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36) The Last Three Advices of Imam 'Ali's Letter

وَاجْعَلْ لِكُلِّ اِنسَانٍ مِنْ خَدَمِكَ عَمَلاً تَأْخُذُهُ بِهِ، فَاِنَّهُ اَحْرى اَلاّ يَتَواكَلُوا في خِدْمَتِكَ واَكْرِم عَشِيرَتَكَ فَانَّهُم جَناحَكَ" الَّذِي بِهِ تَطِيرُ وَاَصلَكَ الَّذِي اللهِ تَصيرُ وَيَدَكَ الَّتي بِها تَصنُولُ اَسْتَودِعُ اللهَ دِينَكَ ودُنْيَاكَ وَاَسْأَلهُ خَيْرَ القَضَاءِ لَكَ في "الذِي بِهِ تَطِيرُ وَاصلَكَ الَّذِي اللهِ تَصيرُ وَيَدَكَ الَّتي بِها تَصنُولُ اَسْتَودِعُ اللهَ دِينَكَ ودُنْيَاكَ وَاَسْأَلهُ خَيْرَ القَضَاءِ لَكَ في الذِي بِهِ تَطِيرُ وَالسَّلامُ اللهَ اللهَ عَلَى اللهُ عَلَى اللّهُ عَلَى اللهُ عَل

"Appoint for each of your servants a specific task for which you hold them responsible, for it is more appropriate so that they do not pass on their responsibilities to one another. Respect your relatives because they are your wings through which you fly and your roots to which you return and your hands through which you attack. I entrust your religion and your world to Allah, and I ask Him the best decree for you, now and in the future, in this world and the next, and peace (be on you)."

Commentary

In this portion of Imam 'Ali's honorable letter, which is the final part, he (as) pinpoints three issues which are dealt with here:

1. Division Of Responsibilities:

Basically in any organized society, management forces us to appoint each person for a specific task. In such managements, the manager only supervises the activities of the workers to see if the tasks are carried out properly. Or else there would not be any stimulation for innovations and chaos will reign over such societies.

It is for this reason that in the sacred faith of Islam for each motion there is a task appointed to the believers and the imam is responsible to see that these tasks are carried out.

Based on this belief, Islam contends that if there were only two persons on the earth, one of them should be either a prophet or an imam so that he could establish the tasks for the other one and see that they were acted out. For this reason, the Great Prophet of Islam says: "إِذَا كَانَ ثَلاثَةٌ في سَفَرِ فَلَيُّؤمِّرُوا أَحَدَهُم"

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"If there are three persons traveling together, one should be the leader."

In the Islamic management system, it is the task of the Islamic managers to appoint the tasks and responsibilities and to supervise them. We can see a part of this system in Imam 'Ali's letter to Malik Ashtar in the letter 53 of Nahj al-Balaghah. However, for more details we should refer to the books concerned.2

On the basis of this philosophy, in this letter, Imam 'Ali (as) orders his son:

"Appoint for each of your servants a specific task for which you hold them responsible, for it is more appropriate so that they do not pass on their responsibilities to one another".

2. Respect Your Relatives:

Although in Islam there is no place for unfounded tribal and family prejudices and piety is the foundation of values and "being loved by Allah" is the criterion for closeness to God, respecting relatives is among ethical principles. Islam believes that the relatives, if not in contrast with the truth and righteousness, and even if being ill-mannered, should be respected. Here one tradition is presented as a proof:

"Jahm ibn Hamid says: I told Imam Sadiq (as): I have a family who do not believe in what I believe. Do they have a right upon me? Imam Sadiq (as) replied: "Yes, nothing can demolish the right of the womb. If they believe in your faith, then they have two rights upon you; the right of the womb and the Islamic right"4

After reporting this tradition, al-Majlisi explains: "This implies that infidelity does not abolish the right of kinship and this meaning is not in contrast with the verse 22 of Surah al-Mujadilah [The pleading one]:

"You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His apostle, even though they were their own fathers, or their sons, or their brothers or their kinsfolk,"

because as Majlisi confirms the love referred to in this verse either refers to hearty love, which is not related to superficial associations, anyway, or to showing animosity towards faith, in which case having association with them will cause the wrong to defeat the right.5

Based on this ethical principle, Imam 'Ali (as) orders his son: "Respect your relatives." Then he tells us the philosophy of this act:

- (1) Relatives are your wings through which you can fly.
- (2) They are your roots to which you may return.
- (3) They are your hands and power through which you may attack your enemies.

3. I Ask God To Protect You And I Wish You A Happy Life:

It is a good custom for the writer to wish good luck for his readers at the end of his book. Imam 'Ali (as), too, based on this principle, asks God to protect his son, both here and in the Hereafter and wishes him the best of luck:

"I entrust your religion and your world to Allah".

Unfortunately, in some versions of Nahj al-Balaghah, this phrase is mentioned as an imperative. However, these words are used and read in the statement and in the form of a supplication.

On the basis of this wrong punctuation (vowel changing), some of Nahj al-Balaghah interpreters have erroneously interpreted this statement as an imperative, rather than as a supplication and statement. They have written, for instance: "Entrust your faith and world to God and ask Him for better future."

Lahijan, 25th Farvardin 1371, 10th Shawwal 1412, Zainol Abedin Qorbani

- 1. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.6, p.717.
- 2. Concerning this, refer to Al-taratib al-Idariya by Kattani, and "A book on the Islamic Management" by Tagavi and Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi's "Management and commandment in Islam".
- <u>3.</u> . Say: if your fathers and your sons... are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command: and Allah does not guide the transgressing people [Qur'an 9:24].
- 4. Bihar, vol.74, p. 131.
- 5. Bihar, vol.74, p. 131.

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