

Letter 24: His Will

The following is the will of Imam Ali (a) in which he has left instructions as to how to treat his property and estate. It was written after his return from the Battle of Siffin.

ومن وصية له (عليه السلام)

بما يُعمل في أمواله، كتبها بعد منصرفه من صفين

This is what `Ali ibn Abi Talib, the slave of Allah has laid down about his property, in pursuance of seeking Allah's pleasure so that He may by virtue of it give him entry into Paradise and accord him peace.

هَذَا مَا أَمَرَ بِهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي مَالِهِ، ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَ
اللَّهِ، لِيُولَجَنِي (1) بِهِ الْجَنَّةَ، وَيُعْطِيَنِي الْأَمَنَةَ

A part of the same

منها:

It will be administered by Hasan ibn `Ali. He will take from it a suitable portion for his livelihood and spend it on charity. If something happens to Hasan, and Husayn survives he will administer it after

Hasan, and deal with it accordingly. In the charitable estate of the two sons of Fatimah they have the same rights as the all (other) sons of `Ali. I have laid down the (functions of) administration of the two sons of Fatimah in order to seek the pleasure of Allah and nearness to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and his descendants) with due regard for his honour and consideration of his kinship.

فَإِنَّهُ يَقُومُ بِذَلِكَ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، يَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَيُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ فِي الْمَعْرُوفِ،
فَإِنْ حَدَثَ بِحَسَنٍ حَدَثٌ وَحُسَيْنٌ حَيٌّ، قَامَ بِالْأَمْرِ بَعْدَهُ، وَأَصْدَرَهُ مَصْدَرَهُ. وَإِنْ
لِابْنِي فَاطِمَةَ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ عَلَيَّ مِثْلَ الَّذِي لِابْنِي عَلِيٍّ، وَإِنِّي إِنَّمَا جَعَلْتُ الْقِيَامَ بِذَلِكَ
إِلَى ابْنِي فَاطِمَةَ ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَ اللَّهِ، وَقُرْبَةً إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (صلى الله عليه وآله)،
وَتَكْرِيماً لِحُرْمَتِهِ، وَتَشْرِيفاً لُوَصْلَتِهِ

It is obligatory on him who administers it that he retains the estate as it is, and spends the usufruct as he has been ordered and instructed. He should not sell the seedlings in the plantations of these villages till the land changes its face by turning them into plants. As for those of my slave girls who were under me, if any one of them has a child or is pregnant, she will be retained for the sake of the child and will form part of his share. If the child dies and she survives, then she is free, bondage is removed from her and liberty is given to her. 1

وَيَشْتَرِطُ عَلَى الَّذِي يَجْعَلُهُ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ يَتْرَكَ الْمَالَ عَلَى أُصُولِهِ، وَيُنْفِقَ مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ
حَيْثُ أُمِرَ بِهِ وَهَدِيَ لَهُ، أَلَّا يَبِيعَ مِنْ أَوْلَادِ نَخِيلِ هَذِهِ الْقُرَى وَدِيَّةً حَتَّى تُشْكَلَ
أَرْضُهَا غِرَاسًا. وَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْ إِمَائِي - اللَّاتِي أَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِنَّ - لَهَا وَلَدٌ، أَوْ هِيَ
حَامِلٌ، فَتُمْسِكُ عَلَى وَلَدِهَا وَهِيَ مِنْ حَظِّهِ، فَإِنْ مَاتَ وَلَدُهَا وَهِيَ حَيَّةٌ فَهِيَ عَتِيقَةٌ،
قَدْ أَفْرَجَ عَنْهَا الرِّقُّ، وَحَرَّرَهَا الْعَتَقُ.

As-Sayyid ar-Radi says: In this will in Amir al-mu' minin's phrase "alla yabi`a min nakhliha wadiyyatan", the word "wadiyyah" means seedling of date-palm and its plural is "wadiyy". And his words "hatta tushkila arduha ghirasan", is one of the most eloquent form of expression and it means that when a number of date plants grow on the land then he who had seen it before the growth would regard it as a different land.

قال الشريف: قوله (عليه السلام) في هذه الوصية: "وألا يبيع من نخلها وديّة"،
الوديّة: الفسيلة، وجمعها وديّ. وقوله (عليه السلام): "حتى تشكل أرضها

غراساً" هو من أفصح الكلام، والمراد به: أن الارض يكثر فيها غراس النخل حتى يراها الناظر على غير تلك الصفة التي عرفها بها فيشكل عليه أمرها ويحسبها غيرها.

1. The life of Amir al-mu'minin was that of a labourer or a cultivator. He worked in fields of other persons, cultivated barren and untilled lands, providing means of irrigating them, made them cultivable and planted orchards therein . Since these lands were cultivated by him they were his Property but he never paid heed to property, and, declaring them a trust, gave up his proprietorship; but in consideration of the Prophet's kinship he assigned the management rights of this trust to Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn one after the other. Yet he did not tolerate any additional rights for them but like other children gave them merely the right to take from it only for their livelihood, while the balance he ordered to be spent for the common good of the Muslims and for charitable purposes. Thus, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes:

Everyone knows that in Medina, Yanbu' and Suwayqah, Amir al-mu'minin had dug several springs from under the land and brought under cultivation many barren and uncultivable lands. Thereafter, he gave up rights over them and declared them as trusts for the Muslims. When he left the world, nothing was owned by him. (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah al-balaghah, vol. 15, p. 146)

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