

Home > Nahjul Balagha Part 2, Letters and Sayings > Letters of Imam ‘Ali Amir Al-Mu’minin, Peace Be On Him > Letter 63: To Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, when Amir al-mu’mnin learned that he was dissuading the people from joining in the battle of Jamal

Letter 63: To Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, when Amir al-mu’mnin learned that he was dissuading the people from joining in the battle of Jamal

To Abu Musa (‘Abdullah ibn Qays) al-Ash`ari, the Governor of Kufah when Amir al-mu’mnin learned that he was dissuading the people of Kufah from joining in the battle of Jamal when Amir al-mu’mnin had called them to fight along with him.

ومن كتاب كتبه (عليه السلام)

إلى أبي موسى الأشعري

وهو عامله على الكوفة، وقد بلغه عنه تثبيطه الناسَ عن الخروج إليه لمّا ندبهم
لحرب أصحاب الجمل

From the servant of Allah, Amir al-mu’mnin to ‘Abdullah ibn Qays:

مِنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَى عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ قَيْسٍ.

Now, I have come to know of words uttered by you which go in your favour as well as against you. 1 So, when my messenger reaches you prepare yourself and get ready, come out of your den and call those who are with you. Then, if you are convinced of the truth get up but if you feel cowardice go away. By Allah, you will be caught wherever you may be and you will not be spared till you are completely upset and everything about you is scattered and till you are shaken from your seat. Then, you will fear from your front as you do from the rear.

أَمَا بَعْدُ، فَقَدْ بَلَغَنِي عَنْكَ قَوْلٌ هُوَ لَكَ وَعَلَيْكَ، فَإِذَا قَدَمَ عَلَيْكَ رَسُولِي فَارْفَعْ ذَيْلَكَ،
وَاشْدُدْ مِنْزَرَكَ، وَاخْرُجْ مِنْ جُحْرَكَ، وَانْدُبْ مَنْ مَعَكَ، فَإِنْ حَقَّتْ فَانْفُذْ، وَإِنْ
تَفَشَّلَتْ فَابْعُدْ! وَإِيمُ اللَّهِ لِتُؤْتَيْنَ حَيْثُ أَنْتَ، وَلَا تُتْرَكُ حَتَّى يُخْلَطَ زِيْدُكَ بِخَاتِرِكَ،
وَذَائِبُكَ بِجَامِدِكَ، وَحَتَّى تُعْجَلَ عَنْ قِعْدَتِكَ، وَتَحْذَرَ مِنْ أَمَامِكَ كَحَذَرَكَ مِنْ خَلْفِكَ،

What you hope is not a light matter, but it is serious calamity. We have to ride its camels, overcome its difficulties and level its mountains. Set your mind in order, take a grip on your affairs and acquire your (lot and your) share. If you do not like it then go away to where neither you are welcome nor can you escape from it. It is better that you be left alone and lie sleeping. Then no one will enquire where so-and-so is. By Allah, this is the case of right with the rightful person and we do not care what the heretics do; and that is an end to the matter.

وَمَا هِيَ بِالْهُوَيْنِي الَّتِي تَرْجُو، وَلِكُنَّهَا الدَّاهِيَةُ الْكُبْرَى، يُرْكَبُ جَمِلَهَا، وَيُذْلَلُ
صَعْبَهَا، وَيُسْهَلُ جَبَلَهَا. فَاعْقِلْ عَقْلَكَ، وَامْلِكْ أَمْرَكَ، وَخُذْ نَصِيبَكَ وَحَظَّكَ، فَإِنْ
كَرْهْتَ فَتَنَحَّ إِلَى غَيْرِ رَحْبٍ وَلَا فِي نَجَاهَ، فَبِالْحَرَى لِتُكَفِّيَنَّ وَأَنْتَ نَائِمٌ، حَتَّى لَا
يُقالُ: أَيْنَ فُلَانُ؟ وَاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌ مَعَ مُحِقٍّ، وَمَا أَبَالِي مَا صَنَعَ الْمُلْحِدُونَ، وَالسَّلَامُ.

1. When Amir al-mu'minin had the idea of suppressing the revolt of the people of Basrah he sent this letter through Imam al-Hasan to Abu Musa ('Abdullah ibn Qays) al-Ash'ari, who had been appointed Governor of Kufah by 'Uthman, wherein he has scolded him for his duplicitous and contradictory behaviour and attempted to persuade him to jihad, because on one side he used to say that Amir al-mu'minin was the true Imam and allegiance to him was right and on the other he said that to support him in fighting against the Muslims was not right; but it was a mischief and it was necessary to keep off this mischief. Thus, Amir al-mu'minin has referred to this contradictory view by the words "huwa laka wa `alayka" (which go in your favour as well as against you). The intention is that when Amir al-mu'minin is the rightful Imam how can fighting his enemy with him be wrong? And if fighting on his side is wrong then what is the meaning of his being the rightful Imam. In any case, in spite of his dissuading from fighting, the people of Kufah came out in large numbers to join Amir al-mu'minin's army and took full part in the battle, giving such a defeat to the people of Basrah that they never again dared to

revolt.

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