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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).

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