

## Letter 9: To Mu`awiyah

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إلى معاوية

Our people 1 (the Quraysh) decided to kill our Prophet and to annihilate our root. They created worries for us, behaved with us harshly, denied us ease of life, exposed us to fear, forced us to take refuge in a rugged mountain and ignited for us the flames of war.

فَأَرَادَ قَوْمُنَا قَتْلَ نَبِيِّنَا، وَاجْتِيَا حَ أَصْلِنَا، وَهَمُّوا بِنَا الْهُمُومَ، وَفَعَلُوا بِنَا الْأَفَاعِيلَ،  
وَمَنَعُونَا الْعَذْبَ، وَأَحْلَسُونَا الْخَوْفَ، وَاضْطَرُّونَا إِلَى جَبَلٍ وَعَرٍ، وَأَوْقَدُوا لَنَا نَارَ  
الْحَرْبِ،

Allah then gave us determination to protect His religion and defend His honour. The believers among us expected (heavenly) reward from it, and the unbelievers among us gave their support because of kinship. Those who accepted Islam from among the Quraysh were away from the distresses in which we were involved either because of a pledge that protected them or because of the tribe that would rise to support them. They were therefore safe from killing. The way with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and his descendants) was that when fighting became fierce and people began to loose ground he would send forward members of his family and through them protect his companions from the attacks of swords and spears. In this way `Ubaydah ibn al-Harith was killed on the day of Badr, Hamzah (ibn `Abd al-Muttalib) on the

day of Uhud and Ja'far (ibn Abi Talib) on the day of Mu'tah. One more person, whom I can name if I wish, desired to seek martyrdom as they did; but their deaths approached, while his death had not yet approached.

فَعَزَمَ اللَّهُ لَنَا عَلَى الدَّبِّ عَنْ حَوْزَتِهِ، وَالرَّمْيِ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حُرْمَتِهِ. مُؤْمِنًا يَبْغِي بِذَلِكَ  
الْأَجْرَ، وَكَافِرُنَا يُحَامِي عَنِ الْأَصْلِ، وَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ خَلَوْ مِمَّا نَحْنُ فِيهِ  
بِحِلْفٍ يَمْنَعُهُ، أَوْ عَشِيرَةٍ تَقُومُ دُونَهُ، فَهُوَ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ بِمَكَانٍ أَمِنَ. وَكَانَ رَسُولُ  
اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) إِذَا احْمَرَ الْبَأْسُ، وَأَحْجَمَ النَّاسُ، قَدَّمَ أَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ فَوْقَى  
بِهِمْ أَصْحَابَهُ حَرَّ السُّيُوفِ وَالْأَسْنَةِ، فَقَتَلَ عُبَيْدَةَ بْنَ الْحَارِثِ يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ، وَقَتَلَ حَمْرَةَ  
يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ، وَقَتَلَ جَعْفَرَ يَوْمَ مُوتَةَ، وَأَرَادَ مَنْ لَوْ شِئْتُ ذَكَرْتُ اسْمَهُ مِثْلَ الَّذِي  
أَرَادُوا مِنَ الشَّهَادَةِ، وَلَكِنْ آجَالُهُمْ عَجَلَتْ، مَنِيتُهُ أُجَلَّتْ.

How strange it is that I am being grouped with him who never evinced briskness of pace like me nor had he to his credit any achievement like mine unless he claims something of which I do not know and which I think Allah too does not know. In any case, all praise belongs to Allah.

فَيَا عَجَبًا لِلدَّهْرِ! إِذْ صِرْتُ يُقْرَنُ بِي مَنْ لَمْ يَسْعَ بِقَدَمِي، وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ كَسَابِقَتِي الَّتِي  
لَا يُدْلِي أَحَدٌ بِمِثْلِهَا، إِلَّا أَنْ يَدْعِيَ مُدْعٍ مَا لَا أَعْرِفُهُ، وَلَا أَظُنُّ اللَّهَ يَعْرِفُهُ، وَالْحَمْدُ  
لِلَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ.

As regards your request to hand over to you the murderers of `Uthman, I have thought over this matter and I do not find their handing over to you or to someone else possible for me. By my life, if you do not give up your wrong ways and disruptive acts you will surely know them. They will shortly be seeking you and will not give you the trouble of seeking them in land, sea, mountains or plain. But this search will be painful for you and their visit will not give you happiness. Peace be on those who deserve it.

وَأَمَّا مَا سَأَلْتَ مِنْ دَفْعِ قَتَلَةِ عُثْمَانَ إِلَيْكَ، فَإِنِّي نَظَرْتُ فِي هَذَا الْأَمْرِ، فَلَمْ أَرَهُ  
يَسْعُنِي دَفْعُهُمْ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا إِلَى غَيْرِكَ، وَلِعَمْرِي لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْزِعْ عَنَّا غِيَّكَ وَشِقَاقَكَ  
لَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ عَنْ قَلِيلٍ يَطْلُبُونَكَ، لَا يُكَلِّفُونَكَ طَلَبَهُمْ فِي بَرٍّ وَلَا بَحْرٍ، وَلَا جَبَلًا سَهْلًا،  
إِلَّا أَنَّهُ طَلَبٌ يَسُوءُكَ وَجِدَانُهُ، وَزَوْرٌ لَا يَسُرُّكَ لِقْيَانُهُ، وَالسَّلَامُ لِأَهْلِهِ.

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1. When the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and his descendants) was commanded (by Allah) to call people to (believe in) the Unity of Allah, the powers of unbelief and disobedience stood up to block the way of Truthfulness and the tribes of Quraysh decided to quell this voice through pressure and force. The love of their idols was so staunch in the hearts of these unbelievers that they were not prepared to hear a single word against them. The idea of one God was enough to rouse their passions. In addition, they were made to hear such epithets about their gods that gave them no better position than lifeless stones. When they saw their principles and beliefs in danger they prepared themselves to trouble the Prophet and got ready to try every means to that end. They adopted such pain-inflicting devices (against the Prophet) that it was impossible for him to step out of his house. Those who had accepted Islam in this period too had to face continuous tribulations. For example, these adherents of belief were often laid prostrate on the ground under the sun and beaten with straps and stones till they lost their senses. When the atrocities of the Quraysh rose to this extent the Prophet permitted them to leave Mecca and immigrate towards Abyssinia, in the fifth year of his call to Prophethood. The Quraysh followed them there as well, but the ruler of Abyssinia refused to hand them over to them, and by his fairness and justice did not allow any trouble to befall them.

On the other side the Prophet's preaching was continuing and the magnetism and influence of Truth was producing its effect. People were impressed by his teachings and personality and coming into his fold as a result of which the Quraysh felt much perturbed and tried to stop this increasing influence and power. When they could not do anything they decided to sever all connections with Banu Hashim and Banu `Abd al-Mut-talib, to have no social contacts with them and to have no transactions with them, so that they might be forced to give up supporting the Prophet and then they would deal with him as they wished. Consequently, they concluded a mutual agreement about it and a document was written on the subject and kept in deposit. After this agreement, although the locality was the same and the inhabitants too were the same yet for Banu Hashim every nook and corner became strange and well-known faces turned as if they had never known each other. All of them turned their faces and stopped mutual meeting and contacts. In these circumstances, there was also apprehension that the Prophet might be attacked suddenly in a valley outside the city. For this reason, they were forced to take refuge in a place called "shi`b (quarter) of Abi Talib." At this stage those Banu Hashim who had not yet accepted Islam shared these privations on account of lineal unity and offered defence at the hour of need, while those who had accepted Islam like Hamzah and Abu Talib, were active in protecting the Prophet by way of a religious obligation. In particular, Abu Talib had given up all his personal ease and comfort. He spent his days in consoling the Prophet and his nights in changing his bed, in this way, that if the Prophet used a bed one night the next night `Ali was made to sleep in it, so that in case someone attacked, then `Ali should suffer the brunt.

This was a period of great privation and trouble for Banu Hashim. If they could get leaves of trees to eat that was enough, otherwise they had to starve. After the lapse of three years in these hardships Zuhayr ibn Abi Umayyah (whose mother was `Atikah bint `Abd al-Muttalib), Hisham. ibn `Amr ibn Rabi`ah (who had family relationship with Banu Hashim through his mother), al-Mut'im ibn `Adi ibn Nawfal ibn `Abd Manaf, Abu'l-Bakhtari al-`As ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughirah and Zama'ah ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib proposed that this agreement should be abrogated. For a discussion of this issue, the Chiefs among the Quraysh assembled in the Ka'bah. No decision has yet been taken when Abu Talib also came out of the Valley and joined them. He said to them, "My nephew Muhammad has told me that the paper on which this agreement was written has been eaten by white-ants and nothing in it has remained save the name of Allah. So, you should send for the document and see it. If he is correct then you should give up animosity to him; and if he is wrong I am ready to hand him over to you." Consequently, the document was sent for and seen. It

was a fact that except the words "with Your name, O' My God" which was written on the top of all documents in those days the rest of it had been eaten away by white-ants. Seeing this al-Mut'im ibn `Adi tore off the writing and thus this agreement was abrogated. At last Banu Hashim got rid of the life of oppression and helplessness; but even after this there was no change in the unbelievers' behaviour towards the Prophet; rather they were so keen in their enmity and malice against him that they started thinking of taking his life, as a consequence of which the great event of hijrah (immigration of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Medina) took place. Although on this occasion Abu Talib was no longer alive, `Ali represented him by lying down on the Prophet's bed, because it was the lesson taught by Abu Talib through which he managed to protect the Holy Prophet's life.

Although these events were not unknown to Mu`awiyah yet by recounting to him the deeds of his predecessors, the

intention was to awaken his malicious spirit. Therefore, his attention has been drawn to the hardships inflicted (on the Holy Prophet and his adherents) by the Quraysh and especially Banu `Abd Shams so that he might see the conduct of each of the followers of truth and the followers of wrong and realize whether he himself was treading on the right path or just following his forefathers.

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