

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Ayesha's March to Basra

Desertions from the army of the confederates

The army of the confederates had hardly proceeded a few stages from Makkah when the followers of Talha and Zubair began to quarrel among themselves on the point as to who out of Talha and Zubair should become the Caliph in the event of victory. Ayesha tried to end the dispute by declaring that the issue was premature, and that at the proper time it was for the people of Madina to choose the Caliph as they had elected the previous Caliphs. Ayesha appointed a neutral person to lead the prayers. The quarrel, however, did its damage. Some of the people who belonged neither to the party of Talha, nor to that of Zubair came to feel that the war was being fought because of personal motives of Talha and Zubair. Some persons suggested that as they had taken up arms to avenge the blood of Othman it was proper that a son of Othman should be chosen as the Caliph. This suggestion was turned down by the followers of Talha and Zubair on the ground that only some veteran companion could be chosen as the Commander of the Faithful. Because of these quarrels doubts began to assail some of the people who had joined the ranks under the impression that they were going to fight in the cause of Islam. They felt uncertain as to where the truth lay. Both the sides claimed to fight for the truth and it was obvious that both of them could not be in the right at the same time. One of them was bound to be in the wrong, but it could not be said who exactly was in the wrong. On one side was the "Mother of the Faithful", and on the other side was the "Commander of the Faithful." In the circumstances the proper course for the faithful was not to support either party until things appeared in their true color. Saeed b Al Aas an ex-Governor of Kufa who had joined the army of the confederates thought it advisable to desert and return to Makkah. Some other persons also returned with him. In response to the battle cry "On to Basra to kill the murderers of Othman", Saeed said. "Why go so far. The objects of your vengeance, Talha and Zubair are riding on their camels before you; kill them and return home".

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