

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - The Battle of Siffin

The ruse of the Syrians

In the actions so far fought, the forces of Ali had the upper hand, and the final collapse of the Syrians was well in sight. In order to avert their defeat the Syrians now resorted to a ruse. The next day when the battle began again, the Syrians hung the leaves from the Holy Quran on their lances and raised the cry, "O ye men of Iraq, should you kill us what would become of our families and should we slay you what would become of your wives and children. Let us stop this sad warfare, and resort to the decision of the Book of God.

As soon as the men of Iraq heard the appeal of the Syrians, they threw down their arms, and echoed the cry, "Let the Book of God decide between us". Ali expostulated with his men saying that this was a nefarious device of Muawiyah to cloak his defeat. Ali warned his men not to fall into the trap, but to fight to the finish. This had no appeal for the men of Iraq. They argued that since they were fighting for the sake of God they could not refuse arbitration based on the Book of God. Ali said that of all the people in the world he would be the first to accept the decision of the Book of God, but he knew full well that neither Muawiyah nor the people around him had any knowledge of the Quran or the injunctions of Islam. They were merely exploiting the Book of God for an ulterior purpose, and it was necessary that they should be frustrated in their object. Ali exhorted the people of Iraq to continue the fighting till they were victorious.

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