

The Midday Traveler

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In this part of magazine by recouring to literature, the best attempt is made to provide you with a small picture of the life of Imam Hasan (p.b.u.h.) under the title of "The Mid-Day Traveler".

The earth was hot and fire was pouring from the sky. He crickets were chirping in the thorny shrubs. Three men came down from a hill and a cloud of dust rose in the air. The first man stood at the bottom of the hill. He loosened the cover on his face and with great tiredness said, "We have been searching this desert for hours, but we haven't found a single drop of water."

The second man sadly looked around himself. Tired and sweaty, he filled his hand with dust, let them in the air, and quietly said, "The earth is dry, and I can't smell any water. Perhaps we are destined to die of thirst in this desert."

The third man crossed the hill and the two other men followed him. The hot earth was covered with soft sand and their legs sank in it up to their knees. Exhausted and thirsty, the three men searched around themselves but the hot desert lay ahead of them in every direction. Suddenly one of them shadowed his face with a hand, pointed in a direction, and cried, "Look!"

On the other side of the hill were a few palm trees. The palm trees had bent their long leaves towards a small pond. A sheep was lying in their shade. A distance further, a little hut

was seen. An old woman was sitting next to the hut, weaving. The three men ran towards her in a hurry. Seeing them, the woman got on her legs terrified and swung her walking stick in the air.

One of the men said, “We don't mean you any harm, we are travelers who have suffered from hunger and thirst in the desert.”

The woman looked at them with doubt and said, “Who are you?”

“We are pilgrims of Kaaba. We will be grateful if you give us some water,” said the man.

“Are you traveling to Mecca on feet?”

The man dropped his head and said, “I am ashamed of my God not to walk on feet. We have a pledge with our God to travel the way to his house on feet.”

The woman brought down her stick and said, “The door of my house is always open to the pilgrims of Mecca, go in the hut and rest.”

The three men went into the hut. The woman milked the cow. Moments later she entered with a bowl full of milk and said, “drinking water in this hot desert will weaken the eye sight. I have brought some milk to remove the thirst and tiredness from your bodies.”

They drank the milk with fervor. “I live with my husband in this hut. He always goes out to the desert in the morning and returns at dusk. I know that you are hungry, but I don't have anything in the house...,” continued the woman.

The woman became silent and stared at the sheep lying in the shade. The wind blew softly and moved the palm's long

leaves. The woman thought with herself, “If I kill the sheep, I can provide these tired travelers some food.”

The woman walked slowly towards the sheep. One of the men got up, went towards the pond, and performed ablution. The woman looked at him. His body was trembling and looked pale. “Is this shaking of your body from hunger and thirst?” the woman asked.

“No,” answered the man. “I want to stand to prayer before the God of the world. This trembling is out of fear of Him.”

There was something familiar in the man's face. “Where have I seen him?” the woman thought with herself.

The man was fair and his hair was twisted and thick. His eyes were as black as the nights of the desert. With seeing him, the old woman remembered one of her childhood memories. A day when her mother had climbed one of the palm trees and picked the white unripe date sprouts to drop them down for her. That day, the palm grove had a strange scent. It was as if the air was filled with the scent of all the green groves of the world. At that moment, his father had suddenly come running to the palm tree and cried, “I have wonderful news. A man called “Muhammad” has invited everyone to worship of the One God. He rejects the worshipping of idols and criticizes the people for buying of girls. He is the messenger of God and he has brought the message of good fortune from the sky...”

The old woman took a deep breath. He looked at the man again and thought, “Who is this man? Why does he remind me of that day?”

The man lifted his head and said, “Mother, what are you thinking about?”

The woman came to herself and answered, “I... I want one you men to kill the sheep so I could make food for you.”

“No, mother,” the man replied, “if your husband returns home and asks about the sheep what will you answer him?”

The woman held her head up and said, “My husband will never leave anyone hungry in the desert.”

Then, she asked one of them to kill the sheep. She quickly prepared a meal. After eating their food, the three men got up and left the hut. One of the men turned to the woman and said, “thank you for your hospitality and kindness. Now show us the way to Mecca.”

The woman pointed to the east. The sun was gathering its last rays from the earth. The three men set off on their feet. The woman stared at them as they disappeared in the sunset.

Moments later the sound of her husband echoed through the desert: “where are you woman? Bring some milk for me to drink. Don't you know that I'm thirsty and tired when I come home?”

Troubled, the woman answered, “You know...our sheep... I mean I have...”

The man looked towards the palm trees and the empty spot of the sheep and asked with fury, “Where is the sheep?”

The woman looked towards the eastern horizon and quietly said, “They were three men; Three tired and thirsty men. Their food and water supply had finished. I quenched their thirst with the sheep's milk and then I asked them to kill the sheep and I...”

“What are you saying?” the man screamed. “Am I hearing right? You have killed our sheep for three strangers?”

“They were not strangers,” replied the woman as she kept her eyes on the eastern horizon. “I recognized something

familiar in the face of one of them; the light of prophets and the dignity of the great ones.”

“What are you saying? Who was he?” the husband yelled.

The woman like one talking with herself, slowly said, “He looked so much like 'Muhammad' the Messenger of God.”

The man hit himself in the head with both hands and cried, “Have you gone crazy woman? Don't you know that the Prophet has passed away many years ago? Don't you remember that you grieved on his death?”

“I swear to God that I have not forgotten that day,” answered the women.

The man screamed, “Then are you pretending to be crazy to free yourself from my punishment? You have given away our only sheep and you want to get away from punishment? Say that you regret what you have done.”

The woman brought her head up and said, “If I had a thousand sheep, I would have killed them all for them.”

The man got hold of his walking stick and rushed towards the woman. The woman ran towards the hill, terrified. The man could not follow her any more and screamed, “I swear to God, if I see a shadow of you on this desert, I would dig a whole and bury you in it alive,” and looked at the women disappearing on the other side of the hill.

The sound of the camels' bells could be heard from the alleys of Medina. The sun was shining on the long palm leaves. The wind lifted the soil from the ground and dispersed them on a grey-haired old woman. The woman had bent down and was busy picking the date seeds from the ground and put them in her basket. The people of Medina passed the alleys quickly. The woman lifted her head and looked at the sun, which had reached the middle of the sky. She thought with

herself, “the sun has reached the middle of the sky but my basket is not half-full yet.”

A grey-colored pigeon settled on the ground, next to the old woman and picked at the date seeds. The old woman gazed at the pigeon and said, “So you're after the seeds like me. Do you pass your days by selling date seeds?”

The pigeon circled itself and picked at the ground again. The old woman said, “I know that you are hungry and you're forced to find your food from the date seeds. If I had a house, I would take you with me and give you wheat and barley. I would then sit next to you to make baskets from the palm leaves. Just like those days...”

The woman sighed and thought deeply. The pigeon took a little twig in its bill and flew. It put the twig on the edge of a mud-built wall. The soft wind blew the twig in the air. The old woman moved her self. She wiped the sweat of tired face with the back of her hand and again bent herself to the ground. She thought with herself, “whatever it was, it has passed, but I do not regret what I have done. The face of that man reminded me of the Prophet. He had an oath with his God to travel the way to Mecca on foot and when he stood to pray his body trembled out of fear of God. At that moment, I felt as if he is like a bright pond reflecting the sun.”

She brought her head up and looked at the sky and said, “O' God, who was he?”

Suddenly the woman felt a heavy look on herself. She averted her eyes from the sky and gazed around herself. Her heart trembled in her chest. A man had kneeled next to the old woman and was looking at her. The man had a reddish face, and his eyes were as black as desert night. The woman came to

herself and said with terror, “My God! Save me from this dream. This is his vision, looking at me.”

She got up, pulled her basket after herself, and tried to get away from the man. The man stood up and said, “Wait!”

The woman froze on her spot.

“Do you know me?” asked the man.

“No, who are you?” the woman replied with a shaky voice.

“I am the person who was your guest along with two other men in a mid-day,” said the man.

“For God sake tell me, are you that guest or his vision?” asked the woman.

The man said, “Today, when I was crossing this alley, I saw you bent down on the ground, picking date seeds. It is now the time for you to rest. I went to give you one thousand sheep, and one thousand gold Dinars. Will you accept this gift from me?”

“One thousand gold Dinars?! But who are you?” the stunned woman said.

“I am a servant from the servants of God who was your guest one day,” answered the man.

The man wrote something on a piece of paper. He gave the paper to the woman and went away.

“But who are you?” the woman asked desperately.

A man walking the alley looked at the old woman surprised and said, “how can you not know him?! He is Hasan, the son of Ali, the second Imam of the Shias.”

The woman trembled, looked at the Imam disappearing on the end of the alley with astonishment.

The wind blew softly and filled the air with the scent of ripe dates.