

Morality of Imam Zayn al-Abidin (A.S.)

≡ Category: [Ahl al-Bayt](#)

✍ Written by Allama Husayn Ansariyan

📄 Hits: 347



A relative of Imam Zayn al-Abidin who was standing beside him, raised his voice and started to abuse him. The Imam did not answer him until he went back to his house. At this moment, the Imam said to his companions, "Did you hear what this man said? I would like you to come with me to hear my response." The Imam put on his shoes and set out with his companions saying to himself,

...and those who restrain their anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of the good. (3:134) When they reached the house of that man, the Imam introduced himself to the servant who conveyed it to his master. The man who seemed to be looking for trouble came out. He was sure that

the Imam had come for retaliation; rather, the Imam said, "My brother! A few minutes ago, you were standing beside me and said such and such words against me. If I am the one whom you described, I will ask for Allah's forgiveness; but if what you said about me is not true, may Allah forgive you." The man kissed the Imam's forehead, saying, "What I said about you is not true and it is more deserving of me."⁸⁴

The Lepers

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) has reported: One day, Imam Zayn al-Abidin was passing by the lepers while he was riding. The lepers who were eating invited the Imam to share food with them. The Imam said, "I am fasting; otherwise, I would sit with you." When the Imam reached home, he had some food prepared, invited the lepers and ate with them.⁸⁵

Forgiving a Neighbor

Husham ibn Ismail was appointed as ruler of Medina by Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. One of the grandsons of Imam Ali (a.s) reports: Husham ibn Ismail was a bad neighbor who persecuted Imam Zayn al-Abidin greatly. When he was dismissed, he was brought to public with his hands

tied, on the order of Walid ibn Abd al-Malik for retaliation. While he was under arrest near Marwan's house, Imam Zayn al-Abidin passed by and greeted him. The Imam had already advised his companions not to offend Husham.⁸⁶

A Hidden Charity

There were families in Medina whose needs were fulfilled without knowing wherefrom. When Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn passed away, they found out that it was the Imam who had secretly helped them.

It is also reported: Imam Zayn al-Abidin would come out of house at nights with a purse full of dirhams and dinars. He would go from one door to another leaving some dirhams and dinars at the door of each house. Only when he had passed away, they found out that the benefactor had been Imam Zayn al-Abidin.⁸⁷

Prayer and Charity

Abu-Hamzah Thamali has reported: I saw Imam Zayn al-Abidin in prayer while his cloak was falling off his shoulders but he did not make any attempt to hold it until he completed his prayer. I asked about it. The Imam said, "Woe to you! Do you know before Whom was I standing? Prayer is not accepted save with full concentration and presence of heart."

A Quranic Pardon

One of the slave-girls of Imam Zayn al-Abidin was pouring water on his hands while performing ablution when all of a sudden the ewer hit and hurt the Imam's face. The Imam raised his head towards her. The slave-girl said: Allah says, "Those who restrain their anger." The Imam said, "I restrained my anger." The slave-girl said, "...and pardon men." The Imam said, "I pardoned you." The slave-girl said, "...and Allah loves the doers of good." The Imam said, "You are free in the way of Allah."⁸⁸

Day of Loss

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) reported: There was a clown in Medina who would make people laugh. One day he said to himself, "This man (Imam Zayn al-Abidin) has made me helpless to make him laugh!" So, when the Imam was followed by two of his servants, he passed by the clown. Seeing the Imam, the clown walked behind him, drew his cloak and ran away. The Imam did not pay any attention to the clown but people went after him and took back the cloak. Addressing people, the Imam said, "Who is this man?" They said, "He is a making people of Medina laugh." The Imam said, "Tell him there is a day for Allah in which idle people will suffer losses."⁸⁹

Unknown among Travelers Kindness to a Camel

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) has reported: When he was passing away, Ali ibn al-Husayn said to his son, Imam al-Baqir, "I have gone on Hajj on this camel for twenty times and I have not given it a lash. Bury it when it dies so that it will not be eaten by wild animals, for Allah's Messenger has said: Any camel which goes to Arafah for seven times, Allah will make it one of the blessings of

Paradise and place blessing in its offspring.” When the camel of the Imam died, they buried it.⁹⁰

Giving Away His Food

When Ali ibn al-Husayn was fasting, he would have a sheep slaughtered, its meat cut into pieces and cooked. At sunset while he had not broken his fast, he would order to bring the bowls, fill them and take them to such and such houses until there was no more food in the pot. Then, they brought bread and date for the Imam to break his fast with.⁹¹

Helping the Needy

When dark overwhelmed Medina and people were at rest, Imam Zayn al-Abidin would come out of house to go to the needy people and divide among them the food which he carried in a bag on his shoulder while covering his face so that none would know him. On many occasions, he would stand waiting at the doors so that they would come and take their shares. When they saw him face to face, they would say: “He is the possessor of bag!”⁹²

The Story of Grapes

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) has reported: Imam Zayn al-Abidin was very fond of grapes. One day, they had brought fresh grapes to Medina. His wife bought some of them for him to break his fast with. When they brought them before him and he stretched out his hand to take some, a needy person knocked the door and asked for something. The Imam told his wife to take the grapes for the needy person. She said, “Some of it was enough for the needy person.” The Imam said, “No, By Allah; take all of it for him.” The next day, again they bought grapes for him but an indigent person came to the door and the Imam gave him all of the grapes. The third night, no needy came. So the Imam ate the grapes saying, “We did not lose anything in it, thanks to Allah.”⁹³

Nobility in Childhood

Abdullah ibn Mubarak reports: When I was on Hajj to Mecca, I caught sight of a seven or eight year old child walking alongside a caravan of pilgrims with no provision with him. I went forward, saluted him and asked, “With whom did you cover the desert?” He said, “With the Beneficent Allah.” He looked great to me. I asked, “Where is your provision, my son?” He said, “My piety is my provision and my Lord is my goal.” He looked magnanimous. I asked, “Which lineage do you come from?” He said, “Abd al-Muttalib.”

“Which family?” I asked.

“Hashim”, he said.

“Which branch”, I asked.

“Ali– Fatimah”, he said.

“O my master! Have you composed a poem?” I asked.

“Yes, I have”, he said.

“Recite part of your poem,” I asked.

The Imam recited a poem with the following words:

We are those sent to the pond of Kawthar. We give water to some and repel others. None can attain salvation but through our mediation. One who loves us will not suffer losses and one who makes us happy will receive happiness from us and whoever harms us will be of low birth. One who usurps our right will be punished on the Judgment Day!

Then I lost sight of him until I came to Mecca. After I had completed my Hajj rituals and returned to al-Abtah, I saw a circle of people round someone. It was the same child with whom I spoke. I asked who he was. They said that he was Zayn al-Abidin.⁹⁴

Asking For Forgiveness

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) has reported: My father sent his slave on mission but he delayed in fulfilling it. He lashed him with one stroke. The slave said, “O Ali ibn al-Husayn. You send me on a mission and hit me!” My father cried, saying, “My son! Go to the grave of the Holy Prophet, perform a two-unit prayer and say: O Lord: Forgive Ali ibn al-Husayn on the Judgment Day.” Then he said to the slave, “You are free in the way of Allah.”

Abu-Basir says: I said to the Imam, “May I be your ransom. It seems that setting a slave free is the atonement of hitting him!” But the Imam kept silent.⁹⁵

Retaliation

Imam al-Ridha reports: Ali ibn al-Husayn hit his slave on one occasion. Being sorry, he entered home, took off his shirt and while giving a lash to his slave said, “Hit Ali ibn al-Husayn!” The slave refused to do and the Imam gave him fifty dinars.⁹⁶

Mother’s Right

Imam Zayn al-Abidin has said, “You are the most benevolent man but you don’t eat from the same plate with your mother while she likes to.” The Imam said, “I don’t like to stretch my hand to reach a morsel which my mother has an eye on it hence being disowned by her.”

From that time on, he would put a cover on the plate of food when eating with his mother so he would put his hand under it and ate the food.⁹⁷

Security against Loan

Isa ibn Abdullah reports: Abdullah was on the verge of death. The creditors had gathered in his house claiming their dues. He said, “I don’t have anything to pay you. Refer to either of my cousins, Ali ibn al-Husayn or Abdullah ibn Jafar to pay my debt to you.” The creditors said, “Abdullah ibn Jafar is a man of long-term promise. He is negligent too. Ali ibn al-Husayn, though not wealthy, is truthful. Hence, he is a better option for us.” The news reached Imam Zayn al-Abidin. He said that he would undertake to pay the debt at harvest time, while he had no grain at all. When it was harvest time, Allah destined for him a certain amount of money with

which he paid all the creditors' claim.⁹⁸

An Extraordinary Example of Forbearance

A man insulted Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.). His slaves made an attempt to attack him. The Imam said, "Let him go. What is hidden of us is more than what he is saying about me." Addressing the same man, the Imam said, "Do you need anything?" The man was ashamed. The Imam gave his garment to him together with a thousand dirhams. The man said loudly, "I bear witness that you are the son of Allah's Messenger."⁹⁹

Reaction to Backbiting

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) reached a group of people who were talking behind his back. He stood near them saying, "If you are true about what you say, may Allah forgive me; and if you are lying, may Allah forgive you."¹⁰⁰

Forgiving the Child's Killer

Imam Zayn al-Abidin had a few guests; he asked his servant to be quick in preparing the food. The servant hastily brought the iron grid on which the meat had been grilled but it fell off his hand on the head of the Imam's child who was on the ground and killed him. Addressing the servant who was shocked and trembling from fear, the Imam said, "You did not do it intentionally. Therefore, you are free in the way of Allah." He then took part in the funeral service of his child.¹⁰¹

Devotion

Imam Zayn al-Abidin had a needy cousin and the Imam would go to the door of his house as an unknown man giving him a few dinars. But the cousin would say, "Ali ibn al-Husayn does not observe ties of relationship towards me. May Allah not give him a good reward!"

The Imam heard what he was saying but forbore it and did not wish to reveal his identity.

When Imam Zayn al-Abidin passed away, his cousin, whose nightly assistance had been cut off, realized that it was Imam Zayn al-Abidin who fulfilled his needs. For this reason, he rushed to the Imam's grave and wept bitterly.¹⁰²

Notes:

84. Kitab al-Irshad by Shaykh al-Mufid 145/2

85. Al-Kafi, 132/2, H. 8

86. Kitab al-Irshad by Shaykh al-Mufid: 147/2

87. Ilal al-Shara'i: 231/1, H. 8

88. Al-Amali by Shaykh al-Saduq: 201, H. 12

89. Al-Amali by Shaykh al-Saduq: 220, H. 6

90. Thawab al-Amal wa-Iqab al-Amal: 50

91. Al-Kafi: 68/4; H. 3

92. Al-Manaqib: 163/4

93. Al-Manaqib: 154/4
94. Al-Manaqib: 155/4
95. Bihar al-Anwar: 92/46, Chapter: 5, H. 79
96. Kitab Al-Zuhd: 45, Chapter: 7, H. 119
97. Al-Manaqib: 162/4
98. Al-Kafi: 97/5, T 7
99. Al-Manaqib: 157/2
100. al-Khisal: 517/2, H. 4
101. Kashf al-Ghummah: 80/2
102. Kashf al-Ghummah: 106/2