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Letter 54: To Talhah and az-Zubayr

To Talhah and az-Zubayr (*through `Imran ibn al-Husayn al-Khuza`i*) 1

Abu Ja`far al-Iskafi has mentioned this in his "Kitab al-maqamat" on the excellent qualities (manaqib) of Amir al-mu'minin (peace be upon him).

ومن كتاب كتبه (عليه السلام)

إلى طلحة والزبير، مع عمران بن الحصين الخزاعي

وقد ذكره أبو جعفر الاسكافي في كتاب المقامات في مناقب أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام

Now, both of you know, although you conceal it, that I did not approach the people till they approached me, and I did not ask them to swear allegiance to me till they themselves swore allegiance to me, and both of you were among those who approached me and swore me allegiance. Certainly, the common people did not swear me allegiance under any force put on them or for any money given to them.

If you two swore allegiance to me obediently, come back and offer repentance to Allah soon, but if you swore allegiance to me reluctantly, you have certainly given me cause for action, by showing your obedience and concealing your disobedience. 2 By my life, you were not more entitled than other Muhajirun to conceal and hide the matter. Your refusing allegiance before entering into it would have been easier than getting out of it after having accepted it.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَقَدْ عَلِمْتُما، وَإِنْ كَتَمْتُما، أَنّي لَمْ أُرِدِ النَّاسَ حَتَّى أَرَادُونِي، وَلَمْ أُبَايِعْهُمْ حَتَّى بَايَعُونِي، وَإِنَّكُمَا مِمَّنْ أَرَادَنِي وَبَايَعَنِي، وَإِنَّ العَامَّةَ لَمْ تُبَايِعْنِي لِسُلْطَان غَاصِب، وَلاَ لِعَرَض حَاضِر، فَإِنْ كُنْتُما بَايَعْتُمانِي طَائِعَيْن، فارْجِعَا وَتُوبَا إِلَى اللهِ مِنْ قَرِيب، وَإِنْ كُنْتُما بَايَعْتُمانِي كَارِهَيْن، فَقَدْ جَعَلْتُما لِي عَلَيْكُمَا السَّبِيلَ بِإِظْهَارِكُمَا الطَّاعَةَ، وَإِسْرَارِكُمَا الْمَعْصِيَةَ، وَلَعَمْرِي مَا كُنْتُما بِأَحَقّ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ بِالتَّقِيَّةِ وَالْكِتْمان، وَإِنَّ دَفْعَكُمَا هذَا الأَمْرَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَدْخُلاَ فِيهِ، كَانَ أَوْسَعَ عَلَيْكُمَا مِنْ خُرُوجِكُمَا مِنْهُ، بَعْدَ إِقْرَارِكُمَا بِهِ.

You have indicated that I killed `Uthman; then let someone from among the people of Medina who supported neither me nor you decide the matter between me and you. Then one of us shall face (the command of law) according to (their) involvement. You should give up your way now, O you two elderly men, when the great question before you is only one of shame, before you face the question of shame coupled with the Hell-fire; and that is an end to the matter.

وَقَدْ زَعَمْتُما أَنّي قَتَلْتُ عُثْمانَ، فَبَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمَا مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنّي وَعَنْكُمَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ، ثُمَّ يُلْزَمُ كُلُّ امْرِىء بِقَدْرِ مَا احْتَمَلَ. فَارْجِعَا أَيُّهَا الشَّيْخَانِ عَنْ رَأْيِكُمَا، فَإِنَّ الاْنَ أَعْظَمَ أَمْرِكُمَا الْعَارُ، مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَجْتَمِعَ الْعَارُ وَالنَّارُ،السَّلاَمُ.

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1. `Imran ibn al-Husayn al-Khuza`i was a high ranking companion distinguished in learning and achievements and very cautious in relating traditions. He accepted Islam in the year of Khaybar and participated in jihad with the Prophet. Was honoured with the judicial position at Kufah and died at Basrah in 52 A.H.

One of the genuine traditions related by `Imran ibn al-Husayn about Amir al-mu'minin is:

The Messenger of Allah raised and sent an army under the command of `Ali ibn Abi Talib. From the khums (one-fifth) received by him `Ali set aside a slave girl for himself. This was distasteful to some of his men and four of them decided to complain of this to the Prophet (S). On their return they approached the Prophet, and one of them stood up and said: "O' Messenger of Allah! Do you not see that `Ali did so and so?" The Prophet turned away his face from him. Another man stood up and made the same complaint and the Prophet turned away his face from him. Still another man stood up and repeated what his two colleagues had said and met the same reaction. Then the fourth man stood up and spoke like his predecessors. The Prophet (S) then turned to them with signs of anger on his face and said: "What do you want me to do to `Ali? (repeating thrice). Surely, `Ali is from me and I am from him, and after me he is the Master of all the believers." (al-Jami` as -sahih, at-Tirmidhi,vol.5,p.632; al-Musnad, Abmad ibn Hanbal, vol.4, pp.437-438; al-Musnad, Abu Dawud at-Tayalisi, p.111;al-Mustadrak, al-Hakim, vol.3, pp.110-111; Hilyah al-awliya', Abu Nu`aym, vol.6, p.294; Tarikh al-Islam, adh- Dhahabi, vol.2, p.196; at-Tarikh, Ibn Kathir, vol.7, p.345; Usd al- ghabah, Ibn al-Athir, vol.4, p.27, al-Isabah, Ibn Hajar, vol.2, p.509)

2. That is you are men of riches and means having a large tribe and community. What is the need to you to do for this double dealing of concealing the real feelings of the heart, showing obedience and swearing allegiance loathsomely and

unwillingly? Of course, if someone else, who was weak and helpless, said that he was obliged to swear allegiance, his point could be accepted to some extent. But when no one else has expressed his helplessness in the matter, why did this helplessness befall you so that you now regard your swearing of allegiance to be the result of your helplessness.

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