

ومن كتاب له (عليه السلام) إلى معاوية جواباً، (قال الشريف: ) وهو من محاسن الكتب

In reply to Mu'āwiyah, and it is one of his most elegant writings

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَقَدْ أَتَانِي كِتَابُكَ تَذَكُّرٌ فِيهِ اصْطِفَاءُ اللَّهِ مُحَمَّدًا (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) لِدِينِهِ، وَتَأْيِيدُهُ إِدَاءَهُ لِمَنْ أَيْدَهُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ، فَلَقَدْ خَبَّرْنَا لَنَا الدَّهْرَ مِنْكَ عَجَبًا، إِذْ طَفِقْتَ تَخِيرَنَا بِبِلَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عِنْدَنَا، وَنِعْمَتِهِ عَلَيْنَا فِي نَبِيِّنَا، فَكُنْتَ فِي ذَلِكَ كَنَاقِلِ التَّمْرِ إِلَى هَجْرٍ، أَوْ دَاعِيٍ مَسْدٍ إِلَيْهِ النَّضَالِ

Now, your letter [1] has reached me wherein you recall that Allāh chose Muḥammad (S) for His religion and helped him through those companions who helped him. Strange things about you have remained concealed (by the irony of fate) from us, since you have started telling us of Allāh's trials for us and His bounties to us through our Prophet. In this matter, you are like the person who carries dates to Hajar, or who challenges his own master to a duel in archery.

وَزَعَمْتَ أَنَّ أَفْضَلَ النَّاسِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ فُلَانٌ وَفُلَانٌ، فَذَكَرْتَ أَمْرًا إِنْ تَمَّ اعْتَرَلَكَ كَلَاهُ، وَإِنْ نَقَصَ لَمْ يَلْحَقْكَ ثَلْمُهُ، وَمَا أَنْتَ وَالْفَاضِلِ وَالْمَفْضُولِ، وَالسَّائِسِ وَالْمَسْبُوسِ! وَمَا لِلطَّلَاءِ وَأَبْنَاءِ الطَّلَاءِ، وَالتَّمْيِيزِ بَيْنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الْأَوْلِيَيْنِ، وَتَرْتِيبِ دَرَجَاتِهِمْ، وَتَعْرِيفِ طَبَقَاتِهِمْ! هَيْهَاتَ لَقَدْ حَنَّ قِدْحٌ لَيْسَ مِنْهَا، وَطَفِقَ يَحْكُمُ فِيهَا مِنْ عَلَيْهِ الْحُكْمَ لَهَا!

You think that so-and-so are the most distinguished persons in Islam. You have said such a thing which if it be true, you have nothing to do with it, but if it be not so, then its defect will not affect you. And what are you to do with the question of who is better and who is worse, or who is the ruler and who is the ruled. What have the freed ones and their sons to do with distinguishing between the first muhājirūn and determining their position or defining their ranks. What a pity! the sound of an arrow is being produced by what is not a real arrow, and he against whom the judgement is to be passed is sitting in judgement.

أَلَا تَرَى - غَيْرَ مُخْبِرٍ لَكَ، وَلَكِنْ نِعْمَةً اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ث - أَنْ قَوْمًا اسْتَشْهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ، وَلِكُلِّ فَضْلٍ، حَتَّى إِذَا اسْتَشْهَدَ شَهِيدُنَا قِيلَ: سَيِّدُ الشَّهَدَاءِ، وَخَصَمَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) بِسَبْعِينَ تَكْبِيرَةً عِنْدَ صَلَاتِهِ عَلَيْهِ! الظَّافِرِ! وَإِنَّكَ لَذَهَابٌ فِي التَّبِيهِ، رَوَّاعٌ عَنِ الْقَصْدِ.

O man, why do you not see your own lameness and remain within bounds, and why do not you realize the shortness of your measure and stay back where destiny has placed you. You have no concern with the defeat of the defeated or the victory of the victor. You are wandering in bewilderment and straying from the right path.

أَلَا تَرَى - غَيْرَ مُخْبِرٍ لَكَ، وَلَكِنْ نِعْمَةً اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ث - أَنْ قَوْمًا اسْتَشْهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ، وَلِكُلِّ فَضْلٍ، حَتَّى إِذَا اسْتَشْهَدَ شَهِيدُنَا قِيلَ: سَيِّدُ الشَّهَدَاءِ، وَخَصَمَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) بِسَبْعِينَ تَكْبِيرَةً عِنْدَ صَلَاتِهِ عَلَيْهِ!

Do you not realize it? I am not giving you any news: I am just recounting Allāh's bounty, namely that a number of people from among the muhājirūn (immigrants from Mecca) and anṣār (helpers) fell as martyrs in the way of Allāh the Sublime, and that each of them is distinguished (on that account), but when one of us secured martyrdom he was named the Chief of all martyrs, and the Messenger of Allāh (S) gave him the peculiar honour of saying seventy takbīr (Allāhu akbar) during his funeral prayer.

أُولَا تَرَى أَنَّ قَوْمًا قَطَعَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ - وَلِكُلِّ فَضْلٍ - حَتَّى إِذَا فَعِلَ بِوَاحِدِنَا كَمَا فَعِلَ بِوَاحِدِهِمْ، قِيلَ: الطَّيَّارُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَذَوِ الْجَنَاحِينَ!

Do you not know that a number of people lost their hands in the way of Allāh, and that everyone is distinguished (on that account), but when the same thing occurred to one of us he was given the name “the flier in Paradise”; and “the two winged”.

وَلَوْ لَا مَا نَهَى اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مِنْ تَرْكِيَةِ الْمَرْءِ نَفْسَهُ، لَذَكَرَ ذَاكَرَ فَضَائِلِ جَمَّةٍ، تَعْرِفُهَا قُلُوبُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَلَا تَمَجُّهَا آذَانُ السَّامِعِينَ. فَدَعُ عَنْكَ مَنْ مَالَتْ بِهِ الرَّمِيَّةُ، فَإِذَا صَنَاعِعُ رَيْنَا، وَالنَّاسُ بَعْدَ صَنَائِعِ لَنَا.

If Allāh had not forbidden self-praise, the writer would have mentioned numerous distinctions which the believer knows full well and which the ears of hearers do not wish to forget. Better leave those whose arrows miss the mark. We are the direct recipients of our Lord's favours while others receive favours from us after that.

لَمْ يَمْنَعْنَا قَدِيمَ عِزِّنَا وَلَا عَادِي طَوْلِنَا عَلَى قَوْمِكَ أَنْ خَلَطْنَاكُمْ بِأَنْفُسِنَا، فَتَكُنَّا وَأَنْكَحْنَا، فَعِلَ الْأَكْفَاءُ، وَلَسْتُمْ هُنَاكَ! وَأَنْبِي يَكُونُ ذَلِكَ كَذَلِكَ وَمِنَّا النَّبِيُّ وَمِنكُمْ الْمَكْذِبُ، وَمِنَّا أَسَدُ اللَّهِ وَمِنكُمْ أَسَدُ الْأَحْلَافِ، وَمِنَّا سَيِّدَا شَبَابِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ وَمِنكُمْ صَبِيَّةُ النَّارِ، وَمِنَّا خَيْرُ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ وَمِنكُمْ حَمَالَةُ الْحَطْبِ، فِي كَثِيرٍ مِمَّا لَنَا وَعَلَيْكُمْ!

In spite of our old established honour and our well-known superiority over your people, we did not stay away from mixing with you and married and got married (among you) like equals although you were not so. And how could you be so when (the position is that) among us is the Prophet while among you is the opposer, among us is the lion of Allāh while among you is the lion of the opposing groups, among us are the two masters of the youth of Paradise [2] while among you are the children of Hell, among us is the choicest of all the women of the worlds [3] while among you is the bearer of firewood, and many more distinctions on our side and shortcomings on your side.

فَأَسْلَمْنَا مَا قَدْ سَمِعَ، وَجَاهِلِيَّةً تَنَا لَا تُدْفَعُ، وَكِتَابُ اللَّهِ يَجْمَعُ لَنَا مَا شَدَّ عِزًّا، وَهُوَ قَوْلُهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى: ﴿وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ﴾، وَقَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى: ﴿إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهُوَ الَّذِي آمَنُوا﴾ وَاللَّهُ وَلِي

Our Islam is well-known and our (greatness in the) pre-Islamic period too cannot be denied. Whatever remains has been mentioned in the words of Allāh the Glorified, the Sublime: And blood relations have the better claim in respect of one to the other, according to the Book of Allāh ... (Qur'ān, 33:6) He (Allāh) the Sublime, also says: Verily, of men the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (Muḥammad) and those who believe; and verily, Allāh, is the Guardian of the faithful. (Qur'ān, 3:68)

فَنَجِّنْ مَرَّةً أَوْلِيَّ بِالْقُرَابَةِ، وَتَارَةً أَوْلِيَّ بِالطَّاعَةِ. وَلَمَّا احْتَجَّ الْمُهَاجِرُونَ عَلَيَّ الْأَنْصَارُ يَوْمَ السَّقِيْفَةِ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) فَلَجُوا عَلَيْهِمْ، فَإِنْ يَكُنِ الْفُلُجُ بِهِ فَالْحَقُّ لَنَا دُونَكُمْ، وَإِنْ يَكُنْ بغيرِهِ فَالْأَنْصَارُ عَلَى دَعْوَاهُمْ.

Thus, we are superior firstly because of kinship and secondly because of obedience. When at Saqīfah (of Banū Sā'idah) the muhājirūn contended kinship with the Messenger of Allah (S) against the anṣār, they scored over them. If that success was based on kinship then the right would be ours better than yours. Otherwise, the anṣār's contention stands.

وَزَعَمْتَ أَنِّي لِكُلِّ الْخُلَفَاءِ حَسَدْتُ، وَعَلَى كُلِّهِمْ بَغَيْتٌ، فَإِنْ يَكُنْ ذَلِكَ كَذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ الْجِنَايَةُ عَلَيْكَ، فَيَكُونُ الْعُذْرُ إِلَيْكَ. «وَتِلْكَ شِكَاةٌ ظَاهِرَةٌ عَنْكَ عَارَهَا.»

You think that I have been jealous of every caliph and have revolted against them. Even if this be so, it is not an offence against you and therefore no explanation is due to you. "This is a matter for which no blame comes to you".

وَقُلْتُ: إِذِي كُنْتُ أَقَادُ كَمَا يَقَادُ الْجَمَلُ الْمَخْشُوشُ حَتَّى أَبَايَعُ، وَلَعَمْرُ اللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ تَذُمَّ فَمَدَحْتِ، وَأَنْ تَفْضَحَ فَاْفْتَضَحْتِ! وَمَا عَلَيَّ الْمَسْلَمِ مِنْ غَضَابَةٍ فِي أَنْ يَكُونَ مَظْلُومًا مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ شَاكَا فِي دِينِهِ، وَلَا مَرْتَابًا بَيِّقِينَهُ! وَهَذِهِ حَجَّتِي إِلَى غَيْرِكَ قَصْدَهَا، وَلَكِنِّي أَطَلَقْتُ لَكَ مِنْهَا بِقَدْرِ مَا سَنَحَ مِنْ ذِكْرِهَا.

You have said that I was dragged like a camel with a nose string to swear allegiance (to Abū Bakr at Saqīfah). By the Eternal Allāh, you had intended to revile me but you have praised me, and to humiliate me but have yourself been humiliated. What humiliation does it mean for a Muslim to be the victim of oppression so long as he does not entertain any doubt in his religion, nor any misgiving in his firm belief! This argument of mine is intended for others, but I have stated it to you only in so far as it was appropriate.

ثُمَّ ذَكَرْتُ مَا كَانَ مِنْ أَمْرِي وَأَمْرِ عُثْمَانَ، فَلَمْ أَنْ تَجَابَ عَنْ هَذِهِ لِرَحْمِكَ مِنْهُ، فَأَيُّنَا كَانَ أَعْدَى لَهُ، وَأَهْدَى إِلَى مَقَاتِلِهِ! أَمْ مِنْ بَدَلٍ لَهُ

نَصْرَتُهُ فَاسْتَقْعَدَهُ وَإِسْتَكْفَهُ، أَمْ مِنْ إِسْتَنْصَرِهِ فِتْرَاحِي عَنْهُ وَبِثِّ الْمُنُونِ إِلَيْهِ، حَتَّى أَتَى قَدْرُهُ عَلَيْهِ، كَلَّا وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ  
المعوقين منكم والقائمين لإخوانهم هلم إلينا ولا يأتون البأس إلا قليلاً.

Then you have recalled my position vis-à-vis ‘Uthmān, and in this matter an answer is due to you because of your kinship with him. So (now tell me), which of us was more inimical towards ‘Uthmān and who did more to bring about his killing; or who offered him his support but he made him sit down and stopped him; or who was he whom he called for help but who turned his face from him and drew his death near him till his fate overtook him? No, no; by Allāh: “Indeed knoweth Allāh those who hinder others among you and those who say unto their brethren ‘Come hither unto us’, and they come not to fight but a little.” (Qur’ān, 33:18)

وَمَا كُنْتُ لِأَعْتَذِرَ مِنْ أَدْبِي كُنْتُ أَنْقَمُ عَلَيْهِ أَحْدَاثًا، فَإِنْ كَانَ الذَّنْبُ إِلَيْهِ إِرْشَادِي وَهَدَايَتِي لَهُ، فَرُبَّ مَلُومٍ لَا ذَنْبَ لَهُ «وَقَدْ يَسْتَفِيدُ  
الظئنة المتصاح»

I am not going to offer my excuse for reproving him for (some of) his innovations, for if my good counsel and guidance to him was a sin then very often a person who is blamed has no sin and “sometimes the only reward a counsellor [4] reaps is suspicion (of evil)”.

وَمَا أَرَدْتُ ﴿إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ﴾ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ﴿عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ﴾.

“I desired naught but reform what I am able to (do); and my guidance is not but with Allāh; On Him (alone) do I rely, and unto Him (alone) do I turn.” (Qur’ān, 11:88)

وَذَكَرْتُ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ لِي وَلَا صَحَابِي عِنْدَكَ إِلَّا السَّيْفُ، فَلَقَدْ أَضْحَكْتَ بَعْدَ اسْتِعْبَارِ! مَتَى أُلْفَيْتَ بِنُو عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ عَنِ الْأَعْدَاءِ نَاكِلِينَ،  
وَبِالسُّيُوفِ مَخُوفِينَ؟! «فَلَيْتَ قَلِيلًا يَلْحَقُ الْهَيْجَا حَمَلًا» فَسَيَطْلُبُكَ مِنْ تَطْلُبٍ، وَيَقْرِبُ مِنْكَ مَا تَسْتَبْعِدُ، وَأَنَا مَرَقِلٌ نَحْوِكَ فِي جِحْفَلٍ  
مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ، وَالتَّابِعِينَ لَهُمْ بِأَحْسَانٍ، شَدِيدِ زَحَامِهِمْ، سَاطِعِ قَتَامِهِمْ، مَتَسْرِيلِينَ سَرَابِيلِ الْمَوْتِ، أَحَبَّ الْإِقَاءِ إِلَيْهِمْ لِقَاءَ  
رَبِّهِمْ، وَقَدْ صَحِبْتَهُمْ ذَرِيَةَ بَدْرِيَّةٍ، وَسُيُوفَ هَاشِمِيَّةٍ، قَدْ عَرَفْتَ مَوَاقِعَ نَصَالِهَا فِي أَخِيكَ وَخَالَكَ وَوَأَهْلِكَ، ﴿وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ  
الظالمين ببعيد﴾

You have mentioned that for me and for my followers you have only the sword. This makes even a weeping person laugh. Did you ever see the descendants of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib running away from battle, or being frightened by swords, “Wait a little till Ḥamal [5] joins the battle” shortly, Then he whom you are seeking will seek you and he whom you think to be far away will approach near you. I am (shortly) speeding towards you with a force of muhājirūn and anṣār and those who follow them in virtue. Their number will be great and their dust will spread all round. They will be wearing their shrouds and their most coveted desire is to meet Allāh. They will be

accompanied by the descendants of those who took part in the battle of Badr, and they will have Hāshimite swords whose cut you have already seen in the case of your brother, maternal uncle, your grandfather and your kinsmen. Nor are they far distant from the unjust ones. (Qur'ān, 11:83)

Footnotes :

[1] This letter of Amīr al-mu'minīn's is in reply to Mu'āwiyah's letter which he sent to Kūfah through Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī, and it also contains replies to some points which Mu'āwiyah had written in the letter sent through Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī.

In Abū Umāmah's letter, Mu'āwiyah had mentioned the deputation of the Prophet and his ascension to the position of revelation and wrote in such a manner as though it was a matter not known to or not understood by Amīr al-mu'minīn and that he was in need of being informed and told of it. This is just like a stranger who may draw the map of a house for the guidance of those who dwell in it and apprise them of things already known to them. That is why Amīr al-mu'minīn has compared him to the man who carried dates to Hajar which was itself noted for abundant growth of dates.

This is a proverb employed when someone beings to tell a person matters which he already knows better. The basis of this proverb is that a man of Hajar, which is a town near Bahrain (Persian Gulf), went to Baṣrah to sell goods and make purchases. After finishing the sale, he looked about the market to make his purchases and found nothing cheaper than dates. He therefore decided to purchase dates, and when he reached Hajar with his load of dates their plenty and cheapness there did not leave him any alternative but to store them so as to sell them later when their price had risen. The price however continued to fall day by day till all of them became rotten leaving to him nothing except their stones. In short, after referring to the Prophet's ascension to prophethood Mu'āwiyah recounted the distinction and merits of the three Caliphs according to his view and wrote:

The most distinguished among the companions and the most high ranking in the view of the Muslims was the first Caliph who collected all the Muslims under one voice, removed their disunity and fought those who were forsaking Islam. After him is the second Caliph who won victories, founded cities and humiliated the unbelievers. Then comes the third Caliph who was the victim of oppression. He propagated religion and spread the word of Allāh far and wide. (Ṣiffīn, al-Minqarī,

pp. 86-87; al-'Iqd al-farīd, vo1. 4, pp. 334-335; Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 15, p. 186)

Mu'āwiyah's purpose behind in bringing up these pointless warblings was to injure Amīr al-mu'minīn's feelings and to rouse his temper so as to make him produce such words through his tongue or pen which would so disparage the caliphs that he would instigate the people of Syria and Iraq against him by exploiting them. In fact, he had already set it in the minds of these people that Amīr al-mu'minīn had instigated the people against 'Uthmān, had got Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr killed, had turned 'Ā'ishah out from her house and had shed the blood of thousands of Muslims. Being unaware of the real facts they were convinced of these baseless allegations, yet to strengthen the opposition, he thought it advisable to make them believe that Amīr al-mu'minīn did not recognize the achievements of the three caliphs and bore enmity and malice towards them, and to produce Amīr al-mu'minīn's writing in evidence, and also to use it for rousing the people of Iraq, because their majority was much impressed with the environment created by the caliphs and with their greatness. But Amīr al-mu'minīn guessed his intention and gave him such a reply which put a knot in his tongue and which he could not dare show to anyone. So, Amīr al-mu'minīn exposed his lowness by referring to his enmity towards Islam and his accepting subjugation under force, and advised him to keep within his bounds, and warned him against fixing grades of distinction among those muhājirūn who were in any case superior to him in so far as they had been the preceders in hijrah (immigration from Mecca). Whereas since Mu'āwiyah himself was only one of those whose life had been spared (on the day of fall of Mecca), he had not the remotest connection with the muhājirūn. Consequently, in the matter under discussion Amīr al-mu'minīn has put Mu'āwiyah's position as that of a false arrow among real arrows. This is a proverb which is employed when a man boasts over persons with whom he has no connection. As regards his statement that so-and-so is greater in distinction, Amīr al-mu'minīn has, by using the word "you think", shown that it is his personal opinion which has not the remotest connection with fact, because this word is used when a false or unreal statement is made.

After refuting this claim of being the most distinguished, Amīr al-mu'minīn has referred to these qualities and distinctions of Banū Hāshim which show conspicuously the high degree of their attainments. Thus, the people who took part in jihād with the Prophet and secured martyrdom attained high positions but the distinction that fell to Ḥamzah by virtue of his high performance was not secured by anyone else. The Prophet gave him the title of Master of the Martyrs and said his

funeral prayer fourteen times whereby the number of takbīr (Allāhu akbar) rose to seventy. Similarly, in various battles the hands of the fighters were cut off. For example, in the battle of Badr the hands of Khubayb ibn Isāf al-Anṣārī and Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal and in the battle of Uḥud those of ‘Amr ibn al-Jamūḥ as-Salamī and ‘Ubayd (‘Atik) ibn at-Tayyihān (brother of Abu’l-Haytham at-Tayyihān) were cut off, but when in the battle of Mu’tah the hands of Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālib were cut off, the Prophet singled him out by naming him “the flier in Paradise” and the “two-winged”. After recounting the peculiar achievements of Banū Hāshim, Amīr al-mu’mīnīn has referred to his own attainments with which the histories and traditions are replete and which could not be tarnished with doubts and misgivings. Thus, traditionists like Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164/780-241/855), Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī an-Nasā’ī (215/830 — 303/915) and others say that :

The number of traditions that have been related through reliable sources in regard to the distinctions of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib have not been related about any other companion of the Prophet. (al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, p. 107; al-Istī‘āb, vol. 3, p. 1115; Tabaqāt al-ḥanābilah, vol. 1, p. 319; al-Kāmil, vol. 3, p. 399; Tahdhīb at-tahdhīb, vol. 7, p. 339; Faḥḥ al-bārī, vol. 7, p. 57)

An important distinction out of these particular distinctions of Ahlu’l-bayt (the Household of the Holy Prophet) is the one to which Amīr al-mu’mīnīn has referred in these words that “We are the direct recipients of Allāh’s favours while others receive favours from us.” This is the height of distinction that even the highest personality cannot reach its sublimity and every other distinction looks small before it. Acknowledging the greatness and supremacy of this sentence, Ibn Abi’l-Hadīd writes:

Amīr al-mu’mīnīn intends to convey that we are not under obligation of any person since Allāh has bestowed all blessings on us directly, there being no intermediary between us and Allāh, while all other people are under our obligation and protection, being the intermediary between them and Allāh, the Glorified; this is a high position indeed. Its apparent meaning is what the words show but its real sense is that the Ahlu’l-bayt are the obedient servants of Allāh and the people must be their obedient followers. (Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, vol. 15, p. 194)

Now, since these people are the first recipients of the bounties of Allāh and the source of bounties for the rest of the people, no one from among the people can be compared with them, nor can anyone be regarded as their equal on the basis of social contacts with them, much less than those individuals who were in direct

contrast to the attainments and characteristics of these people, and used to oppose truth and right on every occasion. Amīr al-mu'minīn places both the sides of the picture before Mu'āwiyah and says:

The Prophet was from us while your father Abū Sufyān was foremost in opposing him. Ḥamzah was from us and the Prophet gave him the title of “Lion of Allāh” while your maternal grandfather, 'Utbaḥ ibn Rabī'ah was proud of being the “lion of swearers (against the Prophet).”

When in the battle of Badr, Ḥamzah and 'Utbaḥ ibn Rabī'ah came face to face, Ḥamzah said, “I am Ḥamzah son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib; I am the lion of Allāh and the lion of His Prophet,” whereupon 'Utbaḥ said, “I am the lion of swearers (against the Prophet).” In another version, the word “Asadu'l-aḥlāf” has been recorded. The meaning is that he was the Chief of the allying parties. The story of swearing is that when Banū 'Abd Manāf acquired a distinct position among the Arab tribes they thought they should take over from Banū 'Abdi'd-Dār the offices relating to the Ka'bah and to depose them from these offices. In this connection, Banū 'Abd Manāf allied with themselves the tribes of Banū Asad ibn 'Abdi'l-'Uzzā, Banū Taym, Banū Zuhrah and Banū al-Ḥārith, and concluded an agreement with them. In order to solemnize this agreement they drenched their hands in ṭīb (perfume) and swore that they would help each other. For this reason, these tribes were called: “Tribes of sworn chaste parties”. On the other side the tribes of Banū 'Abdi'd-Dār, Banū Makhzūm, Banū Sahm and Banū 'Adī also swore that they would resist Banū 'Abd Manāf and their allies. These tribes are called the “allies”. 'Utbaḥ has deemed himself the head of the allying parties.

Some commentators have taken the word Asadu'l-aḥlāf to mean Abū Sufyān, because he made different tribes swear against the Prophet in the battle of the Trench, while some commentators take it to mean Asad ibn 'Abdi'l-'Uzzah, but this interpretation does not carry weight because here Amīr al-mu'minīn is addressing Mu'āwiyah and this interpretation does not hit Mu'āwiyah since Banū 'Abd Manāf were a party to this alliance. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn says, “they have among themselves the masters of the youth of Paradise”. Referring to the Prophet's saying, “al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the masters of the youth of Paradise”, while the boys of the other side are in Hell. This reference is to the sons of 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayṭ, about whom the Prophet has said, “For you and your sons is Hell”. Then Amīr al-mu'minīn says that among them is the chief of all the women of the worlds, namely Fāṭimatu'z-Zahrā' (p.b.u.h.), while in the other party is the bearer of the

wood which refers to Umm Jamīl, the sister of Abū Sufyān. This woman used to spread thorns in the path of the Prophet. She has been mentioned in the Qur'ān along with Abū Lahab, in these words:

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May perish both the hands of Abū Lahab, may perish (he himself); Shall avail him not his wealth nor what he earneth; Soon shall he burn in the flaming fire; And his wife, the bearer of the firewood; Upon her neck shall be a halter of twisted rope. (Qur'ān, 111)

[2] It is narrated from Amīr al-mu'minīn, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Abū Hurayrah, etc., that the Holy Prophet (may Allāh bless him and his descendants) said :

Verily, Fāṭimah is the Supreme Lady of the women of Paradise, and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the two Supreme Youth of Paradise. But their father ('Alī) is Superior to them. (al-Jāmi'aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ, at-Tirmidhi, vol. 5, pp. 656, 661; al-Musnad, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol. 3, pp. 3, 62, 64, 82; vol. 5, pp. 391, 392; as-Sunan, Ibn Mājah, vol. 1, p. 56; al-Mustadrak, al-Ḥākim vol. 3, p. 167; Majma' az-zawā'id, vol. 9, pp. 183, 184, 201; Kanz al-'ummāl, al-Muttaqī, vol. 13, pp. 127, 128; al-Istī'āb, vol. 4, p. 1895; Usd al-ghābah, vol. 5, p. 574; Tārīkh Baghdad, vol. 1, p. 140; vol. 6, p. 372; vol. 10, p. 230; at-Tārīkh, Ibn 'Asākir, vol. 7, p. 365).

[3] It is narrated from 'Imrān ibn al-Ḥusayn and Abū Tha'labah al-Khushnī that the Holy Prophet (S) said to Fāṭimah (p.b.u.h):

“O' my little daughter, are you not satisfied that you are verily the Supreme Lady of all women in the worlds?” She said, “O' father, then what about Maryam (Mary) daughter of 'Imrān?” He said, “She was the Supreme Lady of her age, and you are the Supreme Lady of your age. Truly, by Allāh, I married you to one who is the Master in this world and the hereafter. No one hates him save a hypocrite.” (Ḥilyah al-awliyā', vol. 2, p. 92; al-Istī'āb, vol. 4, p. 1895; al-Iṣābah, vol. 4, p. 275)

Also, 'Ā'ishah narrated that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

O' Fāṭimah, will you not be satisfied to be the Supreme Lady of the women of the worlds (or) to be the Supreme Lady of all women of this ummah (community) or of the women believers? (aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ, al-Bukhārī, vol. 8, p. 79; aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ, Muslim, vol. 7, pp. 142-144; as-Sunan, Ibn Mājah, vol. 1, p. 518; al-Musnad, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol. 6, p. 282; al-Mustadrak 'alā aṣ-ṣaḥīḥayn, al-Ḥākim, vol. 3, p. 156)

[4] The meaning is that the person who goes too far in counselling others will be thought to have his personal ends in so doing, even though his counsel may well be based on sincerity of intention and selflessness. This line is used as a proverb on such occasions. The whole couplet runs as follows:

How often a good counsel I offered you, but sometimes the only reward a counsellor reaps is suspicion

[5] This line is of Ḥamal ibn Badr. The full couplet runs thus:

Wait a bit till Ḥamal reaches the battlefield; How pretty is death when it comes.

The story behind it is that Mālik ibn Zuhayr threatened Ḥamal ibn Badr with battle and in reply he recited this couplet and then attacked Mālik and killed him. When Mālik's brother saw this, he killed Ḥamal and his brother Ḥudhayfah in revenge. Then, he described this in his following couplet:

I appeased my heart by killing Ḥamal ibn Badr and my sword appeased me by killing Ḥudhayfah.