

# Letter to Malik al- Ashtar

## Session One

### Questions for Reflection

- 1) Which two lines from today's reading would you pick as your mottos in life?
- 2) What are the spiritual dangers of leadership, according to this section?
- 3) What are some obstacles which Imam says prevent a leader from acting justly?

# Agenda

- Introduction to the letter
- Malik al Ashtar
- Kindness and affection for all human beings
- Dangers of leadership
- Justice among people

# Letter to Malik al Ashtar

- written when Imam sent him to Egypt as the governor
- first copied by Asbagh bin Nabata
- reproduced and referred to by many Arab scholars
- George Jurdaq wrote about it in his book *Voice of Human Justice*
- referred to in the UN report

UNDP 2002 Arab Human Development Report

<http://www.miftah.org/Doc/Reports/CompleteEnglish.pdf>

(check page 119)

# Malik al-Ashtar

Imam (a) says about him:

He was to me what I was to the Holy Prophet (s)

Upon his death, Imam said:

What an excellent man Malik was!

Had he been a mountain he would have been its firm rock  
and had he been stone he would have been solid . . .

surely his death is among the greatest worldly calamities

May Allah bless Malik with mercy

no doubt he faithfully dispersed his charge

and completed the appointed term and met his Creator . . .

**Al Amaali, pg 95**

The following quotes about Malik are from Nahjul Balagha:

I have appointed Malik bin Harith as chief of the staff over you and the armies under you. Take your orders from him and obey him. Treat him as if he is your shield and armour because he is one of those from whom I have no fear of weakness nor any mistake, nor lethargy where haste is more appropriate, nor haste where slow action is expected of him.

**Letter 13**

After glorifying Allah and paying homage to the Holy Prophet (s) be it known to you that I am sending towards you a creature of Allah who forsakes rest and sleep during days of danger, who does not fear his enemy in the critical junctures, and who is more severe than burning fire to sinners and vicious people. He is Maalik bin Haarith Mazhiji (Mazhij is a sub-class of Bani Nakha'a).

Hear him and obey his commands which you will find to be right and according to true canons of Islam. He is such a sword among the swords of Allah that its sharpness will never get blunt or whose stroke and blow will never be without effect and who will never lose an opportunity. If he orders you to advance against your enemies, then advance; if he commands you to halt then halt because he himself will never advance nor halt and will never give orders to advance, halt or retreat without my consent.

In sending him to you, I have given preference to your needs over those of mine so that he may serve you faithfully and may treat your enemies severely and strongly. **Letter 38**



# **Kindness and Affection to others**

Certainly a Messenger has come to you  
from among yourselves;  
grievous to him is your distress  
he has deep concern for you  
and is compassionate and merciful to the believers.

**Sura at-Tawbah, 9:128**

The peak of intelligence after belief in Allah is to love people

**Holy Prophet (s)**

# Dangers of Leadership

Rise in status is dangerous for the ego

O my Lord! Bless Muhammad (saw) and his progeny  
and do not elevate my status in the eyes of the people  
except that You make me think lower of myself  
to the same extent

and do not bless me with an outward honor  
until You grant me an inner humiliation  
to the same extent

**Dua Makarimul Akhlaq, Saheefa as-Sajjadiyyah**



Imam Khumayni said:

As long as a man's outlook and perception is limited and secular, worldly status is likely to intoxicate him.. Once in our hearts we have been enlightened with the Divine radiance and submission to Him, such insignificant worldly status is not likely to impress us. Yesterday you were a Prime Minister, before that you were a Cabinet Minister, and before that you were a School Teacher, and further before that you were a simple student at school. And it is not known when you will depart from this world. It is likely that immediately after you leave or even while you are present here, a bomb may explode and liquidate all of us.

If this is a factual possibility, why should one's character change after he is elected President? After all what is Presidency? What is it before a person whose heart is lit with the light of Monotheism? What is the whole of universe compared with the glory and magnificence of the Blessed and Supreme Lord? The whole of this material universe has no significant weight compared with the spiritual world, wherefore should we, as a headman of a village, or an alderman of a city or the head of the state think that we are now something and look up to ourselves and down upon others?

**Imam Khumayni at the ceremony of President elect  
Mohamedali Rajai**

# Justice among people

Surely Allah enjoins the doing of Justice  
and the doing of good    **Sura an-Nahl 16:90**

O you who believe, be maintainers of Justice  
Sura an-Nisaa 4:135

According to Imam Ali (a), Justice is:

- an adornment for a human being
- an excellence for the Ruler
- reforms the public
- multiplies blessings