

The Black Market

The dependants of Imam Ja'afar Sadiq (a.s.) had increased in number; so had his expenses. The Imam decided to invest some money in trade to meet the increased expenses of the house. He arranged for an amount of thousand Dinars which he gave to his slave named 'Musadif' directing him to proceed to Egypt and to invest the amount in business on behalf of Imam.

Musadif purchased some goods usually exported to Egypt, and joined a Caravan of traders, who were taking the same type of merchandise to Egypt.

When they reached near Egypt, they met another Caravan coming out of the City. They enquired about each other's affairs. During the course of conversation, they learnt that the goods which Musadif and his friends were carrying were not available in Egypt and were in great demand there. They became very happy at their good fortune. Indeed that was an article of common use and people had to buy it at all costs.

The traders on hearing the good news decided to exploit the situation. They agreed together not to sell the goods at less than hundred percent profit.

They entered the city. The situation was same as they had been told. As previously agreed, they created a black market, and did not sell the goods at less than double the cost.

Musadif returned to Medina with a net profit of one thousand Dinars. Happy as he was he went to Imam Sadiq, and placed before him two bags, each containing one thousand Dinars. The Imam asked

"What is this?"

"One of the two bags represents the capital you gave me, and the other one (which is equal to the capital) is the profit I have made"

"Certainly the profit is unexpectedly high. Tell me how could you make so much profit?" "The fact is when we learnt near Egypt that the merchandise we were carrying had become scarce there, we agreed not to sell the goods at less than double the cost; and we did accordingly'."

"Glory be to God! You did such a work! You took oath to create a black market among the Muslims! You swore not to sell the goods at less than double the actual cost! No. I don't want such business and such profit."

Then picking up one of the bags, he said, "This is my capital." He did not even touch the other one, and said that he did not want to have any connection with that.

Then he said:

"O Musadif! It is easier to fight with a sword than to earn the livelihood lawfully."

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