

The Second Growth

Ibrahim stood up after performing his nightly Prayer. He was feeling very tired and a few hours of sleep had not yet removed his fatigue. He walked towards the window, put his head out and looked at the sky, thinking to himself: "Is it time for morning prayer?"

It was a clear and starry sky. He gazed at the stars and watched the moon that was moving slowly, as if looking after the baby stars. The moon had been telling stories for the stars all night, so that they could go to sleep. How close the stars seemed to him! He said to himself: "If Hossain were awake, he would think that he could climb a very tall ladder and pick one of the stars for himself."

He laughed at this idea, and a slight smile remained on his lips.

After performing his morning prayer he went back to his bed, arguing with himself whether he should lie down again or not. He was very tired and felt sleepy. But he had much work to do on his farm which needed taking care of. He remembered how much hard labour he had done on the farm. He had cultivated a wide and dry land outside Jawania, of the city of Medina. He had worked on it round the clock for many months, assisted by the members of his family and a few other workers he had hired to turn that arid land into a cultivated farm. Now the corn ears moved with every gentle breeze, filling the heart of his family with hope; the hope of the time of reaping and the time when they could settle their debts and use the rest of the crop for their livelihood.

He thought: "I will certainly take some of the corn to Imam Mussa Kazem (p.c.u.h.) to be divided amongst the poor."

He was pleased with this idea. His eyelids felt heavier every moment, but the thought of the corn ears and the unfinished work in the farm did not let him go back to sleep. He shook himself a little and opened his eyes, and said to himself: "I must get up and go to the farm to attend the crop."

He was about to stand up that there came a sudden knock on the door. Before he could rise, his wife and son had reached the door. A voice behind the door kept on calling him with a panting breath, saying: "Ibrahim! Where are you, Ibrahim? All your property is gone! Hurry up! Locusts have swarmed upon your field. Make haste? Maybe you can save the rest of your crop!"

It was one of his workers. He had run a long way. He uttered his words with much anxiety and let himself sit on the ground. Ibrahim leapt out of the bed, picked a large handkerchief, put on his shoes, carried a spade on his shoulder

and ran towards the farm. The sun was just beginning to rise, that the man was getting quite out of breath, saying to himself: "O God! Help me!"

It was too late when Ibrahim reached the farm. He had lost everything. The swarm of locusts were disappearing like a black cloud, and not even one ear of his crop was left. He dropped insensible by his now locust-stricken field and looked towards the sky. Then he covered his face with his hands and plunged into thought, saying: "O God! I have lost the fruits of my labours, and everything I had has, been destroyed. What can I say to people now? How can I pay my debts? Where can I get a living to support my family?"

He was choked with grief, and could hardly breathe. The rest of the family arrived soon, looking worried and distressed. His wife began to comfort him with the following words, "There is nothing to be done. It is a mishap that has happened. But God is Compassionate and our subsistence is in His hand."

Ibrahim was still sitting. His wife's words gave him some hope. She was right and one should vest hope in God only His legs didn't have the strength to stand up. His wife sat by him.

Minutes and hours passed in silence and grief until noon came. The call for prayer could be heard from the city Mosque. Ibrahim stood up and headed for the Mosque. Upon arriving, he performed ablution and stood up to pray. He finished his prayer, but felt uneasy at having nothing to do. So, he set off for home. The sun was almost in the middle of the sky. He was still thinking of his crop, the crop which had grown with his labour and with the aid of water and sunshine, and were now destroyed with the raid of locusts.

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Several days passed, and although a long time had gone since the raid of the locusts upon his farm he continued to visit it every day. He spent the whole day in that cropless field, and returned home in the evenings. A little while later he would lay down in bed, and listen to the murmur of the moon telling stories for the stars. He was thinking to himself: "The stars are golden, and my crop, too, was turning golden." He remembered how hard he had pulled out the weeds. "I won't let you suck the blood of my baby corns." he would say.

Smiling at the thoughts and the hard work he had done, little by little he fell asleep.

One morning, as usual he was sitting by his farm when he saw some horsemen in the distance coming towards him. He thought: ' They must be coming in this direction, for, there is no other place to go around here.

He sheltered his eyes with his hand to see if he could recognise them. When they came nearer Ibrahim recognised them. He got up to his feet and ran towards them, saying: ' My lord! My lord! "He would not believe that the Imam was visiting him. Yes, it was Imam Mussa Kazem and his friends who had come to see him.

Ibrahim ran to the Imam. He was so happy that he felt as if he were flying. The Imam dismounted, stroked Ibrahim's head, embraced him and asked how he was.

Ibrahim wiped his tears of joy, and answered: ' I am very well, O Imam!' The Imam asked about the man's family, and the man answered that all of them were fine. The Imam remained silent and walked towards the farm.

The Imam asked about his job, he bent his head and pointed to the field. Again the Imam remained silent for a few moments and pressed Ibrahim's hand which he still held, saying: "Tell me, Ibrahim! How much have you borrowed, and how much do you think would your profit have been had not your crop been destroyed?"

Again Ibrahim bent his head, and then raised it, saying: "It amounts to two hundred and fifty drachmas worth which was destroyed as a result of the locusts raid. The dry land which I turned into a farm by hard work is completely ruined. Now I am not even able to repay my debts. Locusts have caused my ruin. They have left me misery instead of corn."

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Imam Kazem put his hand in his pocket and took out a bag, and from it he offered two hundred and fifty drachmas to Ibrahim. Ibrahim hesitated for some moments and felt as if he was nailed to the ground. He remembered the words of his wife saying: "God is kind, and our subsistence is in His hand."

At last he took the bag and thanked the Imam. Imam Kazem took hold of the rein of his horse and together with his companions began to walk towards the farm. It was now near noon and the sun was high in the middle of the sky.

Ibrahim looked at the farm for a moment and in his imagination he saw ears of corn, slowly growing reaching higher and higher, each one carrying a fully rich ear, while the breeze gently moving them about. Ibrahim rubbed his eyes to come out of his fanciful dream. He thought that he was either asleep. or that he had gone crazy or fallen into day-dreaming. But it was not a dream. The second growth of the corns was a fact and reality. The sun of Imam Kazem's blissful Imamate and guardianship had shone on his corns making them grow once more. His heart was filled with vast joy. He looked the farm over again. The call for the noon prayer could be heard. The Imam and his companions were setting

off for the city. Ibrahim was so excited and confounded that he did not notice the Imam and his companions leaving for the city. He began to run after them.

That night was so clear, so calm and full of stars. Ibrahim was thinking of the moon and the stars. He smiled, and thought that the moon was telling a fresh story for its stars. The story of the second growth of his crop.

All the people of the city, too, heard about the story. Everyone felt happy. Whenever they saw Ibrahim, they saluted him and begged him to tell them the incident of the second growth of the crops. He, too, would tell the story from the beginning to the end; Like the Moon.

(1) Samera was originally composed of Ser-Man-Ray, meaning: "He who saw, became glad."

(1) The narrator's name is Ali Bin- Khaled.

(1) Muhammad Bin-Abdol-Malek Zayyat was a minister to three of the Abbassid caliphs.

(1) At this time Mo'etassam was caliph.