

Letter 10: To Mu'awiyah

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إليه أيضاً

What will you do when the coverings of this world in which you are wrapped are removed from you. The world attracted you with its embellishment and deceived you with its pleasure. It called you and you responded to it. It led you and you followed it. It commanded you and you obeyed it. Shortly an informer will inform you of things against which there will be no shield (to protect you). Therefore, keep off from this affair, take heed of the accounting (on the Day of Judgement), get ready for death that will soon overtake you and do not give your ears to those who have gone astray. If you do not do so I shall recall to you whatever you have forgotten, because you are a man living in ease and luxury. 1 Satan has taken you in his clutches, has secured his wishes in you and has taken complete control of you like your soul and blood.

وَكَيْفَ أَنْتَ صَانِعٌ إِذَا تَكَشَّفَتْ عَنْكَ جَلَابِيبُ مَا أَنْتَ فِيهِ مِنْ دُنْيَا قَدْ تَبَهَّجَتْ
بِزِينَتِهَا، وَخَدَعَتْ بِلَذَّتِهَا، دَعْتِكَ فَأَجَبْتَهَا، وَقَادَتِكَ فَاتَّبَعْتَهَا، وَأَمْرَتِكَ فَأَطَعْتَهَا، وَإِنَّهُ
يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَقْفِكَ وَأَقْفُ عَلَى مَا لَا يُنْجِيكَ مِنْهُ مَجْنٌ، فَاقْعَسَعَنْ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ، وَخُذْ
أُهْبَةَ الْحِسَابِ، وَشَمِّرْ لِمَا قَدْ نَزَلَ بِكَ، وَلَا تُمْكِنِ الْغُوَاةَ مِنْ سَمْعِكَ، وَالْأَفْعَلَ
أَعْلَمَكَ مَا أَغْفَلْتَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ، فَإِنَّكَ مُتْرَفٌ قَدْ أَخَذَ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنْكَ مَا خَذَهُ، وَبَلَغَ
فِيكَ أَمَلَهُ، وَجَرَى مِنْكَ مَجْرَى الرُّوحِ وَالْدَّمِ.

O Mu'awiyah, when were you all protectors of the ruled and guardians of the affairs of the people? Without any forward step or conspicuous distinction? We seek Allah's protection against the befalling of previous misfortunes, and I warn you lest you continue being deceived by desires and your appearance becomes different from your innerself.

وَمَتَى كُنْتُمْ يَا مُعَاوِيَةَ سَاسَةَ الرَّعِيَّةِ، وَوَلَاةَ أَمْرِ الْأُمَّةِ؟ بِغَيْرِ قَدَمِ سَابِقٍ، وَلَا شَرَفِ
بَاسِقٍ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ لُزُومِ سَوَابِقِ الشَّقَاءِ، وَأُحَذِّرُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مُتَمَادِيًّا فِي غِرَّةِ
الْأَمْنِيَّةِ، مُخْتَلِفَ الْعَلَانِيَةِ وَالسَّرِيرَةِ.

You have called me to war. Better to leave the people on one side, come out to me and spare both the parties from fighting so that it may be known who of us has a rusted heart, and covered eyes. I am Abu'l-Hasan who killed your granfather 2 your brother 3 and your uncle 4 by cutting them to pieces on the day of Badr. The same sword is with me and I meet my adversary with the same heart. I have not altered the religion nor put up any new prophet. I am surely (treading) on that very highway which you had willingly foresaken (in the beginning) and then adopted per force.

وَقَدْ دَعَوْتَ إِلَى الْحَرْبِ، فَدَعِ النَّاسَ جَانِبًا وَاخْرُجْ إِلَيَّ، وَأَعْفِ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ مِنَ
الْقِتَالِ، لِتَعْلَمَ أَيُّنَا الْمَرِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِهِ، وَالْمُغَطَّى عَلَى بَصَرِهِ! فَأَنَا أَبُو حَسَنٍ قَاتِلُ
جَدِّكَ وَخَالِكَ وَأَخِيكَ شَدْخًا يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ، ذَلِكَ السَّيْفُ مَعِي، وَبِذَلِكَ الْقَلْبِ أَلْقَى
عَدُوِّي، مَا اسْتَبَدَلْتُ دِينًا، وَلَا اسْتَحَدَّثْتُ نَبِيًّا، وَإِنِّي لَعَلَى الْمِنْهَاجِ الَّذِي تَرَكْتُمُوهُ
طَائِعِينَ، وَدَخَلْتُمْ فِيهِ مُكْرَهِينَ.

You think you have come out seeking to revenge 'Uthman's blood. Certainly, you know how 'Uthman's blood was shed. If you want to avenge it, avenge it there. It is as though I see that when war is cutting you with its teeth you cry like camels crying under a heavy load. And it is as though I see your party bewildered by the incessant striking of swords, occurrence of death and

falling of bodies after bodies, calling me towards the Qur'an 5 although they would themselves be either unbelievers, deniers of truth or breakers of allegiance after swearing it.

وَزَعَمْتَ أَنَّكَ جِئْتَ ثَائِرًا بِدَمِ عُثْمَانَ، وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ حَيْثُ وَقَعَ دَمُ عُثْمَانَ فَاطْلُبْهُ
مِنْ هُنَاكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ طَالِبًا، فَكَأَنِّي قَدْ رَأَيْتَكَ تَضِجُ مِنَ الْحَرْبِ إِذَا عَضَّتْكَ ضَجِيجَ
الْجِمَالِ بِالْأَثْقَالِ، وَكَأَنِّي بِجَمَاعَتِكَ تَدْعُونِي جَزَعًا مِنَ الضَّرْبِ الْمُتَتَابِعِ، وَالْقَضَاءِ

الْوَاقِعُ، وَمَصَارِعَ بَعْدَ مَصَارِعَ، إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ، وَهِيَ كَافِرَةٌ جَاحِدَةٌ، أَوْ مُبَايَعَةٌ حَائِدَةٌ .

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1. This is in reference to the verse: We sent no warner into any city except its man who lived at ease said, "We disbelieve in the Message you have been sent with." (Qur'an, 34:34).
 2. 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah.
 3. Hanzalah ibn Abi Sufyan.
 4. al-Walid ibn 'Utbah.
 5. This prophecy of Amir al-mu'minin is about the battle of Siffin. Herein he has depicted the whole picture in very few words. Thus, on one side Mu'awiyah was bewildered on account of the attacks of the Iraqis and was thinking to run away, and on the other, his army was crying under the constant onslaught of death, and, eventually, when there was no way of escape, they raised the Qur'an on spears and shouted for peace. By this device, the remaining persons saved their lives. "This prophecy" as Ibn Abi'l-Hadid al-Mu'tazili says, "is either true prophetic keen eye of Amir al-mu'minin which is really a significant power, or it is an information through knowledge of the unknown (ilmu'l -ghayb) which is too most significant and wonderful. However, both cases are in the state of extreme significance and wonderfulness." Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has further quoted the same prophecy from other letters of Amir al-mu'minin to Mu'awiyah. (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah al-balaghah, vol. 15, pp.83-85)
This prophecy cannot be attributed to imagination, guessing or the drawing of inference from events, nor can these details be ascertained by wit or far-reaching intelligence. Only he can disclose them whose source of information is either the Prophet's own revelation-bearing tongue or Divine inspiration.

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