

Joint Project 2 – House

It was 11 am in the morning. The bell rang and Bilal looked out from his room's window, surprised to see the postman in front of his home. Bilal hurriedly came out and took the big envelope and signed in the receipt book. The postman left on his bike and Bilal came up in his room. He then opened the envelope and found a letter and a small envelope inside it. He was surprised to read the letter. It read:

'Dear Mr. Bilal,

I am a friend of Mr. Habib who is the uncle of your very close friend Mobin. He lives in Canada Mr. Habib asked me to purchase a house as a gift for Mobin's family. Mobin's mother is Mr. Habib's sister. Since last several years, their relationship is not good due to minor disagreements between Mobin's father and Mr. Habib and so they have no communication now. Because he is currently very sick, he felt very lonely and wanted to give this gift so that the two families start communication again and forgive each other. Once he recovers, he will come here and meet Mobin and his family. He is currently under intense treatment and so is not responding to his phone. However, his son may reply to emails. The address is: <...@.....>. As per his instructions, I have purchased the house with 4 bedrooms and a small yard and the ownership papers and the keys of the house are in the small envelope. Kindly give it to Mobin's family and explain to them the situation in the best possible way you can. I fully trust you.

'Mr. Habib's friend'

Bilal then noticed that there was no sender's address on the big envelope. It was a bit surprising for him. He was puzzled as to how he can give this to Mobin. Mobin was a regular attendee of Seyyid's lectures and he never mentioned to anyone his family's financial difficulties. Sometimes, Mobin's sister and brother would also come to Seyyid's lectures. He was one of the brightest students close to completing his masters in biotechnology in the highest-ranked university of the country. He had ambitions of going abroad for his PhD but his family's financial situation and home responsibilities were making him uncertain about his future. He was usually quiet in gatherings. He and Bilal used to exchange few formal sentences. Not knowing exactly what to do, Bilal immediately called Seyyid to help him. Seyyid told him that he should ask Mobin to come over and first talk to him about his uncle and then inform him about the house given as a gift. He also told Bilal not to ask Mobin about his family's financial condition.

‘Behave as if you don’t know anything. Inform me if you have any difficulty,’ he said. Bilal thanked Seyyid and then called Mobin. He was busy in writing his thesis. Bilal told him that it was urgent and gave him his home address.

Mobin came and Bilal welcomed him. He was very sober in his manners and wouldn’t talk much. Bilal asked him about his studies and preparations for his thesis. Then, Bilal slowly asked him if he had any relatives outside living outside the country. Mobin mentioned about a maternal uncle named Habib living in Canada. But then, when Bilal asked where he was now, Mobin said that they don’t have any relations with him and have no news of him for the past 10 years. Bilal was surprised. Then he mentioned that uncle Habib has sent a gift for his family from Canada through his friend. Mobin was shocked to hear this and thought Bilal was joking. Bilal explained to him that since his uncle is very sick, he remembers you all very much and he asked his friend to buy a house for your family and sent the ownership papers and keys with a friend.

Bilal brought tea and some snacks for Mobin and then he gave the envelope to Mobin who was still in a state of shock and surprise and said: ‘I don’t know if my mother and father will take this gift or not.’ Bilal replied: ‘Remember Mobin, few weeks ago Seyyid spoke about *sileye rahmi*, keeping relations and doing goodness to your relatives and its *thawab*. One of the things Seyyid emphasized was that it prolongs one’s life. Now if your mother and father accept this gift, it will probably have healing effect on your uncle’s recovery from illness and may prolong his life.’ Mobin agreed. ‘You should remind your parents of what Seyyid said and then convince them in the best way, Mobin.’ Bilal further persuaded him and told Mobin that he has already informed Seyyid about it. Finally, after few minutes of discussions and sharing ideas, Mobin thanked Bilal and left. Bilal called Seyyid and told him about it.

In the evening, Mobin, his sister, brother and his parents were with Seyyid. They came about an hour before *maghrib* prayers to discuss the situation and whether to take the house gift or not. ‘You must take this gift with good intention and create a room in your heart for him. Forget minor differences. Even if in your view he has done something wrong, you must forgive him. How will you ask forgiveness from God on the Day of Judgment when you are not willing to forget minor mistakes of your brother? Keeping good relations doesn’t mean only calling each other. Your uncle has taken the first step towards good relationship by sending the gift. You should not break his heart. You should respond positively and accept it. It may prolong his life. Don’t you want that?’ he asked Mobin’s mother. ‘Yes I do, Seyyid,’ she replied.

Seyyid then looked towards Mobin’s father and with his powerful convincing style, persuaded him to forgive Mr. Habib and asked him to write him an email and also pray for him and give *sadaqa* (charity) for his quick and complete recovery from sickness. He also asked Mobin’s mother to pray for her brother and ask God to unite him with her family as soon as possible. They all promised to Seyyid that they will forget all the past disputes, pray for him and welcome him.

They then prayed *maghrib* prayers and attended his lecture which was on prejudice or *assabiyyah*. He

explained different types of prejudice and their devastating effects on one's life, thinking, the society and finally, the hereafter. 'A person suffering from prejudice of any kind is like a blind individual. He cannot see anything that has human quality because prejudice removes humanity from his eyes. He behaves like an animal. He supports others not because they are on truth and justice but because they are of his tribe, family, group and his fellows from his own race. He cannot see justice and so will harm someone innocent or someone on truth who deserves justice. That person can commit murder or any other crime against innocent person or people. This is the reason that Imam Sadiq (as) has said that 'a person who has prejudice in his heart to the size of a mustard seed will not even smell paradise', He said. Everyone sitting in the lecture was shocked and terrified to listen to Seyyid's words. After lecture, they had dinner as usual and thanked Seyyid and left.

Mobin's family moved into the new house soon afterwards. They also wrote an email to his son and thanked his father for the house gift. They received a reply which didn't mention anything besides the news of Mr. Habib's recovery. A few weeks later, they got an email that there will be another surprise for them soon. All of Mobin's family members were waiting for him now...

Four weeks later, Seyyid's home bell rang. When Seyyid came out, he found an aged, frail man, well dressed and he looked like he had come from a Western country. He introduced himself as Mr. Habib and he said to Seyyid that he came last time to his house 10 years ago and had attended a few of his lectures. Seyyid immediately welcomed him inside his house's yard and asked him about his health and told him that he knew about his sickness and recovery through Mobin. Mr. Habib said that he left for Canada and due to some family issues with the Mobin's father; he was forced to cutoff relations with them.

Seyyid carefully listened. 'I have now come to you for guidance and for mediation Seyyid. They all accept you. Although they have forgiven me as I read in the email but I want to make sure that it is true. Whatever you say, they will agree upon. If you ask them to forgive me, they will. Seyyid please help me. I do not want to be away from my sister because of her husband's enmity towards me. I want Mobin to study abroad. He is a very intelligent boy,' he pleaded. Seyyid promised him that he will do so. He asked him where he was staying. Mr. Habib said that he was staying at his old friend's house. Then Seyyid asked him: 'Did you send the gift of house for Mobin's family?' Mr. Habib said 'No Seyyid. It's a total surprise for me. I never sent them any gift. Rather I have brought few gifts for them with me.'

Seyyid was surprised at first and then thought for a while and told Mr. Habib that he should not mention it to Mobin's family and behave as if he has given the gift of new house to them. But then he should pay equal or more amount of money or spend it in gifts for them. Mr. Habib agreed. He said that he will take Mobin with him for his studies. Seyyid said: 'That's the best. But you should send him back to his own country. I will also ask him to do the same,' Seyyid asked if he brought his family with him. He said that his wife, son and daughter are with him. Then Seyyid asked him to come with his family to his house about an hour before *maghrib* that day in the evening. He would like to talk with them before they all met

Mobin's family. Mr. Habib thanked him and left. Seyyid then went inside his house and talked to his wife about this issue and told her a few important things. He then called Mobin and asked him to come with all his family members at *maghrib* prayers.

As soon as Mr. Habib and his family reached Seyyid's house, an hour before *maghrib*, Seyyid came to the door and guided them inside. Mr. Habib and his son sat with him. Few other students were also there. Bilal then asked Seyyid about how good family relationship can keep a person healthy. Seyyid started with findings from modern research that has shown that people who have peaceful family life live longer and do not suffer from major psychological as well as physical illnesses, as those who live with stress such as the ones who live alone, or are divorced or have stressful relationships with their immediate relatives. This is because psychosocial stress is a well-known factor for heart diseases, diabetes, problems of sleep that itself leads to several other problems. Imagine you have a family relative with whom your relations are not good. Every time you think of him, you will be stressed. However, imagine if the same person again enjoys good relationship, seeing his relative or even thinking of him will lead to relaxation and happiness. Then, Seyyid said that he will continue this topic in his lecture that night.

The time for *maghrib* prayers was approaching and people started coming. Mr. Habib and his son started to do their *wudhu* and started interacting with other people. Just before the prayer began, Mobin, his brother and father also came to join the prayers. They didn't recognize Mr. Habib and his son. His mother and sister went into the ladies' section. There, inside Seyyid's house, Mobin's mother was surprised to see Mr. Habib's wife and his daughter after so many years. They all met and then because the prayer was going to start, they got ready for it. They were all very happy.

After prayers, Seyyid gave a very inspiring lecture on Family Relationship from Qur'an and Islamic traditions. It was a very inspiring lecture. Everybody was just stunned by the importance of family relations and rights of family members upon each other and the *thawab* of keeping good relations and helping each other in the time of need. They didn't move until Seyyid's lecture was over. At the end of his lecture, Seyyid welcomed Mr. Habib and introduced him. Everyone including Mobin and his father welcomed him. Mobin's father also hugged him and they met like brothers. Seyyid smiled while looking at them and asked them to sit near him. Soon, the dinner started and they sat beside one another.

Finally, when everyone left Seyyid gathered the two families around him and talked to them. Mobin's mother then met her brother and talked with him and her nephew, she was full of joy and happiness. Seyyid asked them to thank God for this blessing for all of them. They were all nice in behavior and respected each other. Then Mr. Habib said that because Seyyid 'ordered' me, I have another small gift for my sister and her family. 'I will take Mobin with me for his higher education. I know that he is finishing his MSc thesis and I will take him for his doctorate and post doctorate with me. Of course, on one condition and that is, he will come back here and serve his own society.' Mobin was overjoyed and so was his mother, but his father's facial expression showed disagreement. But then Seyyid said to him:

‘You forgot what I mentioned in my lecture today!’ Finally, he agreed and they all then started coming out in the yard of Seyyid’s house.

When they were leaving, Mobin’s mother was very happy. She wanted to talk to Seyyid separately in private and so Seyyid and his wife took her on one side. She thanked Seyyid and his wife and told them that she was extremely happy to see her brother’s family after so many years.

They all then said goodbye to Seyyid and left together. Seyyid then went inside his house and thanked his wife for her role in reuniting the two families. But he was thinking...who had bought that house for Mobin’s family.... For a moment, he thought it was Bilal. But then he smiled and dismissed the idea.

A few days later, Seyyid got an envelope pasted on the inside of the gate of his yard. He opened it and found one sentence written in it: ‘Respected Seyyid, with the grace of God and your training and help, the project was completed successfully. Many, many thanks.’ Seyyid smiled and thanked God.

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