

Another Prayer

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Article

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This short story depicts the struggles that women meet after giving birth to a child in regards to their prayer and also highlights the profound love and tolerance the Prophet of Allah (S) had for children.

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

For three months Salima had not visited the mosque.

When she heard the call for prayer, she thought more of going to the mosque. Three months ago she had given birth to a baby. She had no one to take care of her baby so that she could go to the mosque for congregational prayer. Her husband was a dates-selling pedlar who wandered about the streets and alleys of Medina all day, in order to obtain a bare living.

She had not much time to look after the baby herself, nor had she any money to employ a baby-sitter. Salima was contented with her life, but whenever she heard the call for prayer, she had a special kind of feeling. She would remember the warm and pleasant voice of the prophet which filled the atmosphere of the mosque. She wished very much to visit the mosque on the call for prayer, as she used to in the past, but she had not been able to do so recently.

Her first child had been born three months ago. The baby was unrestful and cried most of ten, and would hardly stop crying. Most of the time Salima felt tired and sleepy.

She was certain that if she could but once go to the mosque and perform her prayer led by the Prophet, she would feel cheerful and happy, but there was no one to take care of her baby.

That day it was beginning to get dark that once more the call for prayer filled the air over Medina, «God is Great!»

Grief cast a shadow in her heart. She gazed at the face of her baby and listened to the prayer call. The baby was now asleep, and breathed gently and regularly. She could not restrain herself any longer. She rose to her feet, got dressed, performed the ablution, carried the baby in her arms and hurried out of the house to get to the Mosque in time for the congregational prayer.

She looked about, taking long and quick strides towards the mosque. Her legs were automatically drawn towards that destination. When she reached the door of the mosque, she let out a sigh of relief. The prayer had not yet begun. She was glad that she had managed to come to the mosque in time. She entered the mosque gently. She looked her baby over who was now awake and smiling. Salima thought to herself:

«What was I so uneasy about? I could have carried the baby from the very beginning and come to the mosque. It would be a pity not to attend the congregational prayer! It is a privilege to perform even one unit of prayer led by the Prophet of God.»

She had not yet taken her place in the row of worshippers when the call of the muezzin's inviting people to prayer said: «Hasten to the prayer». Salima hurried to join the row. She was looking around to find a suitable place to put the baby down, when the Prophet's call of 'God is Great' was heard.

The prayer had begun. Salima placed the baby on: the mat which covered the floor of the mosque. The baby was quiet and she kept a look on it. She hoped that the baby would remain quiet through the prayer, so that she could peacefully perform her first congregational prayer in three months. She prepared herself to begin.

The pleasant voice of the Prophet could be heard, and there was no other voice but his.

It was as if even the birds and earth and heaven were ordered into silence. Salima listened with all her soul to the verses praising God.

Her heart was filled with joy and repose when the first three units of the prayer were completed. With the next call of 'God is Great', all bent for genuflection, but suddenly the baby let out a cry.

She felt as if the whole world collapsed on her. In the peaceful silence of the mosque the baby's cry sounded very loud. It would not stop. Salima did not remember how she completed the next two units of prayer. She blamed herself for disturbing the peace of the worshippers by bringing her baby to the mosque. She meant to finish her prayer quickly and take the baby home.

Once more with the call of 'God is Great' everyone stood up. So did Salima. The baby continued crying. The second unit was completed very soon. The Prophet was reciting the verses of praise rather hurriedly, and the acts of genuflection and prostration, too, were completed quickly, and the last unit was ended more quickly than usual.

Salima's baby was still crying, so much so that she, in thinking of the baby, had not realized that the Prophet had ended the prayer sooner than before. She felt much uneasiness for having disturbed the peace of the worshippers. She was feeling ashamed. On picking up the baby to take it home, she noticed the smiling face of the Prophet nearby. He had knelt down by the baby and was smiling at it. The baby in return, seeing the smiling face of the Prophet, fell quiet.

The worshippers were surprised that the prayer had ended so quickly, and were even more surprised when they saw the Prophet go to where the cry of the baby came from. When he returned, they asked him the reason for the matter. The Prophet answered: «Did you not hear a baby wail?» It was then that they realized the Prophet had ended the prayer in a hurry in order to go to the aid of the baby.

Salima, too, heard what the Prophet said and understood the reason. She was no longer ashamed, and

cheered the baby: «You noisy child! You wailed so much to attract the attention of the Prophet! When you grow up; I will tell you how much the prophet loved children!»

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