

The Silver Piece

Adapted by Shaykh Rizwan Arastu

One day, ‘Alī returned home from a hard days work and asked his wife, Fāṭimah, if she had any food for him to eat. Slightly embarrassed, she replied, “I don’t have anything. The children and I also haven’t eaten anything.”

‘Alī, also feeling embarrassed said, “I wish you had told me so that I could have brought something for us to eat.”

She replied, “I felt bad asking you for something that I knew was hard for you.”

Despite working hard in his date groves, ‘Alī usually had little money on hand. The harvest was weeks away, and until then, he had no choice but to borrow some money for food. He went to a friend and borrowed a silver piece so that he could buy some food for his family.

On his way home, he crossed paths with his good friend, Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. The heat seemed to have gotten the better of him, and he was visibly out of sorts. ‘Alī asked him what was the matter. Miqdād pleaded, “Leave me be, and please don’t ask me what’s the matter.”

“I won’t allow you to hide your problem from me if I may be able to help you,” ‘Alī insisted.

With a sigh, Miqdād said, “If you insist: I have just left my home, and my family is in tears for their hunger. I have come out to find something to relieve them, if only a bit, of their suffering.”

Without a moment’s hesitation, ‘Alī held out the silver piece in his hand and said, “Take this, and buy something for your family.”

With a heart full of sadness and hands empty as ever, ‘Alī entered the mosque to join the congregational prayers behind the Prophet. When *Maghrib* prayer was complete, the Prophet asked ‘Alī, “Do you mind if we have a bite to eat at your place?”

‘Alī could not lift his eyes to meet the Prophet’s. He held his breath and hesitated, at once embarrassed to have nothing to offer to his guest and to have left the Prophet’s daughter and grandchildren hungry. Collecting himself, he forced a smile and welcomed the Prophet to join him and his family for dinner.

Together they entered ‘Alī’s house using the door that connected it to the Prophet’s mosque. Fāṭimah was finishing her prayers. ‘Alī was surprised to see a pot behind her, seething with steam and exuding a delicious aroma. As ‘Alī stood dumbfounded, the Prophet advanced and placed his hand on Fāṭimah’s head and asked her how she was doing. He asked her to serve him some food, so she removed the pot from the fire and placed it before him. All the while, ‘Alī stood where he was, staring incredulously.

Fāṭimah sensed his gaze upon her, but did not want to say anything in front of their honored guest.

Then the Prophet turned to ‘Alī and said, “This, ‘Alī, is the reward for your silver piece. God provides for whomever he wishes without any reckoning.” The Prophet’s eyes filled with tears as he raised his hands and prayed, “Praise is for God who has rewarded you while you are yet in this world and who has given you what he gave to Zakariah and Mary. Zakariah asked her, ‘Mary, from where do you get this?’ She replied, ‘It is from God. God provides for whomever he wishes without any reckoning.’¹

¹ Qur’ān 3:37. I have adapted the story from *Sīrat al-a’immah al-ithnay ‘ashar* by Hāshim Ma’rūf al-Ḥasanī, vol. 1 p.69-70.