

## Letter 36: To his brother 'Aqil ibn Abi Talib

To his brother 'Aqil ibn Abi Talib, 1 in reply to his letter which contained a reference to the army Amir al-mu'minin had sent to some enemy.

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

في ذكر جيش أنفذه إلى بعض الأعداء، وهو جواب كتاب كتبه إليه أخوه عقيل بن أبي طالب

I had sent towards him a large army of Muslims. When he came to know of it he fled away and retreated repenting. They met him on the way when the sun was about to set. They grappled for a while like nothing. It was about an hour and then he rescued himself half-dead as he had almost been taken by the neck and only the last breath had remained in him. In this way, he escaped in a panic.

فَسَرَّحْتُ إِلَيْهِ جَيْشًا كَثِيفًا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، فَلَمَّا بَلَغَهُ ذَلِكَ شَمَّرَ هَارِبًا، وَنَكَصَ نَادِمًا، فَلَحِقُوهُ بِبَعْضِ الطَّرِيقِ، وَقَدْ طَفَلَتِ الشَّمْسُ لِلْأَيَّامِ، فَاقْتَتَلُوا شَيْئًا كَلًّا وَلَا، فَمَا كَانَ إِلَّا كَمَوْقِفِ سَاعَةٍ حَتَّى نَجَا جَرِيضًا بَعْدَمَا أُخِذَ مِنْهُ بِالْمُخْتَقِ، وَلَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْهُ غَيْرُ الرَّمَقِ، فَلَايَا بِلَايٍ مَا نَجَا .

Leave the Quraysh in their rushing into misguidance, their galloping in disunity and their leaping over destruction. They have joined together to fight me as they had joined to fight the Messenger of Allah (S) before me. I wish the Quraysh will get the reward of their treatment of me. For they disregarded my

kinship and deprived me of the power due to me from the son of my mother (i.e. the Holy Prophet).

فَدَعُ عَنْكَ قُرَيْشًا وَتَرَكَاضَهُمْ فِي الضَّلَالِ، وَتَجَوَّالَهُمْ فِي الشَّقَاقِ، وَجَمَّاحَهُمْ فِي  
التَّيِّهِ، فَإِنَّهُمْ قَدْ أَجْمَعُوا عَلَيَّ حَرْبِي كَأَجْمَاعِهِمْ عَلَيَّ حَرْبَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (صلى الله  
عليه وآله) قَبْلِي، فَجَزَتُ قُرَيْشًا عَنِّي الْجَوَازِي! فَقَدْ قَطَعُوا رَحِمِي، وَسَلَبُونِي  
سُلْطَانَ ابْنِ أُمِّي.

As for your enquiry about my opinion on fighting, I am in favour of fighting those who regard fighting as lawful until I die. The abundance of men around me does not increase me in strength nor does their dispersal from me cause any loneliness. Surely, do not consider the son of your father as being weak or afraid, even though all people have forsaken him, or bowing down submissively before injustice or handing over his reins into the hand of the puller, or allowing his back to be used by the rider to sit upon. But he is as the man of Banu Salim has said:

If you enquire how I am, then listen that I am enduring and strong against the vicissitudes of time.

I do not allow myself to be grieved lest the foe feels joyful and the friend feels sorry.

وَأَمَّا مَا سَأَلْتَ عَنْهُ مِنْ رَأْيِي فِي الْقِتَالِ، فَإِنَّ رَأْيِي قِتَالُ الْمُحِلِّينَ حَتَّى أَلْقَى اللَّهَ،  
لَا يَزِيدُنِي كَثْرَةَ النَّاسِ حَوْلِي عِزَّةً، وَلَا تَفَرُّقَهُمْ عَنِّي وَحْشَةً، وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ابْنَ أَبِيكَ -  
وَلَوْ أَسْلَمَهُ النَّاسُ - مُتَضَرِّعًا مُتَخَشِّعًا، وَلَا مُقْرَأً لِلضَّيْمِ وَاهِنًا، وَلَا سَلِسَ الزَّمَامِ  
لِلْقَائِدِ، وَلَا وَطِيءَ الظَّهْرِ لِلرَّاكِبِ الْمُقْتَعِدِ، وَلَكِنَّهُ كَمَا قَالَ أَخُو بَنِي سُلَيْمِ:

فَإِنْ تَسَأَلِينِي كَيْفَ أَنْتَ فَإِنِّي \* صَبُورٌ عَلَى رَيْبِ الزَّمَانِ صَلِيبٌ

يَعِزُّ عَلَيَّ أَنْ تُرَى بِي كَابَةٌ \* فَيَشِمَّتْ عَادٌ أَوْ يُسَاءَ حَبِيبٌ

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1. When after arbitration Mu'awiyah started a campaign of killing and devastation, he sent a force of four thousand under ad-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Fihri to attack Amir al-mu'minin's cities. When Amir al-mu'minin came to know of his activities he roused the people of Kufah to put up a defence, but they began to offer lame excuses. At last Hujr ibn 'Adi al-Kindi rose

with a force of four thousand men and, chasing the enemy, overtook him at Tadmur. The two parties had only a few grapplings when darkness came in and ad-Dahhak fled away under its cover. This was the time when 'Aqil ibn Abi Talib had come to Mecca for 'umrah. When he came to know that after attacking al-Hirah, ad -Dahhak had escaped alive and that the people of Kufah were afraid of war and all their activities had come to a stop, he sent a letter to Amir al-mu'minin through 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Ubayd al-Azdi offering his help. In reply to that Amir al-mu'minin wrote this letter wherein He complains of the behaviour of the people of Kufah and mentions the flight of ad-Dahhak.

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