. Al-Qur'an, 47:35.
7. Tarikh Damishq: 42/460, Muruj al-Dhahab: 2/389, 'Uyun al-Akhbar: 1/110.
8. Al-Kafi: 5/39/4, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/563/468. Also, cf., Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 124.
9. Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/372.
10. Ibid.
11. ibid., 1/372.
12. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 11, Tuhaf al-'Uqul: 192, Waq'atu Siffin: 124, Al-Akhbar al-Tawal: 166.
13. Al-Qur'an, 4:102.
14. Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/371.
15. Ibid., 372.
16. Waq'atu Siffin: 406, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/511/437.
17. Ghurar al-Hikam: 2003.
18. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 16, 'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'iz: 530/964.
19. Al-Ikhtisas: 2.
20. Al-Ikhtisas: 2, Ibn Nadim, Al-Fihrist: 223.
21. Rijal al-Kashshi: 1/19/8, Bihar al-Anwar: 42/150/16.
22. Rijal al-Kashshi: 1/24/10, Bihar al-Anwar: 42/151/18.
23. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 53, Tuhaf al-'Uqul: 137, Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/361.
24. Al-Qur'an, 8:45-46.
25. Al-Kafi: 5/38/2, Al-Irshad: 1/265, Waq'atu Siffin: 204, Al-Mi'yar wa al- Mawazina: 158.
26. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 11, Manaqib Al al-Abi Talib: 3/155.
27. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 16, 'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'iz: 530/9644.
28. Nahj al-Balagha: sermon 124. Also cf. Al-Irshad: 1/266, Waq'atu Siffin: 235.

29. Al-Qur'an, 61:4.
30. Al-Kafi: 5/39/4.
31. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 20/288/292.
32. Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/370.
33. Waq'atu Siffin: 231, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/461/398 & 100/36/32.
34. The name of a fortress of the Khaybar castles.
35. Al-Kafi: 5/47/1, Bihar al-Anwar: 19/163/1.
36. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 5/177, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/461/400 & 100/37/35.
37. Al-Qur'an, 1: 2-5.
38. Waq'atu Siffin: 230, Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 5/176.
39. Waq'atu Siffin: 332, Bihar al-Anwar: 33/27/380, Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 8/15.
40. Al-Jamal: 368.
41. Da'aim al-Islalam: 1/370, Al-Musannif fi al-Ahadith wa al-Athar: 7/733/6.
42. Ghurar al-Hikam: 1663.
43. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 66, Tarikh Damishq: 42/460
44. Al-Kafi: 5/41/4, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/472/411. Also cf. Al-Mi'yar wa'l Muwazina: 105.
45. Al-Qur'an, 33:16.
46. Al-Kafi: 5/39/4, Waq'atu Siffin: 235, Tarikh Tabari: 5/16. Also cf. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 124.
47. Waq'atu Siffin: 111, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/403/369 – 373, Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 3/18.
48. In the Musnad of Ahmad b.Hanbal the above statement is related as follows: "When I relate something from someone other than the Prophet (S), I am indeed a man in battle." (Musnad of Ibn Hanbal: 1/177/216)
49. Sahih al-Bukhari: 6/162/298, & 3/1322/3415, Sahih of Muslim: 2/746/1066.
50. Tahdhib al- Ahkam: 6/162/298, Qurb al-Isnad: 133/466
51. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 20/312/588.
52. Al-Kafi: 7/460/1, Tahdhib al-Ahkam: 6/163/299, Tafsir al-Qummi: 2/60.
53. Tafsir al-Qummi: 2/183, Bihar al-Anwar: 20/226.
54. Tarikh al-Tabari: 10/5, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh: 2/370, Al-Futuh: 3/32.
55. Waq'atu Siffin: 153, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/414/374.
56. Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 14, Waq'atu Siffin: 203.
57. Nahj al-Balagha: Aphorism 233, 'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'iz: 527/9587, Bihar al-Anwar: 33/454/668.
58. Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/367.
59. Al-Sunan al-Kubra: 8/309/16739.
60. Referring to Al-Qur'an, 41:46.
61. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 2/5.
62. Al-Kafi: 5/46/1, Tahdhib al-Ahkam: 3/81/237, Tafsir al-Najashi: 2/113/143.
63. Al-Qur'an, 43:13-14.
64. Al-Qur'an, 7:89.
65. Al-Qur'an, 1:2-5.
66. Waq'atu Siffin: 230 & 231, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/460/397 & 100/21/8.
67. Al-Kafi: 5/28/5, 'Ilal al-Sharaya': 603/70.
68. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 123, Al-Irshad: 1/253, Al-Jamal: 334.
69. Al-Khisal: 617/10, Tuhaf al-'Uqul: 107, Bihar al-Anwar: 100/21/8.
70. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi: 2/383.
71. Al-'Aqd al-Farid: 3/333, Imam Ali (a.s.) enjoyed the same position toward the enemies in other battles too, cf., Waq'atu Siffin: 204, al-Kafi: 5/33/3, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala al-Sahihin: 2/167/2660, and had inspired it from the sira of the Prophet (S). Al-Kafi: 5/12/2, Tahdhib al-Ahkam: 6/137/230, Ibid.: 155/274.
72. Al-Kafi: 5/33/5, Rijal Kishshi: 2/482/392, Bihar al-Anwar: 33/446/657.
73. Al-Sunan al-Kubra: 8/315/16754, Kanz al-'Ummal: 11/348/31706.

74. Al-Musannif fi al-Ahadith al-Athar: 8/725/25, Kanz al-'Ummal: 11/345/31703.
75. Al-Musannif fi al-Ahadith al-Athar: 8/724/23, Kanz al-'Ummal: 11/345/31702.
76. Al-Kafi: 5/39/4, Waq'atu Siffin: 204, Nahj al-Balagha: Letter 14, Bihar al-Anwar: 32/563/468.
77. Al-Qur'an, 89:22-23. Tarikh al-Tabari: 4/496, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh: 2/334.
78. Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh: 2/424, Ansab al-Ashraf: 3/248.

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