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Surah al-Fatiha

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

Tonight is the night of 8th of Muharram.

Surely tonight, we will shed more tears. We will do more matam.

Tonight is a very tragic night, it is the night of Hazrat ‘Abbas.

‘Abbas! Who was ‘Abbas?

‘Abbas, the Captain; ‘Abbas, the Commander; ‘Abbas, the brave and strong warrior; ‘Abbas, the Alamder – flag bearer; ‘Abbas, the faithful brother; ‘Abbas, the guardian of Umm Kulthoom and Bibi Zainab; ‘Abbas, Sakina’s dearest uncle; ‘Abbas, son of Ummul Baneen; ‘Abbas, the lion son of ‘Ali.

‘Abbas was like his father, ‘Ali. He had all the qualities of his great father. ‘Abbas was brave, strong, wise, loving, obedient and faithful.

His father, ‘Ali, on his dying bed, gave ‘Abbas’ hand to Husayn said:

My son ‘Abbas, Husayn is the son of Bibi Fatimah. ‘Abbas, you are my son. ‘Abbas, Husayn is your master. You are Husayn’s slave. ‘Abbas, take care of Husayn.”

Since that day, ‘Abbas had fulfilled Husayn’s every wish like a faithful slave.

‘Abbas treated Husayn like his master.

He always treated Bibi Kulthoom and Bibi Zainab with great respect.

He followed Husayn like a shadow.

‘Abbas was with Husayn in Karbala’.

Husayn knew ‘Abbas was like their father, ‘Ali, a brave and strong warrior.

He would tell 'Abbas:

“My brother 'Abbas keep your sword in its place. Don't take your sword out to fight. We have come to save Islam. 'Abbas, we have come to teach true Islam. We will teach Islam – not with our swords but with our character. Patience 'Abbas, patience”

When Yazid's men pulled out Husayn's tents from the river bank, 'Abbas became very angry. He pulled out his sword and wanted to fight there and then. Husayn said:

“No 'Abbas, no! Be patient. We have not come here to fight, 'Abbas.

Imagine a warrior like 'Abbas, asked not to pull his sword out, after being treated so badly. That needs great patience.

'Ashura' came. 'Ali Akbar gave his last Adhan. Everyone in Husayn's camp prayed Fajr Salat (Prayer).

The battle of Karbala' began. One-by-one, Husayn's companions went to the battlefield and were martyred.

Everytime a body was brought to the tent, 'Abbas went to Husayn and said:

Master, now allow me to go to the battlefield. Enough, Master, enough. Let me go and fight those beastly men, Master.”

Every time, Husayn calmed 'Abbas down by saying:

“No 'Abbas, no! How can I let you go? You are the captain of my army. You are my right hand man, 'Abbas. You are my support, 'Abbas. Where would I be without you, 'Abbas? No 'Abbas, no.”

'Abbas' three brothers went to the battlefield and were martyred.

'Aun – Muhammad went to the battlefield and were martyred.

Qasim went. His body was trampled and torn to pieces,

'Abbas became very restless and could not take it anymore. Somehow, he must get permission.

'Abbas walked to Umm Kulthoom and Zainab's tent and then turned back.

He knew they won't let him go.

'Abbas walked to Husayn's tent several times and back again. How could he persuade Husayn to let him go?

'Abbas is restless. 'Abbas wants permission to fight.

Just then, little Sakina, with her mashk, came to 'Abbas. "Uncle 'Abbas, look at my mashk. It is very dry. Al-Atash, uncle. Sakina is very thirsty, uncle 'Abbas."

'Abbas thought of a way to get permission from Husayn.

He picked up little Sakina and went to Husayn's tent.

'Abbas sat in front of Husayn, with Sakina on his lap.

'Abbas didn't have to say anything.

Husayn looked at 'Abbas and then at Sakina and her mashk.

Husayn understood 'Abbas' expression.

"'Abbas, how can I say no, now? You have brought Sakina with you. Go 'Abbas, go. Go and fill Sakina's mashk with water.

One request, 'Abbas, leave your sword with me!

Remember, 'Abbas, you are not going to the fight. You are just going to get water for Sakina."

'Abbas gave his sword to Husayn. He kissed Sakina and put her down. He said:

"Sakina, pray for me, pray that I get water for you."

'Abbas then went to Zainab.

"Sister Zainab, give me permission to go to the battlefield."

"Brother 'Abbas, I used to hear that my hijab would be looted. 'Abbas, I used to say, how dare could anyone snatch my hijab when I have eighteen brothers. Now 'Abbas, that you are going, I believe that my hijab will really be looted."

'Abbas went to the battlefield.

In one hand 'Abbas carried the Alam of Husayn's army and in the other he held a spear and Sakina's mashk. He had no sword to fight but had a spear for protection. He headed for River Furaat.

Yazid's soldiers saw 'Abbas coming. They had seen 'Abbas fight and knew he was like his father, 'Ali. They were scared,

The few who dared to attack 'Abbas were killed by his spear.

'Abbas reached the river and filled Sakina's mashk.

He then asked his faithful horse to drink water. The horse looked towards Husayn's camp and seemed to say:

“Master, are you sure that the water will reach Sakina? Master, how can I drink when Sakina and ‘Ali Asghar are thirsty? Let us first give them water, and then I will drink some.”

‘Abbas, with his Alam in one hand and his spear and Sakina's water-filled mashk in the other, rode back.

Umar Saad, Yazid's commander, ordered his men to stop ‘Abbas taking water to Husayn's tents.

The enemies surrounded ‘Abbas. They fired arrows from all directions.

‘Abbas was hit with many arrows. He was bleeding.

Just then, a soldier came from behind and struck his sword on ‘Abbas' shoulder. ‘Abbas gripped the mashk with his teeth, as his arm and spear fell to the ground.

Another soldier came and struck his sword into ‘Abbas' other shoulder. The Alam and the other arm fell to the ground.

Imagine, ‘Abbas on his horse – No arms – holding Sakina's mashk between his teeth.

Water must reach Sakina. ‘Abbas, still had the strength to go on.

Sakina's mashk is still filled with water.

An arrow was shot. It hit Sakina's mashk. The water began to pour out.

Poor ‘Abbas lost all his strength as the water poured out from Sakina's mashk. He fell from his horse and cried out:

“Master, come to me. Master let me see you for the last time.”

Husayn heard ‘Abbas. He was heartbroken. With his hands on his back he cried out:

“Son, ‘Ali Akbar, my back is gone. My support is gone. My Alamdar is gone.”

Husayn and ‘Ali Akbar rushed to the battlefield.

Husayn saw his brother lying on the ground.

Imagine how Husayn felt when he saw his brother lying on the ground – covered with blood, both arms severed.

He placed ‘Abbas' head on his lap.

My brother, 'Abbas? You are leaving me too. 'Abbas, what will I do without you? My support, 'Abbas, I am finished without you. My brother 'Abbas, can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, Master. When I came to this world, I saw your face first. Now, as I am going from this world, Master, I would like to see your face for the last time."

"Abbas, why can't you see me?"

"Master, my eyes are covered with blood."

Imam Husayn cleaned 'Abbas' eyes. 'Abbas gazed at Husayn.

"Abbas, I have a wish too. All your life you have called me Master. Once, brother 'Abbas, just once, call me brother."

'Abbas said:

"Husayn, my brother, do not take my body to the tents. I am ashamed of myself. I don't want Sakina to see me. I don't want my sisters Kulthoom and Zainab to see me like this. I don't want Kulthoom and Zainab to cry."

'Abbas took his last breath and died on Husayn's lap.

Poor Husayn? What should he do now?

Husayn picked up the Alam and tied Sakina's mashk to it.

Sakina saw the Alam coming. She shouted:

"Children, come children. My uncle 'Abbas is coming with water. I will give all of you water. Come children, come."

Husayn reached the tent. He cried out:

"Z-A-I-N-A-B.....Help me, Zainab.....The Alam has come.....But the Alamdar has not..."

Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaih Raja'oon!

We are from Allah and to Him we will return!

Matam al-Husayn!