

Al-Abbas

The River of Endless Loyalty¹

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Abstract: no one can deny the fact that among the freedom seekers of the world none can be found equal to Imam al-Hussain and his companions. Among his companions, his brother, al-Abbas has a special place. A place no one can ignore regardless of being a Muslim, knowing about Islam or being familiar with the life of holy Imams (as). This article is dedicated to al-Abbas.

Keywords: al-Abbas, Hazrat Fatimah, Imam Al-Hussain, Imam Ali, Ashura, Karbala

¹ The following are the main sources used to compile this article:
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A man once lived who possessed the might of Ali (as), the faith of al-Hussain (as), and all the blessings of Allah. He was known as *Qamare Bani-Hashem* (the moon of the Bani-Hashem progeny) because his bright and beautiful physical appearance dazzled like beams of moonlight. *Saqqa* (the one who brings water) was another one of his titles because he continuously sought to quench the thirst of Imam al-Hussain's family. He inherited all the elements of human perfection from his father, Imam Ali (as); his bravery, kindheartedness, faith, and clemency, made him the epitome of heavenly virtue. Even the most eloquent speakers are at a lack of words when trying to describe this towering personality. This man was Hazrat al-Abbas (as), the *Alam-dar* (flag-bearer) of Islam. Despite all of his other lofty merits, one of his traits glistens above all the others. Hazrat Abul-Fazl's endless loyalty and devotion have been etched in the hearts of Muslims worldwide.

In today's terror-stricken world, Muslims especially need to stand up proud and follow their faith whole-heartedly. At the same time, if every Muslim was able to devote him/herself to following the Ahlul Bayt (as), Islam would be represented at its best. This is a strenuous task and it is necessary to look towards a hero to inspire and uplift the hopes of Muslims. Hazrat Abbas (as) is the unblemished model of loyalty to one's faith and should be referred to by all Muslims, who need to follow in his footsteps in order to illuminate the world with Islam.

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When the beloved Hazrat Fatimah (as) passed away, sorrow pierced the blessed hearts of Imam Ali (as), Imam al-Hasan (as), and Imam al-Hussain (as). The sordid enemies of Islam had ruthlessly murdered the most preponderating woman of the religion, and taken Imam Ali's best friend and companion. Imam al-Hasan (as) and Imam al-Hussain (as) were robbed of their precious and adored mother, who instilled the strong love of

Allah in their souls. Though no one could replace Hazrat Fatimah (as), Imam Ali (as) needed a dedicated companion who would help care for his children. He found his perfect partner in a pious woman who we now know as Ummul Banin (Mother of the sons). Imam Ali's family were his precious jewels, thus he was very pleased with Ummul Banin who cared remarkably for his gems. She had such an inundated love for Imam al-Hasan (as) and Imam al-Hussain (as) that she asked Imam Ali (as) not to call her by her real name, Fatimah, so the children would not be reminded of their extraordinary mother.

Hence, they were nurtured by Ummul Banin's extreme kindness and compassion to the extent that some of their deep emotional lacerations were mitigated by her extreme sympathy. Astonishingly, she cared for Imam al-Hasan (as) and Imam al-Hussain (as) far more dedicatedly than for her own children. Never in history has it occurred for a woman to love her stepsons as sincerely as Ummul Banin. Her motivation was Allah; she knew that her Lord had bestowed her with this sacred duty, thus she attended their every need with the utmost affection. Furthermore, she was exceptionally loyal to her family, which Allah commanded most beautifully in the Quran:

"Say: No reward do I ask of you for this, except the love of those near of kin." (The holy Quran 42:23)

This intense dedication and loyalty to family must be noted by Muslims today, whose families may not be very tightly knit. Family is of chief importance in Islam and is the foundation for receiving Allah's blessings. A strong sense of family will lead to a strong sense of community in Islam.

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When the blessed day came, Ummul Banin gave birth to a prodigious son who would be like a mighty lion in his defense of Islam. Imam Ali's face glowed with delight, completely aware that this was the son he was waiting for, the

brother who would stand by Imam al-Hussain (as) on the day of *Ashura*. Imam al-Hussain (as) embraced his baby brother in his arms, and recited the Azhan and Eqamah in his ears. The infant opened his eyes for the first time, and observed the gentle face of Imam al-Hussain (as) with its soft expression. Ever since that moment, he had a constant fire of burning love, blazing for his dearest brother, Imam al-Hussain (as).

From the time Hazrat al-Abbas (as) was young, Imam Ali (as) educated him, desiring his son to preach Islam and forever pledge his allegiance to the Ahlul Bayt. Hazrat al-Abbas (as) inherited his mother's fervent loyalty to Imam al-Hussain (as) and was ready to do absolutely anything for the Imam of his time. He not only realized that al-Hussain (as) was first and foremost the Imam, but he also happened to be his brother, making him even more obliged.

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Imam Ali (as) was training Hazrat al-Abbas (as) to become a powerful and courageous warrior of Islam, both spiritually and physically. Allah had bestowed Imam Ali (as) the great gift of strength which won him many battles in the name of Islam and enabled him to defend the helpless. However, as he proclaimed when he broke the *Kheibar* gate, it was the power of his *iman* (faith) which had given him the strength. All of his potency and fighting techniques were inherited by Hazrat Abul-Fazl (as). At a mere 11 years old, he faced his first battle, which became known as the battle of Siffin. He never thought of himself as a champion in strength, he knew that in every way, Allah had given him the power to defend Islam. That power he dedicated to the will of Allah and the beloved Ahlul Bayt, specifically Imam al-Hussain (as). Consider that one of the most powerful warriors which shook the hearts of the strongest men in the land, knew himself as nothing more than a slave for Imam al-Hussain (as) and Islam at the peak of dedication. He always

addressed Imam al-Hussain (as) as *Mawla*, or Master, not once calling him by his name. Hazrat al-Abbas (as) could have had a world of power and possessions, but he was so incredibly loyal to Islam that he was willing to sacrifice absolutely everything, including his own life, for his brother and his religious conviction.

When Imam Ali (as) was mortally wounded and lying at his deathbed, he summoned his entire family. He entrusted everyone except Hazrat al-Abbas (as) to the care of his oldest son, Imam al-Hasan (as). Barely 12 years old, the excluded Hazrat al-Abbas (as) was silently sobbing. Of course, the scrupulous Imam Ali (as) had not forgotten about his son and called for Hazrat al-Abbas (as) to stand beside him. He put Hazrat al-Abbas' hand in Imam al-Hussain's and majestically said: "Hussain, this child I am entrusting to you. He will represent me on the day of your supreme sacrifice and will lay down his life in defending you and your dear ones". Roughly, 20 years later, Hazrat al-Abbas (as) would be standing beside his brother on the scorching sands of Karbala.

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Imam al-Hussain (as) did everything in his power to avoid a violent encounter with Yazid, but being the ruthless person that he was, Yazid and his men committed the worst of all regicide. As Imam al-Hussain (as), accompanied by his companions, were leaving Medina, Shimr came to Hazrat al-Abbas (as) and his brothers with a proposition. He urged them to join Yazid's army, where they would be cosseted from the myriad of soldiers which would attack Imam al-Hussain (as). Hazrat al-Abbas (as), firm in his allegiance to Imam al-Hussain (as), did not even consider it. His devotion and affection for Imam al-Hussain (as) and Islam were far too deep to be penetrated by the offers. The true reason for their offerings was the fear of facing his valor and might which had burrowed deep in their hearts. Their attempts were in vain as Hazrat al-Abbas (as) sought

help from no one but Allah. All but 72 people had left Imam al-Hussain's side. Still, Hazrat al-Abbas (as) was completely committed to his master and was not shaken by the 10,000 enemy troops which faced them. One by one, the men of the camp would leave for the last time, the only thing that returned were the badly beaten bodies of the martyrs. After each man was pronounced dead, Hazrat al-Abbas (as) eagerly asked Imam al-Hussain (as) for permission to enter the battlefield, getting a negative answer each time. Allah had granted him the power to beat all of the enemies, but for his master's sake he was forced to be patient and contain his fervor despite the way they were being treated. Gradually, the sand dunes of the desert of Karbala became red from the blood of all who were being brutally killed. Hazrat al-Abbas (as) approached Imam al-Hussain (as) and asked to go fight, but Imam al-Hussain (as) did not allow him to do this and once again, the lion was contained by its master.

The beastly Yazid blocked Imam al-Hussain's access to the river, which was the only source of water and nourishment in the desert of Karbala. Imam al-Hussain's children along with the others had parched and scorching throats. Their lips were splitting in the dry heat, which they had endured for days without water. Just then, little Sakinah, with the innocence of a four year old, approached her uncle holding the empty jug. "*Al Atash*," she said, "I am thirsty, oh my uncle Abbas." Hazrat al-Abbas' heart dropped as he felt the pain of his niece. He sat in front of Imam al-Hussain (as) with Sakinah on his lap. This time, Imam al-Hussain (as) could not deny him and he allowed Hazrat al-Abbas (as) into the battlefield with the sole purpose of retrieving water for the dehydrated children. Hazrat al-Abbas (as) mounted his horse with the water jug and the *alam* (flag), armed solely with a spear. Hazrat al-Abbas (as), the lone warrior against thousands of men, majestically entered the battlefield. As Yazid's men witnessed him coming, they scrambled to hide behind one another. The few brave ones who dared challenge al-Abbas were put to death by his spear.

Hazrat Abul-Fazl (*as*) reached the river and proceeded to fill the bag with water. When it was full, he strapped it on and was about to sip some of the precious water but hesitated, thinking about the children that were thirsty back at the camp. Though the arid desert sun had pounded on his head and made him exceedingly thirsty, he threw the water back. While the *Saqqa* (he who gives water) was returning to the tents, one of Yazid's men hid in a tree and as Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) passed by him, he struck his right arm so hard that it was severed and fell to the ground. Hazrat Abul-Fazl (*as*) knew his mission and continued, holding the *alam* and the jug of precious water in his other hand, until someone crept behind him and severed his other arm. The *alam* fell to the ground, but Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) grabbed the jug with his teeth, determined to get the water to his niece. An arrow was shot straight into the jug and Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) watched the precious diamonds spill out of his treasure chest. He was ashamed to face little Sakinah and summoned his horse to turn the other way.

Yazid's men enclosed him from all sides and he fell from his horse saying, "My salutations to you, *Maula* (master)." Hearing his voice, Imam al-Hussain (*as*) lost all energy and dragged towards his brother. Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) then felt the affectionate touch of his master's hand. Barely breathing, he asked a few favors of his master. One of his eyes was shot with an arrow and the other was covered in blood, so he asked Imam al-Hussain (*as*) to wipe the blood away from his eye. Since he had come into the world seeing Imam al-Hussain's face, he wanted to leave the world while looking at his brother. Next, he asked Imam al-Hussain (*as*) not to carry his body back to the camp because he felt ashamed in front of Sakinah and would not be able to face her, even in death. Also, he comprehended the fact that Imam al-Hussain's body was battered from the fighting and it would be difficult for him to carry his weight. He asked that Sakinah not be brought to see his body because her affection and devotion to her uncle would break her heart to see him in that condition. Imam al-Hussain (*as*), in a flood of tears, asked Hazrat

al-Abbas (*as*) for a favor as well. Ever since childhood he had called Imam al-Hussain (*as*) *Master* and now with his last breath, Imam al-Hussain (*as*) wished to hear him be called “brother”. Alas, Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) proclaimed “My brother!” with his last breath, and his soul was freed. The sacred hero was martyred at age 35, with more valor than that of the 10,000 combined enemy personnel.

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The story of the Moon of the Hashimites is more than just a heart-rending tale of tremendous dedication; it teaches every Muslim a number of very important lessons, which can strengthen the entire community. Firstly, it depicts the magnitude of family, which is of very high rank in Islam. Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) was the pinnacle of family affection, and sacrificed his life for the very kin which were so dear to him. If Muslims today were devoted to their families, they would flourish in the sight of Allah and the world. Since Islam is so wrongly depicted, people need to see how involved and successful Islam is in creating such harmonious family relationships. Once families are living in peace, society will be safe and at ease. Most problems stem from early family problems, therefore, children will be inculcated with a strong sense of family, which would be passed to the next generation as well. The simple idea of family devotion as Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*) portrayed, would better the world in the name of Islam, creating a society which fosters love and peace.

Hazrat al-Abbas’ loyalty to his faith and Imam helped revive Islam in all of its purity; the same Islam that Allah had presented to Prophet Muhammad. In today’s world, the enemies of Islam are striving more than ever to destroy the religion and to lead Muslims astray. It is the duty of every follower to be loyal to Islam and stand up proud and united, to shield and pursue this religion in its entirety. In addition, Muslims need to be loyal to the Ahlul Bayt (*as*), who had so much love for us that they

sacrificed a great deal in order to make sure we are presented with a true Islam. They were the shining role models who paved the way for their followers to stay proud and feel their support. Furthermore, it is vital for Muslims to be firm in allegiance to the Imam of their time, Imam Mahdi (*as*). Our loyalty to him should be deep enough to resemble Hazrat al-Abbas' passionate reliability to Imam al-Hussain (*as*). In today's developing world, there are many Yazid's but few Abbas' who can save Islam from the enemies. Now, all pressure is on Muslims to decide whether they will join the abundant forces of Yazid, or the pious companions of Hazrat al-Abbas (*as*).