

## Why Didn't Abu al-Fadl Drink Water?

Historians have narrated that when Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas (as) decided to go on the battlefield, Imam al-Husayn (as) requested that he bring some water for the children and newborns. Abu al-Fadl (as) got a water skin and mounted his horse.

He started moving towards the River Euphrates. Four thousand men surrounded him and were showering spears on him from every direction, but the lone soldier Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas (as) did not pay the least attention to them, nor to the spears which were being showered all around him. He managed to drive the enemies away from the river bank and gain access to water all by himself.

He dismounted his horse and went next to the river with astounding ease and calmness. He then got a handful of water from the river and wanted to drink it because of the intense thirst he was feeling. All of a sudden, he remembered that Imam al-Husayn (as) and his children and the entire family were thirsty. He dropped the water that was in his hands back into the river and recited the famous poem,

يا نفس من بعد الحسين هوني وبعده لا كنت ان تكوني

هذا حسين وارد المنون وتشرابين بارد المعين

تالله ما هذا فعال ديني

*"O soul! You should be debased for al-Husayn (as) and never live after him.*

*Al-Husayn (as) has come face to face with death and yet you want to drink cold and delicious water!?*

*I swear upon Allah that this is not in accordance with the dictates of my religion!"*

Then, he filled the waterskin, mounted his horse and returned towards Imam al-Husayn's (as) camp.

The enemy closed his way...<sup>1</sup>

Some ask why Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas did not drink the water. It would have been better if he had quenched his thirst first in order to gain the necessary strength that was needed to fight, and by this means inflict heavy blows on the enemy or even exterminate them altogether. If he had drunk the water, he would have been able to help Imam al-Husayn (as) and Islam better.

## Response

Firstly, Imam al-Husayn's (as) aim at Karbala was not to bring about the deaths of all the people. On the contrary, Imam al-Husayn's (as) main aim was to awaken the Islamic community and bring about social consciousness. Even killing the enemy has to occur when there is a pressing need and expedience in the action.

Secondly, the issue of Abu al-Fadl's not drinking water has served as further proof of the oppression that was committed against Imam al-Husayn (as). This action has attracted sympathy and affection and led human hearts towards Imam al-Husayn (as). It has drawn people to initiate uprisings against Yazid and others like him.

Thirdly, Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas knew very well that he and his brother, the Holy Imam al-Husayn (as), were going to get killed, whether he took the opportunity to drink water or not. He knew that he was not going to leave this battlefield safe, sound and alive. He knew that the enemies were determined and bent on killing all the household of Bani Hashim at all costs. Therefore, was it not better to attain martyrdom and return to his Lord with thirsty lips?

What bears witness to this is that man drinks water whenever he knows with certainty that drinking water will save his life, but Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas had no hope of living after this war. He knew with certainty that he was going to be martyred.

Fourthly, Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas believed that drinking water when Imam al-Husayn (as) and his household were thirsty amounted to treachery in some way. The rules of proper Islamic conduct did not allow him as a follower to satiate his thirst when his holy leader was thirsty.

Fifthly, generosity and self sacrifice are among the morals and gracious virtues of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as). Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas sacrificed in the same way that his father Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), Fatimah al-Zahra (as), al-Hasan and al-Husayn (as) had sacrificed generously and given the food they so badly needed to break their fast with in the holy month of Ramadan to the poor, orphans and the captives for three days in a row while they themselves were forced to remain hungry all this time.

<sup>1</sup>. Muqarram, Maqtal al-Husayn (as), p. 267.

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