

Letter 44: To Ziyad ibn Abih

To Ziyad ibn Abih when Amir al-mu'minin had come to know that Mn`awiyah had written to Ziyad to deceive him and to attach him to himself in kinship.

(ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام

إلى زياد بن أبيه

وقد بلغه أن معاوية كتب إليه يريد خديعته باستلحاقه

I have learnt that Mu`awiyah has written to you to deceive your wit and blunt your sharpness. You should be on guard against him because he is the Satan who approaches a believer from the front and from the back, from the right and from the left, to catch him suddenly in the hour of his carelessness and overcome his intelligence.

وَقَدْ عَرَفْتُ أَنَّ مَعَاوِيَةَ كَتَبَ إِلَيْكَ يَسْتَزِلُّ لُبَّكَ، وَيَسْتَفِلُّ غَرَبَكَ، فَاحْذَرُهُ، فَإِنَّمَا هُوَ
الشَّيْطَانُ يَأْتِي الْمَرْءَ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ، وَعَنْ يَمِينِهِ وَعَنْ شِمَالِهِ، لِيَقْتَحِمَ
غَفْلَتَهُ، وَيَسْتَلِبَ غَرَّتَهُ.

In the days of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu Sufyan 1 happened to utter a thoughtless point which was an evil suggestion of Satan, from which neither kinship is established nor entitlement to succession occurs. He who relies on it is like the uninvited guest to a drink-party or like the dangling cup (tied to a saddle).

وَقَدْ كَانَ مِنْ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ فِي زَمَنِ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ فَلْتَهُ مِنْ حَدِيثِ النَّفْسِ،
وَنَزَعَةً مِنْ نَزَعَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ، لَا يَثْبُتُ بِهَا نَسَبٌ، وَلَا يُسْتَحَقُّ بِهَا إِرْثٌ، وَالْمُتَعَلِّقُ
بِهَا كَالْوَاغِلِ الْمُدْفَعِ، وَالنَّوْطِ الْمُدْبَذِ.

[When Ziyad read this letter he said, "By Allah he has testified to it." This point remained in his mind till Mu`awiyah claimed him (as his brother by his father)].

As-Sayyid ar-Radi says Amir al-mu'minin's word "al-waghil" means the man who joins the drinking group so as to drink with them, but he is not one of them. He is therefore constantly turned out and pushed off. As for the words "an-nawtu'l-mudhabdhab", it is a wooden cup or a bowl or the like attached to the saddle of the rider so that it dangles when the rider drives the beast or quickens its pace.

فَلَمَّا قَرَأَ زِيَادُ الْكِتَابِ قَالَ: شَهِدَ بِهَا وَرَبَّ الْكَعْبَةِ، وَلَمْ يَزَلْ فِي نَفْسِهِ حَتَّى ادَّعَاهُ
مَعَاوِيَةَ.

قال الرضي: قوله (عليه السلام): "كَالْوَاغِلِ الْمُدْفَعِ" الوَاغِلُ: هُوَ الَّذِي يَهْجُمُ عَلَى
الشَّرْبِ لِيَشْرَبَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ، فَلَا يَزَالُ مُدْفَعًا مُحَاجِرًا. وَالنَّوْطُ الْمُدْبَذُ:
هُوَ مَا يَنَاطُ بِرَحْلِ الرَّكَّابِ مِنْ قَعْبٍ أَوْ قَدْحٍ أَوْ مَا أَشْبَهَ ذَلِكَ، فَهُوَ أَبَدًا يَتَقَلَقِلُ إِذَا
حَثَّ ظَهْرَهُ وَاسْتَعْجَلَ سَيْرَهُ.

1. Caliph `Umar sent Ziyad to Yemen for some encounter. When he returned after finishing the job he addressed a gathering which included Amir al-mu`minin, `Umar, `Amr ibn al-`As and Abu Sufyan. Impressed with the speech `Amr ibn al-`As said:

"What a good man! Had he been from the Quraysh he would have led the whole of Arabia with his stick." Whereupon Abu Sufyan said, "He is from the Quraysh as I know who is his father." `Amr ibn al-`As enquired, "Who was his father?" Abu Sufyan said, "It is I." History also conclusively holds that Ziyad's mother Sumayyah, who was the slave-maid of al-Harith ibn Kaldah and was married to a slave named `Ubayd, used to lead an immoral life in a quarter of at-Ta'if known as Haratu l-Baghaya, and immoral men used to visit her. Once Abu Sufyan also got to her through Abu Maryam as-Saluli. As a result Ziyad was born. When `Amr ibn al-`As heard this from Abu Sufyan, he asked why he had not declared it. Abu Sufyan pointed to `Umar and said that he was afraid of him, otherwise he would have declared him his own son. Although he would not have dared to do this, when Mu`awiyah acquired power he started correspondence with him because Mu`awiyah was in need of such persons who were intelligent and cunning and expert in machinations. In any case, when Amir al-mu`minin got information about this correspondence he wrote this letter to Ziyad wherein he warned him against Mu`awiyah so that he should not fall in the trap. But he did fall in his trap and joined Mu`awiyah and the latter declared him his brother by

attaching him in his kin, although the Prophet had declared.

The child goes to the (lawful) husband while the adulterer gets stones.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-44-ziyad-ibn-abih>