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Letter 18: To `Abdullah ibn al- `Abbas, his Governor of Basrah

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام)

إلى عبد الله بن العباس وهو عامله على البصرة

You should know that Basrah is the place where Satan descends and mischiefs happen. Keep the people of this place pleased with good treatment and remove the knots of fear from their hearts.

وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ الْبَصْرَةَ مَهْبِطُ إِبْلِيسَ، وَمَغْرِسُ الْفِتَنِ، فَحَادِثْ أَهْلَهَا بِالاْحْسَانِ إِلَيْهِمْ، وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةَ الْخَوْفِ عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ.

I have come to know of your strictness with Banu Tamim 1 and your harshness over them. Banu Tamim are those that if one star sets another one rises for them. They were never exceeded in (the art of) war in pre-Islamic times or after Islam. They have a special kinship with us and a particular relationship. We shall be rewarded if we pay heed to the kinship and be deemed sinful if we disregard it. O Abu'l-`Abbas, may Allah have mercy on you. keep yourself restrained in whatever you say or do, good or bad about your people, as we are both partners in this (responsibility). Prove yourself according to my good impressions about you, and do not prove my opinion (about you) wrong; and that is an end to the matter.

وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِي تَنَمُّرُكَ لِبَنِي تَمِيم، وَغِلْظَتُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَإِنَّ بَنِي تَمِيم لَمْ يَغِبْ لَهُمْ نَجْمٌ إِلاَّ طَلَعَ لَهُمْ آخَرُ، وَإِنَّهُمْ لَمْ يُسْبَقُوا بِوَغْم فِي جَاهِلِيَّة وَلاَ إِسْلاَم، وَإِنَّ لَهُمْ بِنَا رَحِماً مَاسَّةً، وَقَرَابَةً خَاصَّةً، نَحْنُ مَأْجُورُونَ عَلَى صِلَتِهَا، وَمَأْزُورُونَ عَلَى قَطِيعَتِهَا. فَارْبَعْ أَبَا الْعَبَّاس، رَحِمَكَ اللهُ، فِيَما جَرَى عَلَى يَدِكَ وَلِسَانِكَ مِنْ خَيْر وَشَرّ! فَإِنَّا شَرِيكَانِ فِي ذلِكَ،كُنْ عِنْدَ صَالِحِ ظَنِّي بِكَ، وَلاَ يَفِيلَنَّ رَأْيِي فِيكَ، وَالسَّلاَمُ.

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1. When Talhah and az-Zubayr reached Basrah it was Banu Tamim who took active part in the movement to avenge `Uthman's blood and werc foremost in fanning this mischief. Therefore, when `Abdullah ibn al-Abbas took over as the Governor of Basrah, in view of their breach of faith and animosity, he thought they deserved harsh treatment and was to some extent severe with them. But in this tribe there were also a few sincere followers of Amir al-mu'minin. When they saw this behaviour of Ibn 'Abbas with their tribe they sent a letter to Amir al-mu'minin through Jariyah ibn Qadamah wherein they complained of Ibn 'Abbas's harsh treatment.
Thereupon, Amir al-mu'minin wrote this letter to Ibn 'Abbas in which he instructed him to change his ways and to behave well with them, and has drawn his attention to the kinship existing between Banu Hashim and Banu Tamim. That kinship was this that Banu Hashim and Banu Tamim join the lineal line at Ilyas ibn Mudar because Hashim is the descendant of Mudrikah ibn Ilyas, while Tamim is the descendant of Tabikhah ibn Ilyas.

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