

Aqeel as a Guest of Ali

Aqeel arrived as a guest at the Government House in the days of the Caliphate of his brother, Ali. Ali made a sign to his elder son Hassan to offer a garment to his uncle. Hassan presented to him a robe and a cloak. The night came; the weather was warm. They were sitting on roof-top having amiable talks. It was time for dinner. Aqeel considered himself to be the guest of the Absolute ruler of the Muslim world and expected an extra ordinarily colorful and rich dinner. But to his surprise it was the most ordinary and simple one. He said: "Is this all the food?"

Ali: "Isn't it a God's gift? I heartily thank Almighty God that he has bestowed me with this gift."

Aqeel: "Then I should better tell you my needs at once, and be on my way soon. I am in debt. Please order to pay off my debt as soon as possible; and also help your poor brother as much

as you can, so that I return to my place relieved of my burdens:"

"How much is your debt?"

"One hundred thousand Dirham"

"Oh! One hundred thousand Dirham! So large? I am sorry, brother. I don't have so much money to give you; but wait till the time comes for the disbursement of stipends. I shall withdraw my personal share and give from it to you, thus fulfilling my duty of cooperation and brotherhood towards you. If my family and children were not in need of their own expenses, I would have given you my entire share"

"What?! ! Should I wait till the payment of stipends? You have the state-treasury in your hand and still you are asking me to wait till the time of disbursement and then only you will give me from your personal share! You can withdraw any amount you want from the State Treasury. So, why are you making me wait till then? Besides, what is your total share from it? Even if you give me your entire share, how far will it relieve me of my trouble?"

"I am surprised to hear your proposal. What concern it is of me or you whether there is money in the Treasury or not? We are just like any other Muslims. True, you are my brother and I must help you as

much as possible, but from my personal money, not from the public treasury"

The argument continued and Aqeel pleaded with Ali in various ways. He continued to insist that Ali should give him from state treasury. The place where they were sitting overlooked the market of Kufa, and they could see the cash-boxes of the shop-keepers. Ali said, "If you still insist and are not ready to listen to me, then I have got another proposal for you. If you follow it you can repay all your loan and still have plenty of money left."

"What is that?"

"Down over there are cash-boxes. As soon as the market is closed and nobody is there, go down and break open the boxes. And take whatever you want!'

"Whose boxes are they?"

"They belong to the people of this market. They keep their cash in them:"

"Strange! You are telling me to steal the money of poor people who have earned it with their hard labor and have gone home leaving it there trusting in God?"

"Then why are you urging me to open the boxes of the state-treasury for you? Whom does it belong to? This also belongs to the same people who are asleep in their houses carefree and in comforts. All right, I have another suggestion. Follow it if you like."

"What's that?"

"If you are ready then pick up your sword and so will do I. The old city of Hirah is not far from here. There are leading merchants and wealthy people there. We make a surprise attack on one of them during night and bring out enormous wealth with us."

"Brother, I haven't come here for theft and robbery that you are suggesting these things to me. I am only asking you to instruct the officials of the treasury to give me the money which is in your power, so that I may repay my debt:"

"Suppose that we steal the property of an individual, isn't it better that stealing from the property of millions of Muslims? How is it that taking the property of an individual with sword is robbery and usurping the property of the general public is not? You are under the impression that robbery only means attacking some individual and taking his property by force. The worst type of robbery is the same thing which you are proposing to me to do now."

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