

Letter 31: Advice to one of his sons after returning from the Battle of Siffin

He wrote this letter for al-Hasan ibn `Ali (his son - peace be upon him), when Amir al-mu'minin encamped at al-Hadirin on his way back from Siffin.

مِنَ الْوَالِدِ الْفَانِ 1، الْمُقَرَّرِ لِلزَّمَانِ 2، الْمُدْبِرِ الْعُمُرِ 3، الْمُسْتَسْلِمِ لِلدُّنْيَا 4، السَّاكِنِ مَسَاكِنَ الْمَوْتَى 5 وَ الظَّالِعِينَ عَنْهَا غَدَاً 6، إِلَى الْمَوْلُودِ الْمُؤَمَّلِ مَا لَا يُدْرِكُ 7، السَّالِكِ سَبِيلَ مَنْ قَدْ هَلَكَ 8، غَرَضِ الْأَسْقَامِ 9 وَ رَهِينَةِ الْأَيَّامِ 10 وَ رَمِيَّةِ الْمَصَائِبِ 11 وَ عَبْدِ الدُّنْيَا 12 وَ تَاجِرِ الْغُرُورِ 13 وَ غَرِيمِ الْمَنَايَا 14 وَ أَسِيرِ الْمَوْتِ 15 وَ حَلِيفِ الْهُمُومِ 16 وَ قَرِينِ الْأَحْزَانِ 17 وَ نُصْبِ الْأَفَاتِ 18 وَ صَرِيحِ الشَّهَوَاتِ 19 وَ خَلِيفَةِ الْأَمْوَاتِ 20؛ ...

From the father who is (shortly) to die 1, who acknowledges the hardships of the times 2, who has turned away from life 3, who has submitted himself to the (difficulties of) time 4, who is living in the homes of the dead 5 and is due to depart from them any day 6; to the son who has the desire for what is not to be achieved 7, who is treading the path of those who have died 8, who is the victim of ailments 9, who is entangled in the worries of the days 10, who is target of hardships 11, a slave of the world 12, a trader of its deception 13, a debtor of wishes 14, a prisoner of mortality 15, an ally of worries 16, a neighbor of grief 17, a victim of distresses 18, who have been overpowered by desires 19, and who is a successor of the dead 20.

Questions and Points:

Points:

- 1: *Why from the father who is shortly to die?* Because he had lived most of his life and he died three years later.
- 2: *Why is he referring to the hardship of the times?* Because he wanted to remind us that life has two kinds of days. Sweet times and bitter times. Whether a person likes it or not; whether he/she expects it or not, he/she will face it.
- 3: *Why is the Imam saying he has turned away from life?* Because he was climbing down the mountain of his life. He is advising us to remember you will too one day reach the top of the hill at your age and you will start climbing down. In that case, you will not be able to turn around and go back. It happened to him, and it will happen to us too.
- 4: *Why submit to the difficulties of time?* Because there are times in man's life that he will not be able to change things. The disasters will overcome him. He must accept it.
- 5: *What does it mean by living in the homes of the dead?* It means the homes we are living in right now; they were built by people before us who lived in them, and they are dead. We are also going to die one day, and these lands or properties will transfer to people after us.
- 6: *What is the point about 'due to depart from the homes of the dead'?* It is to remind us that the time of our departure from this world is near, and it can happen any moment.
- 7: *What does the Imam mean by his first piece of advice to his son and to all human beings?* He means that man in this world is after something which is not achievable. Human beings want to avoid any type of problem, sadness, and loss. He is after comfort and ease. But the nature of this world is full of disasters and difficulties.
- 8: *What is meant by 'who is treading the path of those who have died'?* It means the path that all human beings are on right now ends in dead.