

### Shāh Esmā‘il Sends a Letter to ‘Alā’oddawleh, Who Responds with an Offer of Peace; His Majesty Returns to Ādharbāyjān

When Shāh Esmā‘il arrived at the foot of Mount Darnā with his army and looked up at the fortress, he ordered that a few words be written to ‘Alā’oddawleh thus: “O ‘Alā’oddawleh, the feckless Solṭān Morād is a sinner against my celestial court. He has slipped the bonds of royal service and taken refuge with you. You, too, will be scorched by the fire of that half-burned failure. Bind him in fetters and chains, place a pillory around his neck, and send him to our world-sheltering court. We will accept him as a guarantee; then you go back to your affairs, and we shall return whence we came. Unless you think of another way, know with certainty that until we bring you out and remove the head of Solṭān Morād the Failure from the fortress of his body, we shall not leave the foot of this fortress. Keep the rest in mind. Peace.”

When Shāh Esmā‘il’s letter reached ‘Alā’oddawleh, he studied its contents and saw that His Majesty was dead set on seizing Solṭān Morād. He ordered that a letter of reply be written thus:

“May it not be hidden from the world-conqueror, the breaker of the necks of the obstinate, the divinely chosen scion of the Commander of the Faithful that nowadays I have a name among the kings of the earth. Due to the temptation of some seditious ones, I have fought with your attendants, and handed over eighty thousand Torkmāns and Dhulqadr to destruction. Having realized that God has chosen you from among men, and that none can resist those who have been chosen by the Lord of the World, I withdrew to the summit of this mountain. If Your Majesty’s attendants leave me be, I vow that from now on I will venture no further than the shore of the river Darnā. I grant Diyārbakr to your slaves and withdraw my claim to it. Further, regarding your command to hand over Solṭān Morād, today it is clear to all that only he remains from among the heirs of Ḥasan Pādeshāh, the rest of whom have bent before your sword. He has sought refuge with me and is now my son-in-law. I entreat you by the grave of Ḥasan Pādeshāh, whose descendant you are too, to forgive him this time, and to turn him over to me. I guarantee that henceforth if he makes a move, I will have sinned against your royal court. I leave the rest up to you. Peace.”

When ‘Alā’oddawleh’s letter came under the alchemical gaze of the Shāh, His Majesty said: “Let ‘Alā’oddawleh make a vow by Almighty God that when our royal banners depart for Iran, he and his army will not attack us, and that

he will not go further than the river Darnā. If he does so, I shall grant him security; if not, not.”

When ‘Alā’oddawleh heard this news, he made the vow, wrote it down, and sent it to Shāh Esmā’il.

His Majesty granted the governorship of Qarāḥamid to Moḥammadi Solṭān the Torkmān, but the latter’s brother came to him and said, “I do not think Moḥammadi Solṭān is trustworthy.” So Esmā’il gave the fortress of Barjuk to the brother and turned control of Qarāḥamid over to someone else.

But Moḥammadi Solṭān was still in Qarāḥamid when Shāh Esmā’il set off in triumph to return to Tabriz and Ādharbāyjān. Two months later, Moḥammadi Solṭān the Torkmān turned traitor, just as his brother had said he would. He struck coins in the name of ‘Alā’oddawleh and pronounced the *khoṭbeh* in the name of the Three Companions.<sup>1</sup> He sent someone to ‘Alā’oddawleh with this message: “I have done thus with the coins and the *khoṭbeh* and seized Qarāḥamid for you. Moḥammad Khān is in Diyārbakr with six thousand Ostājlu troops; when he gets word of this, he will attack us. Come and help us, it is urgent!”

When ‘Alā’oddawleh got this message, he closed the door of well-being on himself and sent his sons Sāru Aşlān and Sāru Qaplān to Qarāḥamid at the head of sixteen thousand men. News of the perfidy of Moḥammadi Solṭān now reached Moḥammad Khān Ostājlu; at once he readied six thousand Ostājlu troops and set off from Diyārbakr for Qarāḥamid. They arrived at the foot of the citadel, and Moḥammad Khān wrote a letter to Moḥammadi Solṭān thus:

“Apparently you do not fear the wrath of the Shāh, since you have done this! Your brother had warned that you have no share in the good name of this house, but His Majesty did not listen and entrusted you with this region. Give up this vain dream! His Majesty has not yet heard of this affair, but if he does, I can smooth things over, so that he will look on you with kindness.”

After he read this letter, Moḥammadi Solṭān wrote in reply: “Well, aren’t you observant, O noble Khān! Although our forefathers served the house of Ḥasan Pādeshāh for many years, now we have forgotten them all and we serve their enemies—and as if that weren’t enough, we have changed our religion, heretically turning our backs on the noble Companions of the Prophet. I don’t like this! Moreover, king ‘Alā’oddawleh will not let you be governor here; let Shaykhoghli come to you himself. He has delivered you to destruction! If you are a true man, you will sit at the foot of this fortress for another twenty days.”

When he read this, Moḥammad Khān was incensed. He ordered his men to surround the fortress and make thorough preparations for siege warfare.

<sup>1</sup> I.e., the first three Caliphs.

Now when Solṭān Salim noticed what the Qezelbāsh were up to, he thought to himself that if 'Alā'oddawleh were to fall, they would be in a position to conquer all of Anatolia. He wrote a letter to 'Othmān Pāshā saying: "Take twelve thousand men and attack Aḥmad Solṭān Qājār; perhaps with him out of the way, the whole Qezelbāsh army will be defeated." Word was brought to Aḥmad Solṭān that 'Othmān Pāshā was going to attack him with twelve thousand men.

Aḥmad Solṭān gathered his army and told them, "Every man take two horses, for I want to make such a night-raid that they won't even think of trying this again!" The whole army was of one spirit, reciting the verse, "Wherever our commander goes, there we will follow him!"<sup>2</sup> All of them took two horses and they left the fortress, sending spies ahead as they did.

The Anatolians were holed up three days' journey from the fortress. Aḥmad Solṭān and his men covered those eighteen leagues as quickly as if they were twelve and hid behind a mountain. 'Othmān Pāshā ordered spies to go out and obtain information while he stayed behind, calm and defenseless. At that moment Aḥmad Solṭān ordered his Qezelbāsh to attack, and they hurled themselves against those twelve thousand Anatolians. Leaping into action, they surrounded 'Othmān Pāshā's tent, cut his head off and mounted it on the point of a spear, then plunged with swords drawn into the main part of the Anatolian army. The Anatolians were so overwhelmed that every one of them who spotted a horse got on it and fled to Arzenjān. The Qezelbāsh victory in this hour was a blessing from the Immaculate Emāms.

Aḥmad Solṭān plundered the Anatolians' tents and possessions and headed to the fortress with six thousand enemy heads. In the late afternoon, when Moḥammad Khān Ostājlu was coming from Diyārbakr on his mission of assistance, Aḥmad Solṭān ordered his men to bring the Anatolians' heads out to him, and he came along to welcome him as well.

When the Khān saw this display of virility, he praised Aḥmad Solṭān highly. Aḥmad Solṭān described the battle for him, and the Khān said, "You are truly outstanding! Indeed, you are just as His Majesty told me; he has said repeatedly, 'If Aḥmad Solṭān were not so impatient, I would place him at the head of my army in battle, but he is rash.'"

Anyway, Aḥmad Solṭān hosted the Khān for three days and presented many gifts. On the fourth day the Khān was thinking of going to make summer-camp in the narcissus fields when word came from Diyārbakr that once more the sons of 'Alā'oddawleh Dhulqadr had come to Qarāḥamid with thirty thousand men. The Khān said, "Even though my uncle Maḥmud Beg is in the fortress, I

<sup>2</sup> This is a *robā'i* hemistich in the original.

don't know whether he can manage them," and he immediately mounted up and took to the road toward Qarāḥamid.

Meanwhile, the Khān's brother Qarākhān was coming out and winning victories all by himself. Twenty days later, the Khān arrived face-to-face with the Qezelbāsh and Dhulqadr armies.

Moḥammadi Solṭān, seeing that his situation would be difficult until 'Alā'oddawleh's army arrived, wrote a letter to Eskandar Khān the Maḥmudi Kurd<sup>3</sup> saying: "The Qezelbāsh army has surrounded the fortress of Qarāḥamid, and I am in a tight spot. If they take Qarāḥamid, they won't leave you alone either. Raise an army and come here to make a night-raid on the Qezelbāsh. If I come out from the fortress as well, maybe we can take care of them together. After we drive them off, you will get much booty in the way of colorful tents and swift Arabian horses and mules and camels and Georgian slaves all bedecked with jewels; you will enjoy great renown!"

When Eskandar Khān heard that so much free booty was at the foot of Qarāḥamid with so few Qezelbāsh to guard it, his greed was aroused. He rounded up seven thousand Maḥmudi Kurds and set off for Qarāḥamid.

But the holy Commander of the Faithful appeared to one of the Kurds in a dream and said: "You must go to the governor of Diyārbakr, who is at the foot of the fortress of Qarāḥamid, and tell him that the army of Eskandar Khān is coming. He will make you one of his attendants and raise you to a high position. Perhaps also I will give you repose in this world." So that Kurd fell behind the army, then slipped away and rode toward Qarāḥamid. When he reached the Qezelbāsh camp he approached one of them and said, "I have things to say to the Khān which I must tell him in private!"

That Qezelbāsh went to Moḥammad Khān and said, "A Kurd has arrived saying such-and-such."

The Khān invited the Kurd in and granted him an audience. "Yours is a wondrous sect," said the Kurd. "As one of its blessings, your lord has put the intention in my heart to abandon Eskandar Khān and come here with news for you."

"What news do you have?" asked the Khān.

"Know and be aware of this, that I am one of Eskandar Khān's attendants, and my story is as I have told you. In any case, Eskandar Khān will make a night-raid upon you tonight with seven thousand men. I find it a pity that young men such as you should be destroyed at the hands of their enemy."

Moḥammad Khān said, "Keep an eye on this man," and when night fell, he ordered the Qezelbāsh to leave their tents and head into the wilderness.

3 This seems to be in opposition to the "Yazidi Kurds" (*kord-e yazidi*) with whom the Safavids fought in an earlier chapter.

Then Eskandar Khān and his great army arrived and fell upon the Qezelbāsh camp, but when they looked around, they didn't see anyone there. "Clearly the Qezelbāsh heard we were coming and fled!" said Eskandar Khān. He rode over to the tent of Moḥammad Khān Ostājlu and dismounted. The Kurdish soldiers confidently entered the Qezelbāsh tents and took what they found there. They had loaded up their horses and were about to leave when from all directions the sound of the Qezelbāsh war-trumpets reached Eskandar Khān's ears. He ran out of his tent in a panic, only to hear the clashing of swords all around him. Realizing that it was useless to stay any longer, he turned to run away. He got as far as the camp market before the Qezelbāsh recognized him and dealt him two or three sword-wounds, but he managed to get away with only these injuries. He looked back as he fled and saw the Qezelbāsh troops with their swords in their hands, splitting the heads of the Kurds until they saw that they had killed four thousand men and that the rest of them were running away, a great many of them wounded.

Moḥammadi Solṭān heard the commotion and sent someone to see what was going on. That person reported that the Kurds had attacked the Qezelbāsh, who were running away. Moḥammadi Solṭān said, "Moḥammad Khān is not the kind of man to run away from an army of Maḥmudi Kurds—he must have played a trick!" So he did not leave the fortress.

After some time, the sound of Qezelbāsh war-trumpets sounded. Moḥammadi Solṭān said, "Go see what this means!" Someone went and returned with the news of the flight of the Kurds, explaining what had happened. Moḥammadi Solṭān said, "Now I know that Moḥammad Khān is a true man. He would not flee before the Kurdish army."

The Qezelbāsh ghāzis brought the heads of the Kurds to Moḥammad Khān, and when they counted them, they saw that four thousand men had been killed. Then Moḥammad Khān sent for the Kurd who had brought the warning and asked him how many men had been in the army he was with.

"Seven thousand men," he replied.

The Khān said, "I won't let any of them get away!" He left Qarākhān encamped at the foot of the fortress with three thousand men and gathered another three thousand to go pursue the Kurdish army.

The next day, when the Kurds were in a meadow, grazing their horses and resting their many wounded on their shields, Moḥammad Khān and Qezelbāsh sprang upon them with cries of "*Hu! Hu!*"<sup>4</sup> A thousand Kurds became prey for their well-watered blades, while the rest took to their heels and fled. When Moḥammad Khān had returned to Qarāḥamid, he sought out his Kurdish

4 I.e., He (God)!

informant and showed him great affection, granting him a thousand tumāns and making him his attendant. He also promised him to bring him to Shāh Esmā'il, who would in turn make him his attendant. The Kurd, for his part, became a true-believing Shi'i and cursed the enemies of the faith. "What is your name?" Moḥammad Khān asked him.

"Aḥmad Khān," replied the Kurd.

Moḥammad Khān said, "I give you the name Aḥmad Solṭān." Then he asked him, "Do you believe there is a road nearby which we could take to get to the homeland of Eskandar Khān before he does?"

"The desert road will do it," said Aḥmad Solṭān, "but we need to gather provisions."

So Moḥammad Khān ordered that provisions be gathered; then they set off on the desert road to the lands of the Yazidi [*sic*] Kurds.

Now when Eskandar Khān fled, he appointed a spy to see whether Moḥammad Khān would follow him or go home. The spy reported that Moḥammad Khān had returned to his camp, unaware that he was going to set off on the desert road. Eskandar Khān was relieved and left to return to his homeland.

Moḥammad Khān hurried down that road, covering fifty leagues in three days. The Kurds had pitched their black tents in a meadow and were sitting in them when Moḥammad Khān and his troops arrived. They drew their swords and tore into the tents of the Kurds, killing many. The rest scattered, fled into their citadel, and shut the door tightly.

Since Moḥammad Khān realized that taking that fortress would be difficult, he took the Kurds' wives and children prisoner; he also plundered what there was in the way of goods and possessions, horses and mules and cattle and sheep. Then he set off for home again. He had gone twelve leagues along the road when he spotted the wounded Eskandar Khān coming with seventy or eighty thousand men. Upon seeing the Qezelbāsh army, Eskandar Khān asked what it was; he was told that it was Moḥammad Khān, returning from plundering the Kurdish land. Eskandar Khān realized that he did not have the strength to resist Moḥammad Khān, so he ordered his men to disperse.

"Don't let them get away!" cried Moḥammad Khān. His troops set off in pursuit, and although Eskandar Khān escaped, a great many of his men were killed or wounded, and the rest ran away. Moḥammad Khān and the Qezelbāsh then plundered what the Kurds had left behind and brought it to the foot of the citadel of Qarāḥamid. Moḥammadi Solṭān Torkmān went to the top of the fortress and looked around, asking, "What happened?"

"Moḥammad Khān has chased off Eskandar Khān and plundered the Kurds," he was told.

At this, Moḥammadi Solṭān sent a petition to 'Alā'oddawleh which read: "What paltry compassion you are showing me! Loyal to you, and dependent on the Dhulqadr army, I have abandoned the rebellion and sedition of Shaykh-oghli; why do you not send troops to drive Moḥammad Khān away from here?"

When the messenger carrying this petition got to the bank of the river Darnā, he saw that the sons of 'Alā'oddawleh, Sāru Aşlān and Sāru Qaplān, had arrived there with sixteen thousand men. He gave the petition to them, and when they had read it, they wrote in response, "We shall arrive on such-and-such day. You defend the fortress like a man, for we are on our way." When Moḥammadi Solṭān got this news, he cheered up.