Islamic Stories

Islamic Stories: Stories from the lives of Prophets, Imams, Companions

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Stories from the lives of the Prophets, Imams, and Companions.

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A Call to Prayers On A Cold Wintry Morning

It was a wintry morning with much snow falling coupled with the blowing of a strong cold wind. It was not easy to come out in the open air. Yet one could see people rushing to their work and students with books in their hands hastening to their schools.

In one of the mosques in Hamadan – Iran, religious students were assembling in order to attend a morning class. It was an important school of Islamic theology and the tutor was also a very great learned one. His discourses were indeed very thought-provoking and so were his students quite intelligent.

The tutor was none else but the world famous and a great Persian thinker and philosopher 'Ibn Sina', popularly known in Europe as Avicenna. His lectures and writings on various science subjects had become the standard text books for hundreds of years in the universities of Europe. Students admired his deep philosophical thinking. They felt honoured to sit in his class and hear his inspiring lectures.

That cold morning, students had already assembled in the mosque and were still anxiously awaiting the arrival of their learned tutor. They were wondering if the intense cold weather that day had delayed his coming.

A few minutes had passed when suddenly the students witnessed the graceful arrival of 'Ibn Sina', their great learned tutor. They felt very happy and stood up as a mark of reverence and respect for him. He sat down at his usual place and exchanged greetings with his students. He commenced his discourse in his usual lucid manner that held his students spellbound. He also gave satisfactory answers to their questions.

Among the students was one very young and enthusiastic by name 'Bahman Yar'. He was much more close and attached to 'Ibn Sina' the learned tutor. He was also the foremost among the clever and advanced students of the class. Every time he listened to the lectures of his tutor, he became more and more fascinated with his deep philosophy and knowledge on every subject. He would say to his class-

mates: “I wonder why our tutor 'Ibn Sina' does not claim to be a prophet despite his supreme intelligence and magic personality”

It is said that one day by chance 'Ibn Sina' was standing at a baker and loaf-seller shop. His attention was drawn to a very smart young boy who was displaying signs of much intelligence. The boy was saying to the baker: “My mother is requesting for a little fire.” The baker responded: “Have you brought any pot to carry the fire?” “No! But I know how to carry it”, replied the boy instantly. So saying he applied some ash over his palm and stretched his hand to the baker who placed a piece of burning firewood over his palm. Without any hesitation, the boy took it and went home.

'Ibn Sina' was rather amazed to see the intelligence and courage of this boy. He thought of having him for special training and education under his personal care. The proposal was communicated to the parents who agreed and entrusted the boy to his full care. Thus 'Bahman Yar' since then was staying at no other place except at the house of his tutor and care-taker, 'Ibn Sina'. They were all the time to be seen together. The boy being highly intelligent derived the best of the knowledge that his tutor could impart.

Years passed and 'Bahman Yar' grew up not only in age but also in knowledge and understanding under the patronage of his tutor. The learned tutor was also very proud of this most capable student.

It was one of the coldest nights of the wintry season. Midnight had passed and the snow-falling was very heavy. Both 'Ibn Sina' and 'Bahman Yar' were sleeping in one room under warm thick blankets. The light in the room was already extinguished but the student was still asking intricate questions on some deep subjects. The tutor was replying in his usual impressive manner. Fascinated by the supreme knowledge and deep philosophy of his tutor, he again made the suggestion which he had made before:

“Oh my learned tutor!” he pleaded, “with all this high status of knowledge that you enjoy and being master of all the sciences, why not declare yourself a prophet? Sir! Don't you think that you even excel some of the previous prophets in knowledge and your status today is unparalleled in the world! Should you decide to claim prophethood, no one would dare challenge you. Let me assure you that I shall be the first to offer my allegiance and would serve you with full faith.”

Since 'Bahman Yar' was still young and immature, his above proposal to his tutor was rather emotional than logical. 'Ibn Sina' smiled but did not give any reply.

That night the cold weather had become extreme and there was heavy snow-falling. Both were already fast asleep. It was past midnight and suddenly 'Ibn Sina' woke up and raised his head out of the warm blanket. Incidentally he was very thirsty and the water-mug in the room was empty. So he decided to wake up his student to go out and bring him some water.

“Oh 'Bahman Yar'! My son 'Bahman Yar'! Please wake up and bring me some drinking water from outside”, he said repeatedly.

“Why is there no water in the water-mug near your goodself, Sir?” asked 'Bahman Yar.'

“No!” replied 'Ibn Sina.'

'Bahman Yar' raised his head and saw heavy snowfall outside. The thrilling sound of the strong cold wind also made him nervous to go out. Again 'Ibn Sina' grumbled:

“Oh 'Bahman Yar'! Why the delay? Bring me some water, I am too thristy.”

'Bahman Yar' dared not come out of the warm blankets to face the cold weather outside the room. He was, therefore, putting forward lame excuses to his tutor.

“Oh my respected tutor! It is harmful for you to drink water now that you have just come out of the warmth of thick blankets. It is better you go to sleep again till the early morning which is not far off”, said 'Bahman Yar'.

“My son! Bring me water, I am too thirsty. I myself am a medical expert and know better what is harmful than you do. I am unable to sleep, please bring me some water from outside”, again appealed 'Ibn Sina'

In response 'Bahman Yar' again put forward excuses and argued that he would catch cold and fall sick if he were to go out in that extreme cold weather. So saying he went back to sleep.

There was dead silence everywhere and no sound of anything was to be heard. Outside it was still pitch dark except the first light of Subhe Sadiq (true dawn) in the eastern horizon had commenced to appear. Suddenly the silence broke with a melodious voice of a muezzin – caller to prayer from the top of a minaret at the nearby mosque. After reciting some verses of the, Holy Qur'an, the muezzin in a loud voice said, “Allaho Akber” – Allah is the Greatest. “Ash-hado an la ilaha illallah” – I bear witness that there is no god except Allah.

Both the tutor and his student quietly listened to the melodious voice of the muezzin. The call to prayers then proceeded to the words “Ash-hado anna Muhammadan Rasoolullah” – I bear witness that Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah. On hearing this, 'Ibn Sina' thought of taking the opportunity of responding to the repeated proposal made to him by 'Bahman Yar'. He said:

“Listen to me, oh my son 'Bahman Yar'. Now I wish to reply to your repeated suggestion”. The student sat up to hear attentively of what his learned tutor abruptly wanted to say. 'Ibn Sina' then proceeded:

“You have been suggesting to me several times to claim prophethood, that people would put full faith in me and that you would be the first one to do so. Now look, you have been my close student for several years and benefited from me a great deal, yet you did not think it prudent to obey me by coming out of your warm bed for a moment and bring me water that I badly needed to quench my thirst. Instead you chose to put forward lame excuses.”

“But think of this man who is now calling to prayers at the top of the minaret after coming out in the coldest weather and making ablution with cold water in the early hour of this morning. It is for no other purpose but in obedience to and respect for the command of Allah as conveyed by His apostle Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (S) some four hundred years ago.

“What a great difference there is between me and that Prophet sent by Allah!”

Bahlool Proves the Three Facts

Abu Hanifa was once teaching Islamic beliefs to his students. He was arguing and challenging the validity of some of the statements which had been proclaimed by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) Bahlool happened to be present as well. Abu Hanifa proclaimed that he could not agree with the three understated statements as made by the Imam.

The first one was that “Allah can never be seen.” According to Abu Hanifa it was impossible for a thing to exist and yet be invisible!

The second things that the Imam had stated was that “Satan (devil) will be thrown in the inferno of Hell which will scorch him bitterly.” Abu Hanifa argued: “How was it possible for fire to hurt 'fire', the fact that Satan was created from fire itself!”

The third statement of the Imam was that “Man alone is responsible for his actions and Allah – the most powerful – has nothing to do with his actions.” “How is it possible, when Allah alone guides the destiny of man without Whose will nothing can happen?” This was Abu Hanifa's third challenge.

As soon as the speaker, Abu Hanifa, had made these three criticisms, Bahlool got up, took a piece of brick and aiming at Hanifa, let it go and cracked Abu Hanifa head.

Bahlool was caught and taken before the Caliph for punishment. In his defence, he pleaded that he had done nothing else except reply to the three criticisms which Abu Hanifa had made against the Imam.

The Caliph asked him to explain as to how and why he chose to reply by hitting and injuring Abu Hanifa. Bahlool said, “This man claims that if God is there, then he must be seen. He is now complaining of pain in his head due to the brick having hurt him. If the pain is definitely there, can he show me where it is? Well! just as pain can be there without being seen Allah also exists without being seen.”

“Secondly, he says that fire cannot burn fire. It is a fact that man is made out of clay and this brick with which I hit his head is also made out of clay, if clay can inflict pain and hurt clay, why can't fire do the same to fire?”

“The third thing he says is that man is not responsible for his own actions but Allah does all things. If this is so, then why does he want justice from you and why does he want me to be punished for hurting him? He might as well transfer the punishment to Allah Who, according to him – is responsible for all the actions of man!”

Everyone in the court was stunned at this and Abu Hanifa was dumb founded – having nothing to say. So Bahlool was released without any punishment.

Thus, while some Muslim sects believe that Allah can be seen, perhaps on the Day of Judgement, the Shia Muslims say that Allah is the creator of everything; He was not created and as such he has no body like us that can be seen. If we can still believe in unseen things like air, electricity and human soul, why can't we believe in the unseen God?

If we are responsible for our actions and are to be punished or rewarded accordingly, then it is only fair and just that Allan should not manipulate or compel us to do things but leave us alone to act the way we see it fit, and be answerable for those actions ourselves.

Ahlul Bait at Mubahala

In the south of Arabia, there is a place called Najran. There lived the Christian tribe of Najran who staunchly believed that Prophet Isa (a) i.e. Jesus was the son of God. The Prophet invited them to accept Islam. In response to that, a delegation of their priests and elders came to Madina. They wanted to discuss religion with the Holy Prophet Prophet Muhammad (S).

Their argument was that Jesus was born without a father, so he was the son of God. The Holy Prophet explained to them that just as Allah created Prophet Adam without a father or even a mother, in the same way He created Jesus without a father. Hence Jesus was a servant of Allah as was Prophet Adam. The Christians did not agree with this simple truth. They stuck to their belief that Jesus was the son of God. The Prophet asked them to wait. Then came the following Revelation (message from Allah):

“O Messenger! If they dispute with you in this matter after the knowledge has come to you, then, say, 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our souls and your souls. Then let us earnestly invoke and lay the malison (***curse***) ***of Allah on those who lie”.*** (***Quran: Sura Ale Imran – verse 60***)

It was then agreed that the Christians seek MUBAHALA with the Prophet. The meaning of MUBAHALA is that both of them invoke from Allah that he, who speaks the truth may survive and he, who is untrue may perish.

On the day of Mubahala, the Prophet of Islam took with him his grandsons – Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husain (a), his daughter Fatima Zehra (a) and his cousin and son–in–law Imam Ali (a). But on seeing the radiant faces of these sinless members of the household of the Prophet, the Christians got scared. They decided not to seek Mubahala any more but accepted their defeat. They agreed to pay tribute and returned home.

The Prophet, before going for Mubahala, was commanded by Allah to take with him his sons, his women and his souls. The Holy Prophet obeyed this command as under:

In place of his sons, he took with him Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husain (a). In place of women, he took Fatima Zahra (a). In place of his souls, he took Imam Ali (a).

This is how he showed to the world who the true and real members of his Ahlul Bait (People of the House of Prophet) were. To love them has been obligatory (wajib) command of Allah on every Muslim. The Holy Quran says:

"Say, I do not ask for return of this (***messengership***) ***from you except that you love*** (***my***) ***relatives."*** (***Sura As-shura , 26:23***)

The Prophet and his Ahlul Bait sacrificed all the worldly comforts and even their lives in order to convey the true religion of Islam to us. In return of their sacrifices, we are commanded by God to love them. The aim is that through their love, we follow their footsteps. We follow the true teachings of Islam taught by them, so that we live a good and decent life in this world and earn the pleasure of God in the life hereafter.

God Sees You Everywhere

A teacher had many good students in his class but had particular regard and high respect for one of them. Some of the students one day asked the teacher the reason for this. In reply he said, I shall tell you tomorrow."

The next day, he handed to each of those students one live chicken. He asked them to take the chickens to a place where they would not be seen by anyone and then slaughter them. After a while, they returned with their chicken duly slaughtered. But his favourite student came back with his chicken alive.

The teacher asked him why he had not slaughtered it. He replied. "You had asked me to go to a place where nobody would see me. I tried hard to find a place where God Almighty could not see me. But I failed. Everywhere went I was sure that God could see me and I could not hide from Him. So I could not

carry out your instructions.

On hearing this, the teacher turned to the other students and remarked, “The reason why I respect this student more is because of his constant awareness of the existence of God who can always see him, no matter where he is. Consequently, he does not commit any sin”.

The sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (a), said to one of his friends, Ishaq Bin Ammar, “Fear God as if you are able to see Him because He sees you. And if you think that He is not able to see you, then you become a non-believer. And if you believe that He sees you and you commit a sin in His presence, then you consider Him as the lowest of those seeing you”.

Tit For Tat

It is a law of nature that whatever action we take in this world, there is always a reaction. If we do good, we stand to gain a good reward. If we do bad, we should expect a bad outcome ultimately. “What you sow, so you reap” is a popular saying.

The Holy Qur'an has also guided us on this subject. It says:

If you do good, you do good to yourselves. (***likewise***)

If you do evil, you do evil to yourselves.

(***Qur'an: Chapter 17, Verse 7***)

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was very fond of this verse of the Qur'an. He used to recite it loudly and repeatedly wherever he went.

A Jewish woman who had heard him once wanted to prove him wrong and thus make him unpopular among his people. She thought up a plot against him.

She prepared some sweets mixed with poison and sent them to him as a present. When he received them, he went out of the city with them. On the way, he met two men who were returning home from a long journey. They appeared tired and hungry, so he thought of doing them a good turn. He offered them the sweets. Of course, he was not aware that they were secretly mixed with poison. No sooner had the two travellers taken the sweets, they collapsed and died.

When the news of their death reached Medina, the city where the Prophet resided, the man was arrested. He was brought in front of the Prophet and he related what had actually happened. The Jewish woman who had mixed poison with the sweets was also brought to the court of the Prophet. She was

stunned to see the two dead bodies of the travellers there. They in fact turned out to be her own two sons who had gone away on a journey.

She admitted her evil intention before the Prophet and all the people present. Alas, the poison she had mixed in the sweets to kill the companion of the Prophet had instead killed her own two sons.

What a splendid example of a tragic reaction to a bad action. It shows how one reaps what he sows.

“Do as you would be done by” are words of wisdom from the learned and wise men of the past. They teach us to do good to others in the same way as we like others to do good to us.

Co-Operation the Key To Success

Co-operation is to work together for a common good.

It is to undertake a job in which everyone plays his part sincerely to finish it. People in co-operation pool their resources for their common benefit. We come to hear or see co-operative societies established in many countries. Their benefit has been dignity of labour and self-dependence. The co-operative movement has been the cause of rapid economic progress in many countries.

There is a story of an old man who was on his death-bed. He called his sons and asked them to break a bundle of sticks which was bound together. Although the sons were strong and tried hard to break it, they failed. The old man then advised them to untie the bundle and to break the sticks separately. Everyone of them could do so very easily. The bundle of sticks is like co-operation and working together in unity which cannot be destroyed. Thus co-operation is strength.

The Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (S). was once travelling with his companions. They stopped at a place to have something to eat and then rest. They decided to slaughter a sheep and roast it.

One of them said, “I shall do the slaughtering.”

The other said, “I shall remove the skin.”

The third one said, “I shall do the roasting.”

Each one of them volunteered to do one piece of work.

The Prophet of Islam said, “I shall collect and bring the firewood from the forest.”

The companions said, “Oh Prophet! You need not take the trouble. We shall attend to everything.”

The Prophet said, “I know you can do everything. But I do not like to enjoy a preferential treatment from you. God Almighty does not like to see a person distinguishing himself from his companions.” Thus the Prophet went and brought firewood from the forest;

This is one of the examples set by the Prophet of Islam on co-operation and working together for a common good.

She Had True Faith

Abu Baseer was once in the company of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) when a woman came and said to the Imam, “I have come to ask a question. I am ill. Physicians in Iraq have told me to take liquor. Now I want to know what to do in such circumstances?”

The Imam asked her, “Why don't you drink what the doctors have prescribed for you?”

She replied, “As I am your follower, I shall obey what you say. If you permit me, I shall drink it; if not, I shall keep away from it; so that if I am asked by the Almighty God on the Day of Judgement why I did so, I shall reply that I followed the instructions of the Imam of the day.”

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) turned to Abu Baseer and said: “O Abu Baseer. Did you listen to what this woman has to say? Are you not moved by her faith? Inspite of her illness, she is refraining from taking liquor without the Imam's permission.”

The Imam then turned to the woman and said, “By God, I do not permit you to drink. If you do so, you shall be sorry when your soul reaches your throat (that is at the time of death)”.

So saying the Imam pointed at her throat; and asked her three times if she understood what he had said. The woman nodded her head.

One of the things which Islam has strongly forbidden is the taking of any intoxicating drink, like beer, wine. They are harmful to the body and mind. Under their influence one loses one's senses and is apt to commit criminal acts. We read of fatal accidents and crimes committed because of drinks.

Even trading in liquor and sitting in bars where people are drinking are also forbidden in Islam so that there is no temptation in the way of people to taking them.

The Holy Qur'an says,

“O Believers, Intoxicants and games of chance, idols and divining arrows, are abominations devised by Satan. Avoid them, so that you may prosper. Satan desires to stir up enmity and

hatred among you by means of intoxicants and gambling, and to keep you from the remembrance of Allah and from your prayers. Will you not abstain from them?" (***Chapter 5, Verses 90, 91***)

The above verses from the Qur'an warn us of the effects of drinking.

The first Imam, Ali (a), said, "Suppose a drop of liquor is put in a well and from its water a land is irrigated. Grass grows on the land and a sheep grazes there. That sheep then gets mixed in a flock of other sheep who have grazed elsewhere. If all the sheep are slaughtered making it difficult to identify the meat of the sheep who had grazed on a land which was irrigated from the water of the well, then I shall not eat any of that meat."

Thus Imam Ali (a) has emphasized the evil of alcohol.

For the sake of our own physical, mental and spiritual welfare, we should always keep away from drinks.

Al-Qur'an – The Great and Holy Book

About a hundred years ago, England had a powerful Prime Minister. He was a Christian to a high section of the Anglican Church. His name was Gladstone. One day in the year 1882, he was speaking in the British Parliament on how to weaken the power of Muslims in Egypt so that the British could continue to rule over them.

At one stage he raised a copy of the Holy Qur'an in his hand and said that so long as this book remained with the Muslims in that country and they respected and followed it, the British would never be able to dominate them. He added that the only solution was to try and separate the Holy Qur'an from the Muslims of Egypt.

At the end of the speech; a committee was formed to decide upon ways and means of carrying out Gladstone's recommendation. The committee resolved to send some experts to Egypt who would launch a campaign which would weaken the faith of people and make them suspicious of the truth of the Holy Qur'an. The aim was to discourage people to refer to the Holy Book and gradually make them turn against the Islamic way of life.

In the course of this political and vicious programme, a learned man by the name of Dunlop was sent to Egypt as a teacher. He prepared many books containing lessons which were nothing but propaganda in disguise. One of the lessons on history was based on showing how Egypt was lagging behind and was not making progress because of Islam and the Qur'an. It alleged that people of Egypt were much more civilized prior to the coming of Islam.

Such ill-intentioned programme first succeeded to a small extent in influencing the youths at schools.

Then the Holy men of Al-Azhar university protested to the authorities and demanded that an end be put to it.

Now let us find out what are the qualities of this book which the enemies wished to remove from the Muslims.

The Holy Book is known as Al-Qur'an which means 'The Reading', the reading of the Prophet of Islam who never went to any school. Prophet Muhammad (S) had retired to a cave on Mount Hira not far from Mecca. One day Angel Jibrail (Gabriel) came to him and said "Read". The Holy Prophet said: "What should I recite?" Jibrail said: "Read in the name of thy Lord, who created; created man out of a mere clot of congealed blood; read; and thy Lord is most bountiful; He who taught (The use of) pen; taught man that which he did not know".

The Holy Qur'an as word of God, the Almighty, as revealed to his Prophet Muhammad (S) This book gives guidance for our daily life. It appeals to our power of reasoning, and exhorts us to follow the commands of Allah. It is a living miracle of Prophet Muhammad (S), the last of the Prophets who came from God. It is not surprising at all that this Holy Book has remained intact for the last 1400 years. And it shall remain so till the Day of Judgement, for Allah has taken it on himself to protect it.

***"Surely we have sent down the reminder* (*The Qur'an*) *and we will most surely be its guardian* (*Sura Al-Hijr, 15:9*)**

The Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters (Suras). There are in it 6226 verses (Ayats) containing 99,464 words made up of 330,110 letters.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a) has said that one should at least recite 50 Ayats everyday. Let us, therefore, value and respect this Great Book by reading it with understanding and follow its teachings.

Must God be Just?

Kisra, A Persian King, was once asked, "How did you learn justice?"

He replied, "Because I know for sure that every man will he judged according to his deeds."

He was then asked: "How do you know that?"

He replied: "One day when I was on my way in the forest, I saw a gazelle. I sent my dog after it and it caught the gazelle by the leg. But the dog did not catch the gazelle in the usual way, for it bit and broke

the gazelle's leg.

Not long after, the dog was in front of a horse, that kicked it in the leg and the dog's leg was broken.

Soon after, the horse's leg slipped into a hole and it broke.

Therefore, I realised that every person's award depends upon his deeds. When he does a good deed, he will be rewarded for it, and if he does an evil deed, he will be punished. Hence, I always do good deeds."

God does no wrong or evil. Anybody who commits wrong or injustice does so either because he does not know that it is wrong (but God knows everything or because he needs something which cannot be obtained without wrong doing (but God has no need) or because he has been compelled by somebody else to commit that wrong (but God is All-Powerful and nobody can compel Him to do anything. So it makes sense that it is impossible for God to do any injustice or wrong.

So logically we say that God is Adil, meaning that he is just. He is neither cruel nor does he do anything that lacks in wisdom. Whatever he does be it endowing life or giving sustenance or depriving us of anything, it has inherent benefit in it; though the Benefit may not be apparent to us.

For example, when a doctor treats an illness, we know the patient benefits from the treatment, though we do not know how the treatment brings about the benefit. Thus, when we see God endowing one with riches, while leaving another in poverty, or granting one person greatness while denying it to the other, or bestowing health on one while the other is stricken with disease, we have to accept that these actions are based on rationalism even though we may not be able to understand the wisdom behind them.

"And Allah is not in the least unjust to His servants" - Qur'an: (***Chapter 8 Verse 51***)

From The Shadow of A Tree to the Shadow of Islam

Taif is a fertile green area around Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It has plenty of fruit gardens and a pleasant climate.

The people of the tribe of Bani Sakeef used to relax under the shadow of fruit trees in the Taif area. From the travellers of Mecca passing by, they used to hear reports about the mission of Prophet Muhammad (S). They came to learn from them how truthful, trustworthy and kind the Prophet of Islam was. They also came to know that among women Hazrat Khadija, the Prophet's wife and among the men Imam Ali (a) - the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law were the first to declare faith and accept Islam.

They were also informed that the followers of the Prophet were still very few. That majority of the people from the tribe of Quraish did not yet accept Islam and were opposing the spread of the religion. They had even offered Prophet Muhammad (S) bribes of large sums of money and high post if he would stop preaching against idol worship.

One day when the people were resting under the shadow of fruit trees, they received news that Abu Talib, his uncle had come and told the Prophet "O my Nephew! the leaders of Quarish say that whatever wealth you demand they are willing to give provided you abandon the teaching of Islam."

The Quraish tried again by sending Ataba to persuade the Prophet and offered everything that he would wish to have. In reply the Prophet recited this verse from the Holy Qur'an:

"Say: I am only a man like you, it is revealed unto me that your God is but one God. Therefore, whoever desires to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join any one in the service of his Lord." (***18:10***)

Ataba was very moved to hear this and returned to the Quraish saying, "From Muhammad (S) I have heard words which did not at all sound like a poem nor witchcraft"! He advised the Quraish to leave him on his own and added: "Muhammad grew up among you and has always been most trustworthy and of good character. Now that he has come out with a message of one God, it is not fair to accuse him of witchcraft or lying. Do not molest him and let us see what will happen!"

Thus the Prophet of Islam went on preaching the message of one God and persuaded people to abandon the worship of Idols. On the other hand, the people of Quraish continued to interfere and oppress him and the new followers of Islam.

They asked everyone to boycott and not to have any dealings with them. They wrote the following orders on the skin of a sheep and hung it on the door of Ka'aba in Mecca.

"Do not buy or sell to Muslims."

"Do not salute the Muslims nor speak to them."

"Do not give or take daughters in marriage from any Muslim. Do not have any dealing with them."

Thus the people of Quraish went on oppressing and torturing the Prophet and his followers. They would throw dirt on him when he walked on the streets of Mecca.

One day Prophet Muhammad (S) secretly went out of Taif to convey the message of Islam to the people there. But the leaders of that place laughed and jeered at the Prophet. They were always intoxicated by drinking wine made from the grapes. The Prophet was persuading them to leave this bad habit and was saying that drinking wine has no benefit, it makes man senseless, it badly affects health and more so, it draws man far away from God.

That day, the Prophet having conveyed to the people of Taif what he wished to about Islam, decided to return to Mecca. But on the way the children threw stones and laughed at him, When he managed to be rid of them, he took shelter and rested under the shadow of a grape tree. He raised his face toward the sky and said:

“Oh God! I complain to Thee for my inability.”

“Oh God! I pray to Thee to lead these people to the right path.”

“Oh God! You are the Forgiver and Kind”.

Incidentally Atba and his brother Shaiba were in the same garden. On hearing this prayer of the Prophet, they felt sorry.

They called their servant Adas and gave him a plate full of sweet grapes and asked him to deliver them to the Prophet so that he may recover from fatigue.

Adas took the plate of grapes and presented it to the Prophet. Before he started eating the grapes, the Prophet said “Bismillah” (in the name of one God).

Adas was an Iraqi Arab. On hearing this, he began to wonder and asked what are these words. “I have never heard them before!”

Prophet Muhammad (S) asked, “Where are you from?”

Adas replied, “I have come from Nainawa” (a region in Iraq presently known as Kerbala.

The Prophet asked, “Have you heard of the Prophet Yunus?”

Adas said, “Yes! Yunus was a Prophet. But why have you mentioned his name to me?”

The Prophet replied, “I, like Yunus, also am a Prophet and have come from the One God for the guidance of mankind.”

Adas had already heard before of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Prophet Muhammad (S). Now he became attracted towards him because of his kindness and good character. With tearful eyes he said: “Oh Muhammad I put my faith in your Prophethood, because no one would be willing to face such torture and trouble unless he was on the right path and had come to lead others on the path!”

This is how Adas, a pagan unbelieving Arab accepted the religion of Islam whilst under the shadow of a grape tree and joined the Islamic brotherhood.

Thus Islam spread gradually, not with compulsion or at the point of a sword, but through noble character and kindness of Prophet Muhammad (S).

On The Path of Religion

In a class at the Jaffery Primary School of Mombasa, it was time for religious instruction. The subject was: The meaning and benefits of following a religion. This is how the lesson went.

Pupil: Please, Sir, tell us the meaning of religion.

Teacher: Religion is a collection of beliefs. It lays down the rules of character, how to deal with your family members as well as with other people, It also teaches us rules concerning money matters. They have been taught to us by the Prophets who were messengers of God, sent for the guidance of Mankind.

Pupil: May I know what benefit do we get from following a religion?

Teacher: By following the teachings of true religion, a person becomes happy in this world as well as in the next one.

Pupil: Please, Sir, tell us what religion teaches us.

Teacher: The teachings of religion mainly consist of:

1) Beliefs: To believe in One God, who created this world, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and other planets and everything in them. Because of his kindness, he did not leave human beings without guidance. He sent Prophets to guide them to the right path so that they may fulfill the duties he has laid down. Those who follow the teachings of the Prophets would be successful and happy in this as well as the next world.

2) Character: Religion teaches us to be good and kind to everyone, to love everyone, to respect parents and teachers, to seek useful knowledge, to protect our rights and those of others and to live moderately.

3) Social and Economic Guidance: A perfect religion lays down rules about how to behave and deal with people when they do wrong. It also teaches us rules about money matters, how one should earn one's living, how one should take care of the poor and needy relatives, what type of business is allowed.

4) Worship: Religion teaches us that we pray to God and fast, so that by such actions we remember God and purify our Body and Mind.

We should obey God only and not follow people. God has created all of us. Therefore he knows better what is good for us. He has laid down a code of life for our benefit. Therefore, it is in our interest to follow it.

Pupil: May I know, Sir, how belief in a religion affects our lives?

Teacher: Belief in religion not only affects a person's spirit or soul but also his body and action.

A person who believes in one God, acts differently from a person who does not believe in God. He who believes in God cannot at any time become proud, because he knows that whatever he has acquired has been given to him by God and God can take it back whenever he wishes.

He does not look down upon other people as he knows that all of them have been created by God in the same way as he was created.

He does not bow down before anyone but God. He knows that everything has been created by God and he provides for all our needs. He alone is worthy of being worshipped.

He also believes in life in the next world and always tries to do good and refrains from doing bad. The better his deeds, the better will be his life in the next world.

A person who believes in God does all the good work even if he is not paid for it or appreciated by others. He continues to do good to others. He sacrifices his time, money and energy in serving people for the sake of God, as this pleases God. He does not become selfish.

Thus belief is connected with character and character with actions. They are all connected to each other.

Pupil: Now Sir can you tell us what would happen if a person did not believe in religion?

Teacher: A person who does not believe in God and life in the next world does not know who created him, why he was created and what is the purpose of his life. He is like a traveller who is lost and moves around aimlessly.

When such a person falls into trouble, he has no where to look for help. If he wants anything, he has no one from whom he can ask to fulfill his wishes.

A person who believes in religion asks for help from God when he is in difficulties. He asks God to fulfill his wishes. He is sure that God will help him and will grant him his desires if they are good for him. But a person who does not believe in God has no one.

A non-believer acts according to his whims. He is most of the time selfish. He is not prepared to help others for he does not expect to get God's reward for his sacrifices for the trouble he takes for others.

His only aim in life is to find happiness for himself at all cost. He does not know what is the purpose of his life. He does not hesitate to tell lies, steal, hurt others and do all sorts of bad things; if these actions will gain something for him. He does not know that God will punish him for his bad deeds in the next world.

A person who believes in religion is afraid of God and will not do bad things. He knows that any difficulty that comes to him in this world is meant to test his faith in God. He, therefore, faces it patiently and prays

for God's help. He knows that this will please God and he will be rewarded for it by God in the next world.

The bell rang. It was time for another lesson. When the children went home, they fully realised the need for a religion. Since then, they respected their religious teachings more and more and made every effort to follow them. In so doing they became happier and successful in life.

The Ant Prays For Rain

Once there was a big famine in Palestine. It was during the time of the Prophet, Prophet Sulaiman (King Solomon). He came out with his people and proceeded to an open place in the desert to pray for the rains to come. Suddenly, he saw an ant standing on its two legs, raising its hands up towards the sky and saying, “Oh Allah! We are but very small among all Thy creatures. We cannot survive without Thy grace. Please bestow upon us Thy sustenance and do not punish us because of the sins of human beings. Please send down the rains so that trees can grow, farms become green and grains become available and we have our food to eat.”

Prophet Sulaiman knew the language of all animals. He told his people, “Let us go home. The prayer of this ant is enough.” It then rained heavily and all the land became green and productive.

The ant is an intelligent creature. During warm days it collects and stores grain inside the holes. It knows that during wet and cold months, it would not be able to go out to search for food. For fear that grain may start growing because of wetness, it splits it into two or more pieces. At times, during moonlit nights, it brings the split grains out of the stores for drying and preservation against decay.

The holes under the ground are made very carefully and covered with shelter to prevent the rain water from getting inside the holes. The ant, unlike the other animals, can lift a burden twice its own weight. It is not a selfish creature. When an ant finds some store of food grains, it runs up to its group and takes its fellow ants to that place. It shows everyone of them its own find of the store. They always behave in this manner. They work and live in co-operation with each other.

This shows how the ant works for the group and how each of them fulfils the needs and livelihood of its fellow-beings. How shameful it is for a man, who has no regard for another man; who has no concern for his fellow human beings who could be starving because of want of food.

Once, while Prophet Sulaiman was travelling together with hosts of men, jinn and birds, they reached a valley of ants.

When the chief of these ants witnessed the pomp and the glory with which Prophet Sulaiman and his

companions were approaching toward it. He warned all the ants to get into their holes lest they got trampled and crushed unknowingly by the approaching men and Jinn. Prophet Sulaiman smiled at this warning sounded by the ants' chief, and ordered his companions to wait till the ants went inside their holes. “None of us should hurt any ant while passing over their land”, he said.

It is said that Prophet Sulaiman addressed the chief of the ants and said: “How could my people hurt you or your fellow ants when they are floating through air! Don't you know that I am a messenger of God and would never act unfairly?” The chief of the ants replied: “O Messenger of God! My cautioning the ants was not for any hurt that they would suffer but to prevent them getting astray and forgetting the glory of God after seeing your pomp and show.”

There is a deep meaning in this event. It shows that even the most humble and smallest of creatures has been endowed with the necessary wisdom to live safely and avoid being hurt as far as possible. It also shows, how even a small ant does have the natural understanding of the true position of Allah. It imparts a lesson that one should not forget the true might and glory of Allah when one experiences a great power and dignity of any creature in this world.

Thus an Ant is one of the most wonderful small creatures in this world. Sura “Naml” (the Ant) in the Holy Qur'an is a chapter named after this creature. Over 1300 years ago, Imam Ali (a) was giving a sermon in Kufa, in which he was describing the beauties of creation in various forms of life. He was referring to small creatures and asking man to study how God made them so small yet so sturdy and strong. He described the ant in these words:

'Look at an ant. How tiny is its body and how delicate are its features! It is such a small creature that it often escapes the eye, and few people care to attach any importance to it among the living beings found on this earth. Look at it and study its ways of life; how it crawls, how it attacks its food; how it lifts a grain so many times heavier than its body, carries it to its hole; how it stores grains; and how in summer it gathers and stocks food for winter and rainy days.'

Care for Animals

A man once came to Prophet Muhammad (S) carrying with him his belongings and a box. He said, “O Prophet! While I was passing through a jungle, I heard the voice of some bird's babies. I took them and put them in this box. The moment I did that, their mother came fluttering round my head.”

And the Prophet said, “Put them down”. When the man put the box on the ground, the mother of the young birds joined them. Seeing this, the Prophet asked the man who now had a look of surprise on his face, “Are you surprised by the affection of the mother towards her young? I swear by Him (Almighty

Allah) who has sent me, surely, God is more loving to his servants than the mother to these young birds. Return these baby birds to the place from where you took them, and let their mother be with them."

"Fear God with regard to animals", said the Prophet of Islam, "ride them when they are fit to be ridden, and get off their backs when they are tired; surely, there are rewards for being kind and gentle to animals, and for giving them water to drink."

Islam has taught that in the eyes of Allah, animals also have rights in the same way as man has. They should not be treated badly, tortured or left to starve without food or water.

Imam Ali (a) had some ducks under his care in his house. At the time of his death, he had given particular advice to his sons to take good care of those animals, or to set them free if it was not possible to look after them properly.

The Holy Qur'an has also guided us by telling us that, in the eyes of God there is no difference between the human world and the animal world.

***"There is not an animal* (*that lives*) *on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but* (*forms part of*) *communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they* (*all*) *shall be gathered to their Lord in the end."* (*6:38*)**

The Prophet of Islam was once performing ablution (Wudhu) for prayers from a pot of water. A cat passed there and turned its eyes at the pot of water with a thirsty look. The Prophet realised at once that the cat was very thirsty, so he stopped the ablution (Wudhu) and placed the pot before the cat. Only after the cat had fully quenched its thirst, did the Prophet resume the ablution (Wudhu).

By this action, the Prophet has shown that quenching the thirst of even a small dumb animal is a noble act full of virtue and should be given first attention before one prepares for offering prayers to God.

Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) the King Prophet

For the guidance of mankind, Allah honoured four famous Prophets by revealing to them four Holy Books as under:

1) Taurat to Prophet Musa (Moses):

2) Zaboor (Psalms) To Prophet Dawood (David);

3) Injeel (Evangel) To Prophet Isa (Jesus);

4) Qur'an To Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (S).

The commandments of Allah are contained in these books. The first three books were for the earlier times. The Holy Qur'an is the last book of God and is for the guidance of entire mankind till the Day of Judgement.

Prophet Dawood eventually became King of his people. He had 19 sons. Each of them hoped to inherit the father's throne. Allah revealed to Prophet Dawood a few questions and their answers and commanded him to put the questions to each one of his sons. Whosoever answered those questions correctly, would inherit the throne of the father, Prophet Dawood.

One day Prophet Dawood called all his sons in the presence of the scholars and the chiefs of the tribes of his kingdom. He then put forward the following questions:

1) Which thing is closest (nearest) to man?

2) Which is the farthest thing?

3) Which two things are attached to each other?

4) Which is the most awe-creating thing?

5, Which two things remain unchanged?

6) Which two things are always different?

7) Which two things are opposed to each other?

8) What is the action the result of which is good?

9) What is that action the result of which is bad?

The sons of Prophet Dawood felt helpless and could not answer any of these questions. Then the youngest of the sons, Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) stood up and gave the following answers:

1. The nearest things to a man is the hereafter (Life and Death - as one may die any moment);

2. The farthest things is the time which has passed away (which is not to come again);

3. The two things that are attached to each other is man's body with the soul;

4. The most awe-creating is the man's body (dead) without soul;

5. The two things which remain the same are the sky and the earth;

6. The two things which are different are the day and night;

7. The two things which are opposed to each other are life and death;

8. The action – the end of which is good – is patience and forbearance at the time of anger;

9. The action – the end of which is bad is haste at the time of anger.

Prophet Dawood obviously, was very much impressed with these correct answers and appointed Prophet Sulaiman as his successor.

Thus it will be seen that it was the supreme knowledge and understanding that made Prophet Sulaiman succeed his father and become the Great King Prophet.

Here Comes Al-Amin – The Trustworthy

It had rained heavily and continuously for a long period, and the water poured down towards the Holy Ka'aba in Masjid-ul-Haram, the big mosque in Mecca, The Ka'aba was in the lower section of Mecca. It had become old and collapsed.

So the rebuilding was started. The work progressed well enough until al-Hajar-ul-Aswad, the Black Stone, was to be put back in its place.

Each quarter of the Ka'aba was being built by one leading family of Quraish – the big and prominent tribe of Mecca. Each family of Quraish felt the honour of placing the Black Stone belonging to it.

The disagreement became deeper, and led to a lot of argument, shouting and abuse. The members of each big family were thinking that a war was going to break out, None of them was willing to change his position. They regarded it as a great insult if they didn't have that special honour of putting the Black Stone back in its place.

One member stood up and said, “I have a suggestion, let us wait till tomorrow and see who enters the Masjid-ul-Haram first in the morning; then let him decide”. All agreed, since that sounded like a good suggestion.

They anxiously waited next morning to see who was the first to come and enter Ka'aba. Suddenly they heard footsteps heading towards them. It was Muhammad (S), the son of Abdulla. Everyone, of course, knew, loved, admired and respected Muhammad (S). So with a loud voice, everyone said, “Here comes Al-Amin” and the voice echoed through the place over and over again.

He was surprised to hear of that title with which they called him. He was told about what the people of Quraish were fighting for. It was all silent for a while. Everyone thought his family was going to be

favoured. Their hearts were beating hard and they were getting anxious and impatient.

Muhammad (S) put his robe on the floor, took the sacred Black Stone and put it in the centre of the robe and said. “The chief of each family will take one corner of the robe and lift it together”. With that, each understood a marvellous example of justice in sharing the honour. It showed how Muhammad's intelligence far exceeded those around him. It also showed his great capacity to solve difficult problems with such ease.

When the robe with the Black Stone was lifted to a reasonable height. Muhammad (S) took the Black Stone and put it in its proper place by his own hands. None felt insulted and each had his share of the privilege and honour.

This is how Muhammad (S) the Prophet of Islam succeeded in uniting the ever–fighting and ignorant Arabs with his honesty, justice and noble character.

Hercules and Islam

Arabia, during the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), was a country without any central authority. It was a country far from the civilised nations of those days.

At the time Prophet Muhammad (S) was spreading Islam; asking people to turn away from worshipping idols to worshipping Allah, the Almighty, the All–Knower, the Master.

The Prophet sent letters of invitation to Kings and Rulers of various countries in the world, inviting them to embrace Islam. Many of the letters were met with a favourable response whilst others were rejected. In many cases, the messengers of the Prophet were badly treated and abused. But the Prophet was not worried by these setbacks. He was inviting people to the right path and a few setbacks could not deter him from propagating Islam.

Abu Sufyan a leader of the tribe of Quraish and the arch enemy of the Prophet was in Constantinople on a business trip, when the Prophet's letter of invitation reached Hercules, the Byzantine emperor of Eastern Roman Empire. Hercules, at the time was in his court at Constantinople celebrating his victory over the Persians.

Hercules read the letter through an interpreter and then asked the people in his court, to find out if there was someone in the city, who knew the Prophet. Abu Sufyan with his companions was brought into the court.

The emperor asked Abu Sufyan, “What kind of family does Muhammad belong to?”

“Noble”, replied Abu Sufyan

“Has there been a king in his family?” Hercules asked.

“No,” said Abu Sufyan

“Are the people who have accepted his religion poor or rich?”, Hercules questioned again.

“They are poor”, replied Abu Sufyan.

Hercules was now becoming more and more interested and he went on asking questions.

His next question was, “Are his followers on the increase or decrease?”

“Increasing”, Abu Sufyan replied shortly.

“Have you known him to tell lies”? asked Hercules.

“No”, admitted Abu Sufyan.

“Does he ever go against his convents?”, Hercules once again asked.

“Not so far. But we have to see whether he carries out the new agreement made between us and him”, Abu Sufyan answered lengthily for a change.

“Have you ever fought him in wars?” Hercules questioned.

“Yes”, answered Abu Sufyan

“What has been the result?” Hercules asked, getting more and more interested.

“Sometimes we have won, sometimes he”, replied Abu Sufyan.

“What does he teach?” asked Hercules

“Worship One God, join no partners with Him, carry out your prayers, be chaste, speak the truth and keep union with your relatives”, answered Abu Sufyan, even surprised at his own answer as it sounded like he was preaching Islam.

Hercules stood up and said, “If all you said is true, then I am sure that this Prophet's Kingdom will reach here where I am standing. I was certain that a Prophet was coming, but I didn't know that he would be born in Arabia. If I were to go there, I would embrace Islam and wash the Prophet's feet with my own hands.”

This was the way in which the Prophet spread Islam. He impressed them by his truthfulness, honesty, noble character and dedication in the service of Allah. He did not compel people to accept Islam under

threat of waging wars, nor did he compel people to accept Islam by the force of the sword. He fought only in defence, and only when the enemies waged war on him.

Ja'far Al-Tayyar, The Refugee Who Brought Islam to Africa

When the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) began to preach religion of Islam in Mecca, those who did not believe in him and his message, opposed and troubled him. They called him a lunatic and a sorcerer. They offered bribes to persuade him to stop preaching the religion. When all these ways failed, they used harsh threats against the Prophet and the new Muslim converts.

During all these years, the Holy Prophet enjoyed the protection of his uncle Abu Talib. He always stood by his nephew and did not let anyone harm him. The sons of Abu Talib, one by one, accepted Islam. Imam Ali (a) was right, from his childhood, under the care of the Prophet and was the first one to declare his true faith, Islam, when the Prophet proclaimed his Prophethood. He always stood by the Prophet firmly and faithfully both in good and difficult times. Among the other sons of Abu Talib (a), Ja'far also accepted Islam and so did Aqeel, the other son of Abu Talib.

The torture and oppression which the Holy Prophet and the small group of his followers had been subjected to, had increased so much that life became unbearable. The Holy Prophet decided on an action which not only saved the lives of his followers but also spread the message of Islam to other countries. He therefore, decided to send some of his followers to Abyssinia, which was just across the Red Sea, to the south of Mecca.

The Holy Prophet had great faith in Ja'far the son of Abu Talib (a) and brother of Imam Ali (a). A handful of Muslim refugees including men and women under the leadership of Ja'far crossed the Red Sea. This is known to be the first migration in the history of Islam, which occurred in the fifth year after the Prophet had proclaimed Islam in 615 A.D. They were joined by more immigrants who had become the victims of the enemies of Islam. The number of the refugees rose to eighty-two men and eighteen women.

On arrival at the capital of Abyssinia, Ja'far and his companions paid a visit to the Emperor Negus. The Emperor was very much impressed with the knowledge, behaviour and the politeness of Ja'far and he received him with much honour and entertained him as a respected guest.

When the non-believers of Quraish in Mecca came to know of this, Abdulla Bin Rabih and Amr Bin 'Aas together with some other people took some expensive gifts and arrived at the court of the Emperor Negus. On entering the court, they prostrated (bowed in sajda before the Emperor and presented him

with the gifts. Then they said, “Someone in our country has invented a new religion and some people have joined him. We tried to stop this, but some of his followers have taken refuge in your country. Now, we appeal to you to throw them out and hand them over to us.” The Emperor replied that he had already given protection to them and would not throw them out of the country, but he would ask them to come there before them. So saying, the Emperor called in the Muslim refugees.

Hazrat Ja'far took with him some close companions and arrived at the court. But he did not prostrate (bow in sajda) before Negus. People in the court criticised him for this and asked him why he had not bowed down before the Emperor as was customary. Hazrat Ja'far promptly retorted, “We do not bow down before anybody except God. The Emperor knew that this was the true and basic teaching of divine religions. He called Ja'far and gave a respectful place near him. He then informed Ja'far that some people from his country of origin had come there with a complaint that he had deserted his old religion and started a new one which rejected the original idol–worship. Hazrat Ja'far in very impressive language, replied:

“O King! We were in deep ignorance and barbarism: we adored idols, we lived in unchastity; we ate dead animals, we disregarded the duties of hospitality and neighbourhood; At that time, God raised among us a man, who is pure, truthful and honest. He called us to believe in One God and taught us not to associate anything with Him. He forbade us to worship idols, enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful and to regard the rights of neighbours. He forbade us to speak evil of women. He ordered us to keep away from vices, to offer prayers, to pay alms and to observe the fast.”

Negus told Ja'far to recite some words from the Holy Qur'an. Ja’far commenced with Bismillah and proceeded to recite a few lines from Surah Maryam with such sincerity and sweet voice that the Emperor and his people were very much moved and began to weep. When the Emperor heard the verse concerning Prophet Isa (Jesus), he was very touched and said that the words resembled those which were bestowed upon Prophet Musa (Moses) and Prophet Isa (Jesus).

The Emperor rejected the appeal of the Quraish and ordered Amr bin 'Aas to take away the gifts he had brought. Amr bin 'Aas went away but having thought of something, he returned to the court the next day. He made a cunning move by suggesting to the Emperor to ask the Muslims as to what their belief was concerning Prophet Isa? Hazrat Ja’far was called to the court again and was given a very respectful welcome. The Emperor then asked: “What does your Prophet (Muhammad) say about Prophet Isa (Jesus)?'

The Muslims became worried but Hazrat Ja'far, with great peace of mind, replied: “O King! Our Prophet is guided by God in what he says.” Saying this, he proceeded to show an Ayat from the Holy Qur'an and requested Negus to read it: “The messiah (Isa), son of Maryam is only a messenger of Allah and His word and His spirit which He sent to Maryam.”

Negus was extremely pleased to learn this and said: “This actually is also there in our book of Injil.” He

then expelled Amr bin 'Aas and the infidels of Quraish from Abyssinia. From then onwards, Negus had high regard for and faith in Islam.

Thus Ja'far had done a great service to Islam. He preached the true message of Islam in Abyssinia and stayed there for fifteen years before returning to Madina.

Prophet Ibrahim and the Idol Worship

During the olden times, people everywhere used to carve stones and make idols for worship. These statues were considered as gods, and people bowed and prayed before them. Namrud, the King of Babylonia, was once informed by his astrologers that someone was going to be born who would destroy his kingdom. He would teach people another religious concept: that of worshipping none but only one God.

On hearing that, Namrud gave orders that no woman would conceive, hence no child would be born in his kingdom. If any child was born, it would be killed immediately. The mother of Prophet Ibrahim became pregnant. But by the will of Allah, no sign of pregnancy was to be seen. When the time of birth of the child came nearer, she went out of the town and hid in a cave. There, Prophet Ibrahim was born. She then covered the child with a cloth, closed the mouth of the cave with stones and returned home without the child. She told nobody of what had happened.

The child was alone in the cave with no one to care for him. He was sucking the milk which flowed of his fingers – by the grace of Almighty God. The child grew up under Allah's protection. From time to time, his mother would come secretly to the cave to watch him. This went on for thirteen years. On one occasion when the mother visited the son, he beseeched her to take him out of the cave. The mother warned that he would be killed by the King it he came to know about him. But the child insisted that he be brought out of the cave as 13 years had been a long time.

Thus Prophet Ibrahim came out of the cave for the first time. It was late in the evening when the sun was setting. When the night grew dark, he saw a star and he said, “Is this my Lord?” But when it set, he said, “I love not the setting ones.” Then, when he saw the moon rising he said: “Is this my Lord?” But when it set, he said, “If my Lord had not guided me I would have certainly been among the mistaken ones. Then he saw the sun rising and said, “Is this my Lord?” Is this the greatest?”. But when it also set, he said, “O, my people! Surely. I am clear of what you set up with Allah. Surely, I have turned myself wholly to the One Who created the heavens and the earth. I am not of the ones who believe and worship anything else other than Allah – the one God.

The people, at that time were not only idol–worshippers but they were also worshipping the stars, the

sun, the moon etc. All the time, he was making them realise their error in their choice of 'gods'. He was showing his people what they called a god, did not deserve to be called god and worshipped if it disappeared at times. So Prophet Ibrahim started preaching the belief of One God and persuading his people not to worship anything else but Allah, the one and only God.

Once, it was the time of annual festival in the town and according to their custom, Namrud, the King, went out of town with all his people to celebrate the day. Prophet Ibrahim did not accompany them but stayed behind. He went to the temple where all the idols were kept, and broke all of them one by one. He left the biggest idol untouched, but put the axe on its shoulder.

When the King and his people returned they were very angry to see their idols destroyed. He said that he would kill the person who had caused that damage. The people told him that it must be a young man, named Ibrahim who always preached against the worship of idols. He must have destroyed them.

When Prophet Ibrahim was asked if it was he who broke the idols. He replied, “Why do you not ask the chief (of the idols) who is standing safe. Perhaps he has done it, that is if your idol gods can speak, ask them as to who broke them.” Thus Prophet Ibrahim did not utter a lie denying what he had done. He only wanted the people to first ask their own idols as to who had done it?

Namrud got very angry and asked his people their opinion. Every one suggested that Prophet Ibrahim be punished by burning him alive in a big fire.

So, Prophet Ibrahim was jailed, while Namrud ordered that all available firewood in the forest be collected and be heaped up in one open place. When this was done, it was set alight. The fire burnt fiercely and widely for days and days. It had generated so much heat that no bird dared to fly nearby. At the appointed day on which Prophet Ibrahim was to be put in the fire and burnt, Namrud with his large army and followers came out to that place to watch.

On seeing the huge fire and the intense heat, he began to ponder as to how it would be possible to convey Prophet Ibrahim into the fire. Suddenly Satan, the devil, came and suggested that a type of a crane be prepared which could be used to hurl Prophet Ibrahim into the fire. This would cut out the need of any assistance of human hands to do the risky job of delivering the Prophet into the raging fire.

The crane was constructed and Prophet Ibrahim was lifted and readied to be dumped into the fire. On seeing this tragic happening. the angels in the heaven and all the creatures in the sky became deeply upset. Taking permission from Almighty Allah, one by one, they all came to Prophet Ibrahim to inquire if they could be of any help to him. The Prophet said that he was seeking help and protection from none of them. The one from whom he expected help (that is Almighty Allah), was fully aware of the dangerous situation in which he was and would help him if need be.

Just then, the angel, Jibrail came to the Prophet and gave him a ring on which the following was inscribed (written):

“There is no God but Allah”

“Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah”

“I depend and rely upon Allah”

“I submit my affair to the will of Allah.”

Prophet Ibrahim put the holy ring on his finger and the grace and blessing of Allah began to be showered upon him. Then came the command from Allah, “O fire! Be nothing but coolness and peace for Ibrahim.”

Thus the burning fire instantly lost its heat and no harm came to the Prophet.

It is related that when Prophet Ibrahim was being thrown into the fire, the angels in the heaven and the birds in the air cried in protest. One of them, a small weak bird decided to burn itself along with the Prophet. As it was flying towards the fire, the angel Jibrail was sent by Allah to inquire the reason why it was going to commit suicide! The angel stopped the bird on the ground and asked it to explain its strange action – that of trying to burn itself along with Prophet Ibrahim. The bird said: “Don't you know that the friend of God is to be burnt in the fire? As it is not within my strength to save him, I am showing my sorrow and sympathy by accompanying him into the fire!”

The angel conveyed this incident to Allah. Then came a command from Allah to tell the bird that it would be rewarded for its sincere feeling shown for the Prophet. It was asked what it wished to have so that the wish be fulfilled. The bird in reply said: “I do not wish to have anything from this world. All I wish is to constantly remember Allah in prayer. There are a thousand and one names of Allah. I know hardly a hundred names. I wish to be taught the remaining names. Almighty Allah fulfilled its desire. As it flew from tree to tree, it went on singing the names of Allah, thus remembering Him day and night.

To respect and sympathise with the friends of Allah; to remember Allah constantly in prayer is better than fulfilling worldly desires. This is what the little weak bird has shown to us. These are the acts of virtue which would one day undoubtedly earn great rewards from Allah.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) Enters Madina

The camel has, since olden times, proved to be a very useful animal for desert journeys. It has shown to be dependable and sturdy animal for desert transport. The reason is that it has been created with certain special features which are not to be found in any other animal. It can walk in the hot desert under scorching sun for days and days without feeling tired or thirsty and arrive at the intended destination with

his rider – the traveller. Hence the Arabs have named this animal as the 'Ship of the Desert'.

It was this same animal which had fulfilled in excellent manner the task of conveying the Prophet of Islam from Mecca to Madina. It had also served well in the cause of Islam.

The Prophet, tired of the tortures by the disbelieving Quraish, decided to migrate from Mecca to Madina. He had hidden himself in the cave of Thaur to protect himself against the enemies who wanted to kill him.

Imam Ali (a) sent three camels with a guide to the cave. The Prophet, mounting one of the camels, left the cave in the dark of the night, destined for Madina. On the way, several miracles took place which showed that God's help was always there to protect the Prophet against the attacks of his enemies.

The distance between Mecca and Madina is about three hundred fifty kilometres. In those days, it used to take eleven days to travel between the two places. But in this instance, the camel carrying the Prophet took only eight days to reach Madina. The Prophet (S) travelled at night, resting during the day-time. He was doing so to protect himself against the desert heat as well as to keep from being seen by the enemies.

On the eighth day, the Prophet along with his companions reached a place known as Quba, just two kilometres outside Madina. There he rested for several days, awaiting Imam Ali (a) and family members. After their arrival they proceeded to enter the city. On seeing the date trees on the outskirts of the holy city, they felt happy and relieved to have finally come out safe from the tortures of their enemies.

The people of Madina keenly awaited his arrival. Suddenly someone from the top of a hill announced that the Prophet had arrived. On hearing this, the people became wild with extreme joy and recited "Allahu Akbar!", "Allahu Akbar!" – "God is Great!", "God is Great!"

The Prophet dismounted the camel just outside Madina and sat down under a date tree. People rushed forward to greet and welcome him to their city. He was loved by all and everyone was keen to salute him. After the traditional welcome ceremony, the Prophet mounted his came to enter the holy city. All around, there were expressions of great joy. The children got together and in loud voices chanted the following welcoming poem:

"Tala-Al Badru Alaina

Min Thanayatil Wadai

Wajaba-Shukru Alaina

Ma Da'allaha Da'i"

"The full moon is shining on us from the area of gardens. We must offer thanks (to Allah) so long as

anyone prays before Allah."

"Ayuhal Mab-Uthu Fiina

Je'ta Bil Amril Mutai

Je'ta Shar-Raftal Madina

Marhaban Ya Khaira Dai"

"O' the one sent to us, you have come with commands which we shall obey. You came and graced Madina, we salute and welcome you, 'O' the best caller (towards Allah). "

It was hardly three years since the people of Madina had embraced Islam and had started to worship Allah. The young boys in the city were given a job to eradicate the worship of idols. Wherever they saw an idol, they destroyed it and set fire to it.

One day, the youths came to know that Omar bin Janah, the chief of Bani Salma tribe, had still preserved his idol and worshipped it. In order to impress upon him the uselessness of worshipping idols made of wood, they removed it from his place and threw it down a pit. The chief, on tracing the idol to where it was lying, brought it back, washed it and kept it in its original place. But the next day again it was removed and thrown into the pit.

The chief was very much disturbed at this. For the last lime he brought home this idol and cleaned it. He then put his sword around its neck and said to the idol: "If henceforth anybody comes to you, promptly take action and kill him with the sword."

On the next day, the idol was again missing. This time he found it tied to a dead body of a dog. There was no effect at all of the sword which he had tied around the neck of the idol. This incident made him lose faith in his man-made wooden idol. He abandoned the idol-worship altogether. On becoming a Muslim, he uttered a poem as under:

"Alas! O' my idol! If you were my god, you would not have reached this stage and I would not have seen you in the pit along with a dead dog. I have now put my faith in the Almighty Allah, from Whom come all blessings. It is He Who has freed me from darkness of ignorance."

This is one of the examples of how the young Muslim volunteers of Madina helped the Prophet in putting an end to idol worship and spread the true message of Islam.

When the Prophet entered the city amid great rejoicing, every one wanted him to stay at his house. Particularly, the chiefs of all the tribes were keen to have the Prophet as their guest. Everyone insisted but the Prophet ordered: "Let the reins of the camel loose and I shall get down and stay where it stops by itself."

The camel went ahead further and further till it stopped at a big open land. It was a place where people used to dry their dates and other farm produce. It knelt there and sat The Prophet dismounted and asked the people, whose land it was. They replied that it belonged to two small children by the name of SAHL and SUHAIL.

Nearby was the house of ABU AYYUB. ABU AYYUB'S mother came forward and took away the luggage of the Prophet to her house. People again persuaded him to put up in their house but the Prophet asked: “Where is my luggage?” The reply was that the mother of ABU AYYUB had taken them to her house. And the Prophet said: “One has to go to stay at a place where one's luggage and belonging go to.”

Some time later, the name of Yathrib was changed to 'Madina-tun-Nabi' i.e. 'the City of the Prophet.' He named the people of that city as ANSAR (helpers) and those who had migrated from Mecca as MUHAJIREEN (immigrants). All these people, i.e. the Ansar and the muhajireen got together and united in the common bond of brotherhood of Islam.

Nazr: A Vow with Allah to Be Fulfilled

Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Husain (a) were still very young probably in their fifth to sixth year of age. Once, both of them fell sick and their parents, Imam Ali (a) and Bibi Fatima (a) were grieved to see them in unhealthy condition.

The Holy Prophet Prophet Muhammad (S) came to see them. He loved them very much and on seeing them sick, he also was much grieved. They all prayed for their quick recovery. The Holy Prophet suggested to the parents to keep a Nazr for the restoration of the health of the children. Thereupon. Imam Ali (a) and Bibi Fatima (a) made a Nazr (a vow) that they would fast three days upon the recovery of the children.

Allah accepted their prayers and granted their Nazr. Both the children recovered from their illness. Imam Ali (a) and Bibi Fatima (a) decided to fast in fulfilment of the Nazr. When the two children came to know of this, they too decided to fast. The maid-servant in the house, Bibi Fizza, who loved the children very much also decided to join in the fast on the happy occasion of their recovery.

On the first day of the fasting, Imam Ali (a) went out in the morning and brought 3 sa'a wool for spinning and 3 sa'a barley as its wages. Bibi Fatima (a) spinned 1 sa'a wool, then ground 1 sa'a barley, and prepared five loaves of bread. In the evening, all of them gathered to break the fast and each of them had a loaf placed before him.

When they heard the Adhan (call to prayers), they prayed and sat to break the fast. Suddenly, a poor

man knocked on their door and asked for something to eat. All of them, one by one, passed their loaves to the beggar. There was no other food in the house, so all of them had to be content with water. They went to bed and slept without food. The next day they fasted again in fulfilment of the Nazr, but yet with almost empty stomach.

Second day, Bibi Fatima (a) again spinned 1 sa'a of wool, ground 1 sa'a of barley, and again baked 5 loaves. Again they sat together to break the fast with the usual one loaf of bread for each. As they were about to break the fast, an orphan came all of a sudden to their door and asked for food saying he was very hungry. Although the inmates of the house were themselves hungry for two days, they were happy to feed the boy. Everyone gave his or her bread to the orphan. They again slept without any food.

On the third day as they sat down to break the fast, a prisoner knocked at their door asking for something to eat. Although the people of the house of the Holy Prophet had been suffering from near starvation for the last three days, they again gave away all the bread to the prisoner and contented themselves only with water for the third day in succession.

It was in appreciation of these sacrifices, that Almighty Allah revealed the whole 'Surah al-Dahr', which contains, among other things, the following Ayat:

"They (***Ahlul Bait***) ***fulfil vow and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide"*** (***Surah Al-Dahr, 76: Verse7***)

This is how Ahlul Bait, the people of the household of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), kept and fulfilled their their Nazr (vow). They also set example of sacrifice by feeding the poor and caring for those who were in need.

The tradition of Nazr is a very old one. During the time of Bani Israel, centuries back, in the name of God, people used to present their sons at Baitul-Muqaddas, in the service of the pious people there, They used to stay within the walls of the mosques.

Once Imran, the father of Hazrat Maryam (Mary) got the good news that Almighty would bless him with a child. The child would be so gifted that with the command of God, he would cure the sick, restore sight to the blind, bring life back unto the dead and he shall also be a Prophet of God. When Bibi Hanna, the mother of Hazrat Maryam, heard this news, she vowed that she would free the child from the worldly attachments (to spend life in the service of Allah). The following Ayat in the Qur'an refers to this event:

"When said (***Hanna***) ***the wife of Imran, 'My Lordl Verily I have vowed to thee what is in my womb to be*** (***dedicated***) ***for Thee*** (***exclusively for Thy service***) ***freed*** (***from all worldly responsibilities***), ***therefore accept*** (***it***) ***from me; Verily Thou Ant the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing'".*** (***Sura Ale-Imran, 3:35***)

Over 2000 years ago people worshipped idols in Arabia. There was a King by the name of Hasan who

decided to destroy the Holy Ka'aba. Because of this evil intention, he fell sick and ended being a leper. Upon realising his mistake, he begged pardon from God and vowed that if his health was restored, he would place Ghilaf (Covering) over the Holy Ka'aba. This wish of his was fulfilled and he, in turn placed the Ghilaf made of palm leaves, For many years a new black cover made of thick cloth is being placed on Ka'aba every year.

Thus Nazr is a media by which a human being seeks assistance and pleasure of God. Whenever one prays to God for assistance, it is recommended that one uses a media which can take him to God. Nazr is one of such medias.

Whenever a person keeps a Nazr and prays for something from God and upon being granted his wish when he fulfills the Nazr which he had pledged, his faith in Allah is enhanced. As faith increases, one tries to refrain from sins and endeavours to do more virtuous deeds in order to please and be nearer to Allah.

For The Sake of Allah Only

During the time of Prophet Musa, there was a pious man, who used to pray day and night on the roof of his house. One day some people came and told him that there was a garden where a tree was being worshipped by a group of people. On hearing this the pious man picked up an axe and went to that tree with the intention of cutting and uprooting it altogether.

Satan (the Devil) came to him in the form of an old man and asked: “What are you aiming to do?” The pious man explained what was happening and his intention to cut the tree. Satan said: “What have you to do with it? If God wished the tree to be cut, he would have sent his Prophet to do it.”

The pious man did not listen. The two went on arguing and quarrelling till they came to blows. He managed to knock the Satan down on the floor and sat on him, aiming at cutting his throat. The Satan begged him for pardon and release saying, “Let me suggest you one thing which would help you in this world as well as in the next world. I shall pay you two dinars everyday. You can pay partly to the poor and partly spend for your own self. Leave this tree uncut till God commanded whether it was right or wrong to cut it.”

The pious man was misled by the Satan. He thought the suggestion was right and returned home. On the second day, he saw two dinars under his pillow. He was delighted with the money and spent some after the poor. But on the following day, he did not see the money again as expected, so he again took over his axe and came at that tree.

Again Satan told him in the form of an old man and asked him, “What do you want to do?” He said, “I want to cut that tree.” Satan told him that he had no power to do it so it was better he went back home. He did not agree and again they fought. This time the Satan succeeded in overpowering the pious man and knocked him down on the floor.

The pious man was surprised at this and asked Satan why it so happened that he could not overpower him this time. The Satan replied: “Whoever does a good deed purely for the pleasure of God, no one can face him but if he does it with an aim of worldly gain, then he loses strength and stands to fail.”

Why did the pious man win on the first day and lose on the second in his fight against the Satan? Because his first intention to cut the tree, was to please God and nothing else. But the second day, his good intention had changed and it had become for the sake of money. So the God given spiritual strength which he had on the first day had then disappeared and so he lost.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad (S), his enemies – ten thousand strongmen, once planned to attack him. The Muslims were then but very few. Having received the secret news of what was about to happen, the Muslims dug a very wide ditch around them for their defence so that the enemy may not attack them all of a sudden.

From the enemy side, a warrior by name 'Amr Bin Abd-e-wadd' who was very famous for his strength, courage and art of fighting, landed in the midst of these Muslims by jumping over the ditch! The Muslims lacked the courage to face him. Only the lion of Allah, Imam Ali (a) came forward to challenge the intruder!

Both drew their swords and were soon locked in a fierce duel to death against each other. At last, Allah bestowed victory to Imam Ali (a) who threw Amr down on the ground and mounted on his chest ready to kill the arch-enemy of Islam, but before Imam Ali (a) could do this, Amr spat in the face of our Imam.

Everybody around was certain that as a result of this insult, Amr would meet his death even faster still. But instead Imam Ali (a) moved from Amr's chest and walked away! People around were too surprised to see why he left loose such a dangerous enemy after overpowering him. Amr attacked again and after a short while, Imam Ali (a) again got control over him and this time he killed the enemy of Islam.

After the battle was over, people asked Imam Ali (a) about the reason why he had spared Amr's life when he first got control over him Imam Ali (a) replied, “I wanted to kill him for the sake of Allah only. He spat on me and thus made me angry. Had I killed him at that moment, it would not have been for the sake of Allah only. It would have also been for the satisfaction of my anger. So I let him free. When I controlled my anger, I killed him purely for the sake of Allah.'

This is how the Ahlul Bait – people of the household of our Holy Prophet. have set examples of sincere intention. Before any action we take, we must be clear in our minds that the action is in accordance with the commands of Allah. That, it is for his sake and pleasure alone.

To keep away from insincere and impure intentions is indeed difficult but not impossible. This can be done by constant thinking and true understanding of the aim of our life. We have to understand what Allah really wants from us.

Imamat Is Guidance We Need

Basra is a big city and the main port of Iraq. It is situated at the mouth of river Euphrates.

There, in a big mosque, people used to assemble to discuss various subjects on Islamic rules and laws. A famous learned priest of Sunni sect by name Amr Bin Ubeid was once preaching on the subject of Imamat. He was surrounded by a big crowd of people who were asking various questions on the subject. Suddenly, a young and intelligent student of Islam by name of Hesham, entered the gathering and sat down in the first row. He addressed the priest saying that he was a stranger and would like to ask some questions. On getting the permission to do so, he asked the following:

Hesham: First, Sir! May I please know if you have eyes?

Amr: Young Boy! Is this a question to be asked?

Hesham: Whatever it may be, this is my question to which I shall appreciate your answer.

Amr: Alright! you are at liberty to ask, even though it is a foolish question.

Hesham: As I have already asked, Sir, may I please know if you have eyes?

Amr: Yes, I have.

Hesham: For what use are they?

Amr: With eyes, I can see faces of people and colour of various things.

Hesham: And you have a nose also?

Amr: Yes, I do have one.

Hesham: What is its function?

Amr: I smell the scent and odour by it.

Hesham: And do you have a mouth?

Amr: Yes I do have.

Hesham: For what use is it?

Amr: I can talk to people or taste food and drinks with it.

Hesham: Do you have ears?

Amr: Yes, I have two ears.

Hesham: What is their function?

Amr: I can hear voices by them.

Hesham: And do you have a mind?

Amr: Almighty has bestowed me with that also.

Hesham: What is its use?

Amr: With that I am able to distinguish things whatever is felt by the other senses like hands, eyes, ears, nose, tongue etc. In case of a difference, I am able to solve with its help. In case of doubt, I can dispel with it and be sure.

Hesham: So, does it mean that despite being sound and healthy, all these organs cannot function independently without the help of the mind.

Amr: No, No! none of the organs can function independently without the help of the mind.

Hesham: Why is it so? After all, are the organs perfect and strong enough to differentiate between things?

Amr: Young Boy! When any organ has some doubt about a thing which it smells, sees or tastes, it brings the matter to the mind and it is the mind which confirms the truth and removes the doubt.

Hesham: So, from what you have said, do you want me to understand that God Almighty has created and designed the mind to guide the organs and remove doubts.

Amr: Yes! It is so.

Hesham: So the mind is a necessity, otherwise the organs could not work independently.

Amr: Yes.

Hesham: Please Sir! Proclaim your opinion with fairness and justice on this point also. If Almighty has not left the organs of man's body without the guidance of the mind, how is it possible that Almighty God could leave millions of His creatures without an IMAM to guide and solve their problems arising out of

doubts and conflicts? Should not our common sense accept this fact?

On hearing this logic argument. and having no answer to give, Amr Bin Ubeid kept silent and went into deep thinking.

Hesham was a deeply learned person and one of the closest companions of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a) from whom he had obtained his knowledge.

'IMAM' is an Arabic word which literally means 'Leader' or 'Guide'. Any leader or guide can be good or bad, true or false. Therefore, it is essential for every Muslim to know what makes and who is a true and good Imam. The Holy Prophet has said: “If a man dies without recognising the Imam of his time, he dies the death of ignorance.”

It is of utmost importance that the Imam must be appointed by a Prophet under the command of God, nobody can be an Imam either by claiming to be so, by inheritance or by the wealth or power which he may have.

It is essential that an Imam possess certain characteristics and qualities so that a clear distinction can be made between a true and false Imam. Some of these are as under:

1. An Imam must be free from every defect – Physical as well as Mental;

2. He must be born of legal Marriage;

3. He must be Ma'sum (Infallible–Sinless) like the Prophet – from birth to death;

4. He must possess all knowledge and be the wisest of all human beings of his time;

5. He must know all the languages including those of animals also;

6. He must be able to perform miracles;

7. He must be bold, brave and most courageous;

8. He should be most generous and be able to help needy and weak persons.

In short, an Imam is the Holiest, most Pious of all – after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S)

The Learned Man and the Hungry Dog

Isphahan is a beautiful city in Persia. In this lovely city there once lived a very great learned man. He

was also very poor. His name was Muhammad Baqar. Because he lived in Isphahan he is known as Mohammad Baqar–e–Isphahani which means Muhammad Baqar of Isphahan city.

Muhammad Baqar–e–Isphahani was poor and therefore he could not afford good food. He had no money to buy rich food. For many years he had been living on simple food. Once he felt like eating liver. Food made from liver is tasty and rich in strength. So he began to save money each day from his small earnings so that he could buy a pound of liver and thus satisfy his desire.

After many days he saved enough money to buy a pound of liver He was happy. He went to the bazaar and bought a nice piece of his favourite liver.

Feeling very, very happy he was returning home from market with the parcel in his hands. On the way home, near a ruined house, he saw a dog with her puppies. The dog with her young ones looked very hungry. Her stomach had gone deep inside. She was not able even to give milk to her little ones and feed them. The dog and her puppies were also shivering from the cold climate.

Mohammad Baqar–e–Isphahani felt sorry for the poor animals. He went near them and stroked them kindly. Then he opened his parcel of liver and cut small pieces and then piece by piece fed them.

The dog while eating looked thankfully at Mohammad Baqar–e– Isphahani and then at the sky as if she was thanking Allah for the favour and praying for the generous and kind man.

Having fed the animals Mohammad Baqar–e–Isphahani went home. Tired and hungry he slept that night shivering in the cold. But, somehow he felt happy.

Soon after this incident the learned man began to get rich. Gradually he became richer and richer until he was a millionaire. He became so rich that once when the King of Isphahan was in need of money, Muhammad Baqar–e–Isphahani gave him a loan of 20,000 dinars.

Moral: Kindness is never wasted.

The Five Loaves

Zarr Bin Hobeish relates this story.

Two travellers sat together on the way to their destination to have a meal. One had five loaves of bread. The other had three. A third traveller was passing by and at the request of the two joined in the meal.

The travellers cut each of the loaf of bread in three equal parts. Each of the travellers ate eight broken pieces of the loaf.

At the time of leaving the third traveller took out eight dirhams and gave to the first two men who had offered him the meal, and went away. On receiving the money the two travellers started quarrelling as to who should have how much of the money.

The five-loaf-man demanded five dirharns. The three-loaf-man insisted on dividing the money in two equal parts.

The dispute was brought to Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib (the Caliph of the time in Arabia) to be decided.

Imam Ali (a) requested the three-loaf-man to accept three dirhams. The man refused and said that he would take only four dirhams. At this Imam Ali (a) returned, “You can have only one dirham. You had eight loaves between yourselves. each loaf was broken in three parts.

Therefore, you had 24 equal parts. Your three loaves made nine parts out of which you have eaten eight portions, leaving just one to the third traveller. Your friend had five loaves which divided into three made fifteen pieces. He ate eight pieces and gave seven pieces to the guest. As such the guest shared one part from your loaves and seven from those of your friend. So you should get one dirham and your friend should receive seven dirhams.

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