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Letter 13: To two of the officers in his army

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إلى أميرين من أُمراء جيشه

I have placed Malik 1 ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar in command over you and over all those under you. Therefore, follow his commands and take him as the armour and shield for yourselves, because he is one of those from whom I have no fear of weakness nor any mistake, nor laziness where haste is more appropriate, nor haste where slackness is expected of him.

وَقَدْ أَمَّرْتُ عَلَيْكُمَا وَعَلى مَنْ فِي حَيِّزِكُمَا مَالِكَ بْنَ الْحَارث الاْشْتر، فَاسْمَعَا لَهُ وَأَطِيعاً، واجْعَلاَهُ درْعاً وَمِجَنّاً، فَإِنّهُ مِمَّنْ لاَ يُخَافُ وَهْنُهُ، وَلاَ سَقْطَتُهُ، وَلاَ بُطْؤُهُ عَمَّا الاْسْرَاعُ إِلَيْهِ أَحْزَمُ، وَلاَ إِسْرَاعُهُ إِلَى مَا الْبُطءُ عَنْهُ أَمْثَلُ.

1. When Amir al-mu'minin sent a vanguard contingent twelve thousand strong under Ziyad ibn an-Nadr al-Harithi and Shurayh ibn Ham al-Harithi to Syria, on the way, near Sur ar-Rum, they encountered with Abu'l-A'war ('Amr ibn Sulayman) as-Sulami who was camping there with a contingent of the Syrians. Both of them informed Amir al-mu'minin of this through al-Harith ibn Jumhan al-Ju'fi, whereupon he sent Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar as the Officer-in-command and wrote this letter to inform them. The brief but comprehensive words in which Amir al-mu'minin has mentioned Malik al-Ashtar in this letter gives an indication of his intelligence, sagacity, courage, daring, expanse and versatility in the art of war and his personal greatness and importance.

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