

Story Parables



Everyone loves a good story. Stories come in different genres – there are true stories, factual accounts of someone’s life experiences. There’s fiction, where the author addresses truth through stories that are created in the author’s mind. Then there are parables, where a story is used to teach a specific truth encouraging a specific action.

Lilias Trotter lived and worked in North Africa, where the people were very familiar with the use of parables passed from one generation to the next to teach truth. So she wrote a number of her own parables to introduce God’s plan of salvation through Jesus’ death on the cross to the Muslim people who were her friends and neighbors. These parables dealt with things that would be familiar to her friends – the danger of traveling in the desert, the farmers’ fear of a swarm of locusts destroying their crops, the problem of finding clean water, the need to submit to those who ruled over them, the ornery but necessary camel, and many more.

These parables were printed in small booklets and given to anyone who wanted to read them, and some have survived through the years to our time. Though written for an Eastern culture they tell truths that are applicable to us today in a charming and colorful way that captures one’s attention by its very “different-ness”. The truths taught are universal and timeless. I encourage you to read these little jewels and let them touch your heart. Then think of ways they could be used to communicate to other friends, whether from a different culture or just a different world view. Let Lilias speak again one hundred plus years after these were first written, in a unique and creative way.

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THE ROBE OF RASHEED

Long ago there was a king who ruled over a mighty kingdom, and all parts of his kingdom submitted to his rule except one far-off province that rebelled against him. Many times the king sent warnings to this province, but they ignored every warning. At last he sent his own son with one last message of mercy if the rebels would lay down their arms and submit to him. Instead, this province revolted again, and in the fresh fighting the king's son was killed. As he died, instead of wishing vengeance on his enemies, the message he sent home to his father was to ask that his death might be accounted as their death, that for his sake forgiveness would be extended to those who would submit in his name, and that thus the blood he shed would not be for nothing.

Then the king, because of his love for his son, agreed that it would be as his son desired, and he sent a messenger to the distant province to call some of the rebels to his capital city. There they would be told of the king's decision, and if they submitted to him they would be sent back to their own land as ambassadors, to bring others to submit to him.

Now the first who were summoned to the king's city were a band of four men. The king told them that they were to remain in his city for a month, and at the end of the month they were to appear before him to make their submission. During that month they were to weave, each for himself, the robe that they would wear to appear before the king. This was no hardship for them, for the main industry in their land was weaving, and each boy learned it from his father as he grew up. The order was given to these four men that because their plea for forgiveness was based on the blood of the king's son, therefore the robe they wove was to be white, with one broad red border around it.

So four looms were set up, and a large pile of wool ready for weaving was brought to them – some of deep red, and the rest pure white. That evening the four sat on their mats in their room, but three of them looked angry. Then the oldest of them whose name was El Khrati, said to the others, "My brothers, it is well that we should weave new robes to appear before the king, but it seems to me that we should make them after the style of our own country. In our country we never wear that deep red color, so let's dye this white wool in the colors that are common to us. Then we will go before the king looking like ourselves, not like strangers. As for the deep red, we'll just leave it out – we don't need it." Two of the other men agreed with him, and they took the red wool and put it in an empty chest in the corner of the room. Only the youngest, whose name was Rasheed, was silent and thoughtful, and didn't help them.

The next morning the men rose early and began dividing the white wool in five piles, according to the five colors they had decided to dye it – yellow, orange, green, blue, and purple. But Rasheed's face was pale, and he came to them and said "Give me first my part of the white wool. I will not dye it, but I am going to weave my robe as the king commanded me." Then he went to the chest and took out his portion of the deep red wool from inside.

El Khrati and the two others were very angry, and cursed at him, but they could not force him to give up his white wool. Then they carried their own white wool to the dyers, and brought it back two days later dyed in the colors of the rainbow, except for the red color, and set up their looms. In the meantime Rasheed had woven the deep red border, and was working on the pure white fabric. Each day he patiently listened to their anger and contempt, which only grew worse as time went on. Yet in some strange way, their hatred didn't seem to touch him now, for as he wove his robe his heart was filled with

love to the Prince who had pleaded for him in his hour of death, and this love overflowed to those who were hating him so that he only answered them with silence or with gentle words.

Finally the day came when the four were called to appear before the king, and the three older men walked proudly through the streets in their robes of many colors, sure that the king would be pleased with their work. But Rasheed's face looked like he was seeing something far off – as in his heart he saw only the distant battlefield where the Prince lay dying, pleading for him and for his people, and now he wore the robe that represented the precious blood that had been shed.

As the four stood side by side in front of the crowd that filled the audience chamber of the king, a curtain lifted and the king came in. He looked at the four, and asked them, "Tell me, what are you thinking as you come to surrender to me?" So El Khrati answered him, "O king, we have no king but you, and your kingdom alone is eternal. So we have woven for ourselves robes of beautiful colors to appear before you. Therefore, we present ourselves as submitted to you."

Then the king answered, "Truly, if you and your ancestors had kept all the laws of my kingdom, then this submission might have been enough. But have you forgotten how much you have sinned? I hear nothing from you of repentance for the past."

Al Khrati answered, "O we do know we have sinned, but you are the merciful and compassionate one, and so we come to you for help."

Then the king said, "My mercy and compassion have shown you a way in which your sins can be forgiven. It is through the blood of my son shed for you. That blood cried out to me for mercy and not for vengeance. You may not understand how this can be, but I will tell you that the only way that you can come into my presence expecting forgiveness is by the way he opened to you in his dying. If you had truly submitted to me, you would have appeared before me in the way I commanded, and would have woven robes of crimson and white to appear in. Where, then, is this submission you speak of? I see neither the crimson nor the white except in the robe of one of you" – and the king looked with love at Rasheed, and said to him "Speak, my son."

Rasheed answered, "O my Lord and King, I have nothing to say! I am unworthy to come before you. Don't look at me, look at this crimson that I bring as my plea, and in your great mercy count my guilty past as the pure whiteness for the sake of your son. Then send me back to my land to tell my people of the mercy you have shown us through him."

The king answered, "It will be to you as you desire, for you have brought me the plea that is above every other plea. Go back to your people, with my authority, and tell all who will submit in their hearts, as you have done." Right there Rasheed knelt before the king, and gave up his whole life to this sacrifice no matter what it might cost him.

The other three stood by with looks of gloom and anger, and the king turned to them sadly and said, "I have offered you my only way of mercy, and I have no other to offer. But you have added to your former sins this blackest sin of all, that you have not honored my son, nor his blood that he shed for you. Your beautiful robes can do nothing for you, for there is in them no mention of that blood, and your submission is in word only. You have failed my test. You have chosen your own punishment. And the king signaled to his jailer to lead them away into the prison house.

THE INTERPRETATION

O our Muslim brothers, you bear a beautiful name – that is to say, you call yourselves the submitted ones to the most High God. But does your submission resemble that of El Khrati, or that of Rasheed? Or do you submit on your own terms to God, or on the terms He has made?

Now the terms on which you submit to God seem to resemble those of El Khrati, with the robes that you have woven. The five colors of the robes, so to speak, are the good works of Prayer, Fasting, Alms-giving, Pilgrimage, and the Witness. These robes represent the ways of your people, that you are familiar with. But in all these good deeds, there is no mention of the sins which you have committed, or of any need of atonement and reconciliation with God.

But God throughout history has told us that where there is sin there is no way of access to Him except through the way of atonement, that is, the death of an innocent one being counted as the death of the guilty one. So when Cain and Abel brought their offerings Abel's offering was accepted, but Cain's was not. Then in the Tourat, God told Moses that "It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul", and so the daily sacrifice was made. All this was to point forward to the time when our Lord the Christ came from heaven and gave His life for us as it is told in the Gospels. By this, He fulfilled all sacrifices, by this one and final sacrifice, and made the way of reconciliation between God and man. He has risen from the dead, and stands at God's right hand to plead for those who come to God in His name.

But the House of Islam, like El Khrati, leave out all mention of this Blood of Christ's sacrifice, and deny it. In the day of judgment, they will find that His death is their only plea for atonement before God, and they have rejected it. While they have submitted in name to Him, they have refused His terms of mercy, and have been rebels before Him.

Therefore, we pray that you, O our brothers, would open your eyes and see where this rejection of the atonement of Christ is leading you. Take the path of Rasheed, abandon the idea that your good works can save you, open your hearts to Christ and trust in His blood shed for you as your means of reconciliation with God. Then you will find a spring of purity and love within you, and you will long to go back to your friends and tell them of Christ's love and mercy, and bring them with you in the last great day as those who submit to God not in name, but in truth.

Hear now God's words concerning Jesus Christ our Lord.

"He has made peace by the blood of His cross."

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

May God bless you, O our brothers, and open your eyes that you may see, before His day of grace comes to an end.

THE WEAVING OF SAID, THE SILK WEAVER

In The Name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful.

There once was a man whose name was Said, the Silkweaver, and he worked with wicked men in a conspiracy to kill the king of the country. When the king learned of the conspiracy he imprisoned them and sentenced them to death. However, the king felt sorry for Said because he was still young, and Said cried for mercy. The next morning the king called for him and, "Said, I have found a way for you to save yourself. I have heard that you are a silk weaver, and I want you to make me a beautiful belt. I will measure your repentance by the beauty of this belt and if I think it beautiful enough, I will pardon you, but you must bring it to me in four days."

When Said heard this he could have flown for joy. He returned to the prison and the king sent him a loom and silk threads of all colors. Said set up the loom in the court of the prison, and began to work on a beautiful pattern. That night he slept peacefully.

When he got up in the morning and began to work, he saw two holes burnt in the belt, and Said guessed that this had been done by his enemies, the same ones who had encouraged him to rebel against the king. Now they envied him because the king had given him a chance to receive a pardon so they burned his work while he slept. Angrily Said began to make another belt, and he worked hard all day. In the evening he ate his supper, spread out his sleeping mat, and went on to work again until dark. All night he was restless, and watching for his enemies. When daylight came he got up, looked at his work, and found it all soiled, for in his hurry the night before he had forgotten to wash his hands when he began to work. At this, his face became pale with fear, for he realized that tomorrow was the day he had to give the belt to the king, and he was afraid it would not be enough to pardon him.

That morning the son of the king came to see the prisoners, and noticed Said, that he was pale and troubled. The prince said to Said, "What's wrong? Why are you so pale?" Then Said told him about the belt, and how it had been arranged with the king, and what had happened to him with it. He said to the king's son, "O Sir, I know that the king wants to see how genuine my repentance is by how beautiful a belt I can make for him. Tomorrow I have to bring the belt to him, and you can see what has happened to it. That's why I am so upset." Then the king's son looked at Said with compassion, and said to him, "Don't be afraid, I will make a way of escape for you, if God will."

However, Said was still anxious, and did not understand how the king's son could help him. So all day and all night he worked in a new belt until he couldn't stay awake and fell asleep. When he got up the next day and looked at the belt he found that it was too short, and he had only a little silk thread left. Besides, he found that working at night he had mixed up the colors, and all that he had worked so hard on was spoiled. At last, Said felt hopeless, and knew he would die, for he had neither time nor silk thread to work on another belt.

But there was a way of escape for him, though he didn't know it yet. The king's son had left Said and gone out to where the weavers lived, dressed himself in the clothes of a weaver, borrowed a loom, bought some silk thread, and worked all day and all night to make the most beautiful belt that was ever made. So just at the moment when Said waited for the soldiers to arrest him and lead him to the house of judgment, the door of the prison opened, and the king's son entered and stood before Said. He said to him, "O my brother, show me your work". When Said heard this he fell on his face before the king's

son, and showed the three spoiled belts, and said to him, "Sir, you see these three belts all spoiled; I have wasted all the silk on them, and now I must die." But the king's son said to him, "Open your eyes." Said lifted his head to see, and the king's son showed him the beautiful belt he had made, and said to him, "Don't be afraid. Give this belt to the king with a quiet heart." Then the king's son told Said what he had done for him, and Said was astonished, and his heart was filled with love for the king's son.

When the soldiers came to lead him away, Said threw his ruined belts on the ground, and took with him the belt the king's son had made. The king's son went with him as Said confessed to the king what had happened to the work he had tried to do, and told the king of the wonderful goodness of his son, who had saved him. Then the king looked at his son and smiled, and looked at Said and smiled at him, too. He said, "O, Said, you are pardoned and accepted for the sake of my son. Go now and sin no more." And Said went free to his house, and all his life he brought all his best work to the palace, to show the praise and love that filled his heart towards the king and his son.

THE INTERPRETATION

Oh, my brothers and sisters, this world is like the prison where Said was, and you, too, are trying to weave good works that you can offer to God so he will forgive and accept you. You work hard, but all your work becomes spoiled. Satan is your cunning enemy, and he knows how to tempt you secretly so that even in the mosque while you are praying he makes sin look beautiful to you and your good works become singed and burnt like Said's belt. But not all your sins can be blamed on Satan. Your own heart is defiled with sin, as it says in the Gospel, "From within our hearts come evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and defile a person." My brothers and sisters, last Ramadan you fasted with your lips, but how many of these uncleannesses came from your heart, and defiled the days of the fast, as happened to Said and his work in the parable. Also, he made mistakes in the darkness and didn't know about them until the dawn. So there are mistakes in your life, my brothers and sisters, that you won't see until the day of judgment. Then you will be ashamed to present your works to God, for he says in his word that "all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" before him.

But I have come to bring you good news. As the king's son had pity on Said, thus Jesus Christ had pity on you. He left heaven and clothed himself with the form of a man, and came to earth and worked works which were perfect before God. If he had been only a man, these deeds could not have helped you, but in Jesus Christ, God was manifested in the flesh of a man, and because of this, he could bear on himself the punishment for your sins, and give to you his righteousness, as it is written in the Gospel that God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

Oh my brothers and sisters, throw away all trust in your good works, as Said threw on the ground all the pieces that he had worked, and confess to God that you are full of sin and deserve the punishment of fire. And as Said took up the belt that the king's son had made, you take, with joy and praise, the perfect and complete work of Jesus and present it to God as the means of your salvation, and God will receive you for his son's sake. Then you will know a new life in your heart, and your good works will no longer be to win pardon, but to praise God and Jesus Christ, who has given you salvation. Amen

THE BEDOUIN AND HIS CAMEL

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

They say that a Bedouin tied up his camel at twilight in front of his tent. Then he went to sleep, and slept quietly until midnight. At midnight his camel woke him up and said to him, "O my master, I am very cold. Please let me hide my nose in your tent." His master answered him, "No problem," and covered himself with his robe and went back to sleep.

A while later his camel woke him again, and said to him, "O my master, my nose now feels good, but would it be OK if I brought my ears into the tent, too?" His master replied, "Very well, camel, and goodnight." The camel moved his ears into the tent, but after a little while he began to shiver with cold until the whole tent shook. His master woke again, and said to him, "What has gotten into you?" He was getting tired of the camel's complaining. The camel answered, "Forgive me, O my master, my neck is freezing." So his master said to him, "Get your neck in here, and leave me in peace."

But the camel did not leave him in peace. When the moon rose he began to cry louder than ever, and said roughly to his master, "Get up, O man." His master sighed and said to him "What do you want, O camel?" The camel said "You are warm, and I am dying of cold, so if you will get out of the way a little, I can bring in my front legs." The master said, "Oh, bring them in, and then leave me alone." Now the master had to crouch up at the side of the tent, and was very uncomfortable. However, he went back to sleep again until he heard the camel call loudly to him, "Oh my master." The Bedouin answered impatiently, "Now what do you want?" The camel said to him "Oh master, my body is dying of cold, I must bring it into the tent." His master answered crossly, "Bring it in, stupid animal!"

As the camel entered, he nearly overturned the tent, and at once it became so suffocating that his master had to put his head out from the tent's flap to breathe. Then, without asking permission, the camel went on to bring in his hind legs, and lay down in the tent. Now the poor master could not move him, and could only drag himself out of the tent and sleep in the cold.

Who was master now? The true master had given up his place, little by little, and could not take it again. He was not strong enough to turn the camel out, so he let him stay and live there.

THE INTERPRETATION

O Reader, I think you will say to yourself "That man was a fool to let his camel come into his tent until he was the master of it." But maybe you are like him, for your heart is like the tent, and you let sin come into it little by little like the camel. This is how it can happen - it starts when a person is young, and makes bad choices of cheating or lying or other dishonesty. As he gets older it becomes easy to join other boys and skip school, and lie to his father and the teacher to avoid punishment. Later he may choose to hang out with people who break the law, and end up in jail. So sin takes over his life, like the body of the camel that took over his master's tent.

O Reader, you may not have gotten so far as this, but if the nose of the camel is in your tent, that is, if only one sin has entered your heart, it will increase in its power every day. If you have begun to lie,

to lose your temper, to steal little things, you have begun to let sin into your heart, and little by little it will grow until it takes over your whole life. You have no power to resist your sins, your heart is filled with sin, so how will God allow you into His pure heaven?

There was a man in this world who conquered sin completely, and God has sent him to save us. He is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is able to turn out the camel of sin from the tent of our heart, as it is said of him in the gospel that he was “manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” Let him come into your heart and life, and he will turn out Satan and all his works. Just call to him to come and save you now.
Amen

THE DEBT OF ALI BEN OMAR

In the Name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate

There once lived a man named Ali ben Omar, who left his country and went to live by the sea to look for work, taking his family with him. This man had a small shop in his country, but his shop was not making a profit, so he sold it and took the money to pay for his journey. When he reached the coast he had only five francs left of his money, but he wasn't worried because people had told him that it was easy to find work in that place. So he rented a room for five francs a month, gave the owner the deposit, and went to look for work. However, he couldn't find a job, and he spent the rest of his money for food for his family, and now he had nothing left to pay the rent.

Two months passed, and at the beginning of the third month the landlord came and said to him, "My brother, you have only given me the deposit for the rent of your room. You must find the money to pay me the rent for two months." Ali said, "Oh, Sir, times have been hard for me. Please be patient with me for just a little while." The landlord agreed and waited until the end of the third month. At the beginning of the fourth month he returned to Ali and said to him: "Ali, pay me what you owe me." Then Ali was ashamed, and said to him, "Sir, people say that you are a generous and merciful man. If you will forgive me for the last three months, from this time on I will begin to pay you if God will." The landlord replied, "Yes, I am a merciful and generous man or I wouldn't have been so patient with you up to now. But I am also a just man, and so you must pay your debt, and the payment of the future will not pay the debt of the past." Then the landlord left.

The next month was Ramadan, and Ali ben Omar didn't have even enough food to break his fast when the cannon sounded, and still he found no way to pay the rent for his room. Ramadan passed, and then the little feast, and Ali began to be very fearful, for he knew that when the Great Feast came the landlord would come, and if he didn't have the money for his rent the landlord would throw his furniture and his family out into the street.

The Great Feast came, and Ali had no sheep to slay, no new clothes to wear. He went to all his friends and asked for their help, but they all said "We have nothing to give you, for we are debtors like you." Then came the fifth day of the feast, and Ali ben Omar knew that the next day would be his last. That day he fasted all day, bowing his head and meditating on the day of reckoning that was coming. In the evening there came a knock at his door, and Ali rose to open it. There before him stood the son of the master, whose name was Si Abderahman, a tall and handsome man. But Ali's heart was full of anger and hate, so he didn't want to see Si Abderahman. But Si Abderahman reached out his hand gently, and said to him, "O my brother, I have not come to reproach you, but to bring you good news. My father and I have seen your condition, and we have compassion on you, for you are far from your country. It is true that my father is a just man and so he cannot excuse you, but he has given me the right to sell a piece of land I own in the mountains and to give you the money. I have sold it, and here is the amount I sold it for, the same amount as you owe to my father. Take it, for I give it to you, and tomorrow go to my father without fear and bring it to him, and God will help you."

But at these words, Ali ben Omar, instead of thanking the son of the master, looked at him with disdain, and said proudly, "Sir, I have nothing to do with you, and I don't need your pity. Tomorrow when I see your father I will decide by myself what to do. Take your money and get out!" He threw the

money on the floor and made him leave. Si Abderahman was silent, looked sadly at Ali, and left without saying a word.

The next day at noon the landlord came to the house himself. When Ali ben Omar saw him he threw himself on the floor at his feet and begged, "Have pity on me, Sir, have pity on me." The landlord said to him, "Last night I sent you mercy and pardon by the hand of my son, and you wouldn't accept them. Now the time for mercy has passed." And Ali had nothing to answer him, so that very hour he was turned out into the street, and the door was locked behind him. Then Ali went from door to door begging, till the day when he became sick and finally died far from his own people and friends.

THE INTERPRETATION

You, oh my brother, are like Ali ben Omar. From the time that you knew the difference between good and evil your debt between you and God has increased. How many times have you done things that you know God has forbidden, and neglected the things you know God has commanded you to do. From time to time you decide not to repeat your evil acts, and then you think that will cancel the old debt you have to God. But you are wrong, O my brother, for repentance for the future can never pay for the sins of the past. You have looked to the prophets – peace be upon them – but the prophets were men like you, and they cannot help pay your debt, for every one of us must give an account of himself to God. God sees that you have no way to pay the debt of your sins, and He knows that the day of reckoning is near, so He has had mercy on you and has sent a way to escape. Jesus the Messiah is the one who brings you this good news. This Jesus is the son of Mary according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the Spirit.

It is Jesus who has come to make reconciliation between you and God. He gave up the glory of Heaven when he left Heaven to come down on the earth, and he gave up His life when he died for you on the cross. In this way he purchased for you God's pardon, and today he is offering you this wonderful pardon.

Oh my brother, if you do not yet understand this mercy of God by the hand of Jesus the Messiah, you are like Ali ben Omar before Si Abderahman came to him, and your condition is like his, for the debt of your sin is growing day by day, and the day of judgment is getting near. Be careful that you don't act like Ali, in adding to your sins the greatest sin of all if you do not receive the good news of pardon that God sends to you. Be careful that you do not refuse Jesus the Messiah, who wants to save you, and that this great sin is not on you when you appear before God in the day of judgment.

These words were written in the Gospel, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not counting their trespasses unto them, and has given us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...and we pray you will be reconciled to God. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

THE LETTEER THAT CAME FROM A FAR COUNTRY

There was once a little boy named Abdelkader who was heir to a great estate, but his parents both died before he was two years old and his uncle became his guardian and the guardian of his estate.

Now his uncle was a wicked man and he mortgaged the land and sent Abdelkader away to a distant part of the country, where he was brought up by another relative. Meanwhile his uncle lied about him, and spread the rumor that he was dead.

When he grew older the man who brought him up told him that he was a poor orphan who had been left homeless and taken in by this man for charity, but that now he had to work to repay the man. So he worked hard in the fields, and hardly even learned to read or write.

When Abdelkader was twenty-two he received a letter late one evening when he was alone in the house. He hid the letter until the next day, then he took it out to the fields to read it, and this is what it said.

“To the honorable lord, the gracious Abdelkader son of Mubarek, greetings and God’s blessing to you. I am the brother of your mother, and my name is Abd el Aziz ben el Hassan. A short time ago I learned that you are alive, and I longed to see you, for you are my own family, but you have been deceived by enemies who have robbed you of the great heritage left you by your father. The man who thus deceived you is strong and clever, and I saw no way to restore your rights to you unless I could buy your inheritance and give it back to you. I have worked hard to redeem your rights, and finally I have paid the full price and the title deed is in the hands of the judge of your birthplace. You only have to come to sign the papers, and here is the name and address of the judge. If you take the judge your identity papers and this letter, he will make the property all over to you, and when I come to see you we will rejoice together. Written by the hand of Abdel Aziz ben el Hassan on the date of 5th of Sha Ashoura.”

As Abdelkader read this letter he was amazed, and could hardly believe it. Was he a poor boy, having to work hard to make ends meet, or was he an heir to great riches? He read the letter again and again, trying to think. Then he hid the letter under a stone for fear that it might be taken away from him, and the next morning he told the story to his master.

The master was very angry and said, “O fool, do you think you are the only Abdelkader in the world? It was meant for someone else, not for you.”

The boy answered, “That may be, but it has my name on it, and I am going to travel to this place and see what happens.”

The master tried to persuade Abdelkader to show him the letter, but Abdelkader was afraid and wouldn’t be persuaded. Before the sun set he went to the place where he had hidden the letter and read it again and compared the name with his identity papers, then hid his identity papers with the letter.

When he came back to the village for supper he found that the wise men of the village had been invited to have supper with his master, and after supper they called the boy. They said, “O Abdelkader, you surely won’t be such a fool as to believe this letter that you have received. It is just a forgery and a fraud that someone is playing on you, not a genuine letter. Bring it to us and we will prove this.”

Now Abdelkader began to doubt, for he had not thought of this. But he said to himself, "Something tells me that my letter is true. I will see if I can get any information on this Abdel Aziz."

The next day he went to the market in the town near by, and asked if anyone knew the place from which Abdel Aziz had written the letter. He found one man who had gone there a year before, and this man told him, "In fact, I did hear there of a man named Abdel Aziz ben el Hassan, and they said he was a good man, a very rich man, but that lately he had been living like a poor man and working very hard to save money, which was strange."

Then Abdelkader's heart leaped for joy, and he thought, "It was for me he was working!" So he went to his master again and told him that he planned to travel to find out the truth of the letter he had received. His master was very angry and said that if he left, he would be cut off from his people forever. Then he locked Abdelkader in a room alone, but during the night he dug a hole in the wall and escaped. He went to the field, found the letter and the identity papers, and ran away. He travelled by night and hid by day until he was far away from the house of his master, and then he worked his way for three more weeks until he arrived at the house of the judge where his letter told him his title deeds were kept.

When he knocked at the judge's door he didn't look like the heir to a great estate, for he had had to sell his robe and his shoes to find food for the journey, and all he had to show was his identity papers and the letter of Abd el Aziz. But the judge smiled at him and said, "You have done well to come, for this is what Abd el Aziz said to me – he would not force the matter, but he wished it would be your own faith and courage that would bring you here to claim your right. Your title deeds shall be signed over to you this very day, in the presence of witnesses, and you shall set your seal on them and have that which is your own."

So it happened that when Abdelkader went to bed that night he was no longer a beggar, but the master of houses and lands that he hadn't yet seen. There isn't time to tell how he dressed in beautiful clothing and went to see his inheritance, and how he marveled at the beauty of all the things that were now his. Yet the crowning joy of all was the joy that was yet to come, when he would meet the one who had redeemed his inheritance and given it back to him.

THE INTERPRETATION

O my brother, you, too, have received a letter from a far country. This letter is the Great Gospel (Injil) which tells you not of earthly riches that perish, but of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that doesn't fade away." The meaning of this inheritance is peace with God, and His love in our hearts, and power to conquer our sins. God has willed this heritage to us.

But the Gospel (Injil) tells us that Satan is our enemy, and that he has stripped us of our heritage as Abdelkader was stripped of his. And as it was with Abdelkader, our enemy keeps us in ignorance so that we might never know what we might have, and that is why all this is new to you, because Satan has planned that you should never hear of it.

Like the letter that came to Abdelkader, the Injil tells you yet more news. It tells you of One who has sacrificed his all for you to win back the heritage Satan robbed from you. This One is Jesus the

Messiah, and the letter from heaven, the Injil, tells of his wonderful love, and all that it cost him to redeem our inheritance, even to giving his life itself.

The Injil tells us also what to do in order to gain what Jesus has bought for us. It tells us that we must have faith and courage to leave the old life and to come to God to receive the gift that is waiting for us. However, when you do that, people around you will probably try to get you to stay with them. Some will tell you that the Injil is not for you, just as Abdelkader's master told him. They will say it is only for Christians. But your identity papers say that you are a sinner, and the Injil says that the good news is for all sinners, so it must be for you.

Others will tell you, like the wise men of the village told Abdelkader, that the letter of the Injil is not a genuine letter, and that you cannot trust it, but there are many wise teachers who can give you proofs of the purity of the Injil. Even before you have these proofs, listen to your own heart and to God's voice within your heart, which will bear witness that the Injil is true. Then come to God in your spirit and show Him your identity papers that say you are a sinner, and show Him the words of the Injil that say that Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and come fearlessly in His name to receive the heritage of pardon and peace that He has won for you.

Little by little you will discover how rich your inheritance is, and you will look forward to the time when Jesus the Messiah returns to this world and you will see him face to face, and thank him for all he has done for you. Then you and he will rejoice together that you had the courage to believe his letter and to receive his gift. Amen

THE LOST ONES IN THE SAHARA

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

There were once two brothers whose names were El-Tahir and Abdel-Qadir, who lived in the mountains. One day they received news from a town far off in the Sahara, where one of their relatives lived. The news said that their relative was dead. He had been a wealthy man and had left them an inheritance.

At this news they left their village, mounted their mules, and travelled to a village on the edge of the Sahara, thinking they would find a caravan and travel with it. However, when they asked when the next caravan would leave, they found that none would leave for two months. That evening they found a Bedouin in the Café, and he told them, "I can guide you, for I know the easiest road where there are good wells, and besides, I have a waterskin, so you have nothing to fear." However, he was lying to them, for he was from another part of the Sahara and knew nothing about how to guide them. But they agreed on the price of the journey, and gave him a deposit, sold their mules, bought provisions, and set out on the journey.

The first day all went well, and they drank freely of their waterskin, and the Bedouin told them that the next evening they would come to a well with good water. But when they arrived, with their waterskin empty, they found this well was salty, and it only made them thirsty.

The next morning the Bedouin said to them, "Cheer up, for tonight we will come to another well." So they filled their waterskins with salty water and travelled on till twilight. Before they arrived at the well they met a flock of goats and asked the goat-herd about the well. He said to them, "Be careful, this well sometimes has water and is sometimes dry, and I have just come from it and found it dry." So they slept poorly, with only enough water remaining to them to keep them from dying of thirst. They yelled at the Bedouin, asking him about the next well. He said that the well before them would have good, cold water, but it was only his imagination, for he was also thirsty, and was beginning to doubt his ability to guide them.

In the evening they all rejoiced, for they saw far away the landmark for the well, and could hardly wait to arrive and drink. But this well was choked and abandoned, for a young camel had fallen into it, and when the people couldn't draw it out they filled the well with stones and sand. El-Tahir and Abdel-Qadir felt like they would die of thirst, and they were very angry at the Bedouin, and said to him, "Why have you betrayed us and brought us here to die?" The Bedouin was silent, and that night he got up, took the camels and fled while El-Tahir and Abdel-Qadir slept. When they woke up and found themselves alone, they did not give up, but continued on the road, thinking they would meet someone. They were in the area of the dunes, and after two hours, they had lost their way. Soon they arrived at the top of a dune, and Abdel-Qadir cried, "Praise be to God", for they saw below them a pool of water, glittering in the sun, with palm trees on its banks. However, they were from the mountains and did not know the Sahara, so they ran down the dune to quench their thirst. But the pool disappeared before them, for it was a mirage, and they found only dry sand, and the palm trees were only bushes of white broom.

Then Abdel-Qadir said, "My brother, listen to me. We should return on the same road that we came on. Maybe we will find water before we die."

El-Tahir answered, "But we have tried those wells and found them dry. Even if we reach them we shall still find them the same. My heart tells me to go on further."

But Abdel-Qadir would not continue on the road, and turned around to return. El-Tahir went on with all the strength that he still had till he left the dunes behind and found himself again in the desert. It was a stony waste, and he was nearly fainting with thirst. Suddenly he heard the faint sound of a flute, and he said to himself, " I'm imagining it – this is the sign that death is near." Soon, however, he saw that it really was a shepherd's flute, a shepherd who was feeding his sheep in that place, and El-Tahir knew that where man and sheep were, there must be water.

He began to call out with all his remaining strength, for he could go no further. Immediately the shepherd came running and greeted him, asking how he was. El-Tahir answered, "I am almost dead, I have lost my way and can find no water."

The shepherd said to him, "Here is the way, and there is water is near." Then he led El-Tahir to a well-marked road, and soon they came to a hollow where there were some bushes, and under a rock was a spring of pure water. El-Tahir tasted it, then washed himself, and began to drink a little at a time until he was refreshed, and felt like a new man.

When he began to think clearly again, he thought about his brother, and asked the shepherd to go with him to find him. The shepherd left his sheep with his little brother and they hurried back on the path till they came to the choked well. There they found Abdel-Qadir, stretched out on the ground, and they thought he was asleep. But he was dead from a sunstroke, and El-Tahir alone finished the journey and received the inheritance.

THE INTERPRETATION

Oh my brother, you want to receive the inheritance of Heaven, and so you have looked for those who can show you the way. But you have done like Abdel-Qadir and El-Tahir and have followed those who don't know the way themselves, so they have led you to wells that are salty and dry and choked, and all the good they have promised has disappeared like a mirage. You have tried the well of Fasting, but it has not satisfied you thirst for righteousness. You have followed the requirements of the Feast days, but you found yourself worse than in the Sahara. You have taken the Pilgrimage and have found a dry well, for it did not change your heart and your conduct. You have tried the wells of Prayer and Good Deeds and "witness" but you have not found in them the water of God's pardon, His power and His peace.

And yet, you act like Abdel-Qadir, and keep returning to those wells, hoping to find blessing in them. Be careful, my brother, for these wells are as useless to you as they have always been, and time is passing for you, and heaven is still far off. Go forward till you find the fountain of Life, which is Jesus, the Messiah. This Spring is not far from you, for now in your journey God has caused you to meet us, who are followers of Christ, and to read this story. We can show you the Fountain of Life, for we have drunk of it.

Come with us and drink, and find eternal life. It is written in God's Book that Jesus the Messiah says to you, "Let him who is thirsty come to me, and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." You have looked for God's pardon through good works, but you have wearied yourself for nothing, for

pardon comes only from the death of the Messiah for your sake. You have tried to conquer sin, but all your efforts are in vain; only Jesus the Messiah can give you this wonderful power by the Holy Spirit that he will give you. We can tell you this is true, for we ourselves have found him to meet our need and give us rest, and he has promised this rest and peace all our lives till we reach Heaven. So leave the dry wells you have trusted in up to now, and turn to Jesus, the true Fountain that God has shown you.

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen

THE STREAM AND ITS SOURCE

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

An orphan girl named Shereefa was taken from her village up to the hill country to be married to a peasant, and the old woman who took her stayed three days, and then left her. Her new home, though only a hut, was pleasant because of the birds singing all around it, the sun shining above it, and the fig tree flowering in the garden, for it was summer time.

However, before the end of summer, Shereefa became anxious and weary, for her mother-in-law was always sick, and complained a lot, so no one came to visit her. Then the poor girl's husband went off to the grape harvest, and ordered her not to go out, so she couldn't even go to the bath, or to the saints' tomb, nor even to the cemetery on Fridays to give her a chance to relax with friends. Besides all this, Ramadan fell in the late summer that year, so the fast days were very long and hot, and no one came to spend the evenings with them.

Shereefa knew that her husband would return home for Holy Night, so she decided that she would ask him to let her go to visit some of their friends on the day of the Little Feast. She prepared him a nice supper, and then when she saw him smiling she asked her request. He thought for a while and then said, "Actually, you have been alone the whole summer, and didn't complain, so I will go and see Aly Ben Sayid at the café tonight, and as his house is across from us, maybe he will tell his family to take you with them." Shereefa was glad to hear this, for she remembered going to the wedding of Aly and his wife Haneefa, and Haneefa resembled Shereefa's own mother.

When her husband left the house the next morning, she opened her box of clothes that she had brought when she got married. There were not many in the box, for her dowry was only ten dollars. As soon as she saw them, her joy turned to sadness, for her box was an old one and so the dust had gotten into it over the summer and ruined her clothes.

However, she told herself that there were still three days in which to wash her things at the stream in the garden, and she would do it the next day in order to be ready on the third day.

However, a strong wind blew all that afternoon, and the hut shook all night. In the morning when the wind stopped blowing, the rain poured down, along with thunder and lightening, and Shereefa worried that she couldn't do her washing.

When she got up on the third day, the day of the Feast, the sun was shining and the birds were singing, so she took her bundle of clothes to the stream to wash. However, the water was not like the town water, for the rain had made it all muddy. Still she washed as hard as she could, hoping to get them clean at last, but really she made matters worse, for the dirt in the ditch got on the clothes and spoiled them. In despair, Shereefa sat down and cried, for now she would have to go home and sit indoors like a prisoner, hearing and seeing no one but her husband and mother-in-law, both of whom she was quite tired.

While she was sitting there crying, she heard the voice of women going along the road to the village, and so she climbed up on the cactus hedge. There she saw Haneefa, the wife of Aly, and her daughter carrying their bundles of clothes on their heads. Since they didn't see her, she clapped her hands to them. When Haneefa turned, Shereefa asked her to come in, and when she had walked along

the narrow path to the hut, she asked her, "Why are you crying, my daughter?" Shereefa answered her, "I am crying because my clothes are dirty, and I cannot get them clean, so I can't come with you because I would be shamed before everyone."

Haneefa said, "Never mind, my girl, for you are a town-child and do not know the country. People like you wash in the stream in the rainy season, but don't you know that the spring is right there behind that olive tree?" Shereefa said, "No, I know nothing about the spring. How am I to know with no one to teach me?"

Haneefa replied, "Look at the clothes I have just washed. They are as white as milk, and now I will spread them in the sun to dry. There is still time, the sun is still strong. Run and ask your mother-in-law to let you come with me to the spring."

Shareefa went and asked the old woman, but she turned away and said, "Suit yourself! If your husband comes home and finds you not here, you will get a beating, but please yourself."

Shereefa came back and went with Haneefa, and when they came near the spring there were lots of women coming and going. Those coming up carried bundles of dirty clothes, and those going down had nothing but clean clothes. When she looked at the spring she saw why it cleaned away all the dirt stains, for it came out of a rock, and was as clear as crystal. When she soaked her clothes in it, it cleaned away every old dirt mark, even all those the muddy ditch had made. Joyfully she spread them in the sun, and found that only made them whiter.

On the day of the Feast, she went with a happy heart, and thought that she had never seen a feast like it, for her days of loneliness had gone like a dream.

THE INTERPRETATION

Oh, friend, you know that you, like Shereefa, have spent many days in weariness and loneliness as you think of heaven as she thought of the coming feast. You long for heaven, and you know that heaven is all purity, and so you try to cleanse yourself in preparation, not your clothes, but your spirit. You try by doing good works, by praying to the prophets, and by visiting the graves of the saints, hoping that these will remove your stains. All these good deeds, however, are mixed with worldliness, just as the water of the stream was mixed with mud, and so they cannot take away your sins. You also know that the prophets and saints were all sons of Adam like us, dying and turning back into dust, and they all bore their own sins around their necks, so not one of them could bear your sins. In the same way, your almsgiving, fasting, and visiting the graves of saints are all connected to this world, and resemble the muddy water that cannot remove stains. For are not your almsgiving and lighted candles at the tombs of the Sheikhs mixed with pride, wanting people to see you do them? And when you visit the graves is it not partly an excuse for gossiping with your neighbors? When you fast, do you not often quarrel so that you end up feeling dizzy so that the food for the evening is not prepared?

So you see that your good deeds only add more harm to your heart instead of removing the sin that was there. The longer you live, the more you will know you cannot be perfect, for God (let Him be exalted) declares that this is beyond your power. He says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one." (Job 14:4)

Meanwhile, time is passing and soon you will be dying, and facing the Feast of Heaven, and you won't be ready. But we are followers of the Messiah, and we have come to you as Haneefa did to Shereefa's garden, to tell you about a spring of water as clear as crystal. This spring has washed away our own sins and filthiness, and is able to take away yours, too.

This spring is Jesus Christ, our Lord, and he is not like the prophets who were born human as you were, but he came from Heaven. The prophets lived as we live, lives mixed of good and evil, but our Lord Jesus Christ had no trace of sin, and therefore, when he died for us, he was able to bear our sins. This is too great to understand, and yet it is true.

We do not know exactly how water cleanses our clothes, yet we know it does, and Jesus Christ can do the same for the sins of anyone who comes to Him. The Holy Scripture says that he "bears the sins of the world", not only at the Day of Judgment, but even now at this very moment. So do not despair, but come to him and let him do the work for you. Then, on the Great Feast Day of Heaven, you will awake free and happy. Amen

THE YEAR OF LOCUSTS

Nobody could doubt that Ismail was an ignorant boy. Perhaps it was not entirely his fault. He had never been to school, because he started work from the time he was very young on a farm that was several kilometers from his house. Also, his village was poor, and during the 28 years of his life he had never left the area.

However, he was wrong, because he was aware of his ignorance and did not try to learn more by asking questions of those who knew more than he did. This is the basis of the story I am about to tell you:

His father had died a few months before, and left him a few hundred dollars. Ismail used this money to buy 4 acres of land near his hut, and four hundred measures of barley seed. After buying these, he still had enough money left to live comfortably with his family until harvest time. So he borrowed a mule and a plough and began to sow the seed, expecting that with the money he thought to get from his harvest he would be able to buy other farms, and build a house with a tile roof.

The spring of that year happened to be so damp and hot that all the seeds started to sprout early, promising a good harvest, but one day at market Ismail heard the news that locusts may be on the way, as they had been noticed coming from the south. When he heard this news, he was more curious than fearful, because for many years locusts had not invaded his village, so he couldn't understand why old people stroked their beards nervously, saying, "May God preserve us!" Instead of asking what he should do in case of an invasion, he kept quiet.

Two or three days later, a hot day, he took a walk on his farm with his son, Abbas. Looking up, he noticed a single cloud coming from the south, although the wind was not blowing. A few minutes later his son said, "O father, look at the birds, the nice little yellow birds!" As the cloud came near, it seemed to separate into pieces of small silver clouds hovering and shining under the sun. Ismail rubbed his eyes and looked into the air again, and realized that it was the plague of locusts.

Ismail and his son amused themselves for more than an hour looking at these insects whirling around them. Abbas caught some of them and soon many of the locusts had passed by them without stopping. "So," said Ismail to himself, "they have come and gone without doing any harm. What luck!"

After a few minutes another cloud appeared. This time the insects were brown locusts, who landed on the barley field. Soon the barley was covered with them, and Ismail realized he needed to get rid of them as soon as possible. He and his son ran around the field with sticks and branches, chasing the insects. They spent the whole morning doing this until they heard their grandmother clapping her hands in a sign that dinner was ready. "Too bad," said Ismail, "let them stay in the barley for half an hour. Are you hungry, son? I am!"

They went to eat, and then came back to the field. It was completely quiet and the insects had stopped flying around. Nothing had happened to the barley except that some of the stems were half-eaten. So Ismail took Abbas by the hand, and they returned to their hut for a rest.

After getting up from his nap and smoking his pipe, he left his hut. The locusts had become active again, but without doing harm. However, people said they should be chased, so he started work,

and soon he saw them leaving toward the north. He then sat down very pleased – as he had spent a busy day – but the second visit of the locusts had not damaged his farm.

All went well for three or four weeks. The sprouts grew and swelled up. The locusts disappeared, and nothing more was said about them. Ismail had forgotten all about the locusts and their visit to his farm.

One day, on the path that ran across his farm, he noticed some black spots on the ground as if tar had had been poured out. With the end of his stick he touched one of those spots, and caused a commotion. Then he discovered that it was not a nest of ants as he had thought, but that it was myriads of small locusts no bigger than gnats.

He easily found other places where small locusts were about to be hatched – they looked like black mud coming out of the cracks in the ground. He stamped on these places with his foot to drive them into the ground, but he only managed to scatter most of them and kill only a few. He began to think about what he should do, and realized that his harvest was seriously threatened. It would have been easy for him to ask the men in the market that day, and they would have given him good advice. But although he did not want to ask advice from the men in the market, he did need to go there to buy some meat for the feast that was coming. Maybe he could learn something useful there. After buying the meat, he met some of his friends, and although he had decided to talk with them about his troubles, he found that he could not get the words out. He was too proud to confess his foolishness in allowing the locusts to remain on his farm long enough to lay eggs. Also, he was too proud to ask how to get rid of them, so he said to himself, “I’ll think of something.”

As he thought this, a young boy came up and grabbed his hand shouting, “O, Sidi Ismail, blessed be God, I have found you. Your uncle, Sheikh El-Rebah, sent me to tell you that he is sick and wants to tell you something before he dies. He urges you not to be too late, for what he is going to tell you is important.”

Ismail thought about what he had just heard. The most important business of the day for him was the locusts, and he had already neglected it long enough. But he felt very curious about his uncle! Maybe the Sheikh wanted to give him some land, or there might be a hidden treasure which his uncle wanted to tell him about. His uncle was an old man, with no sons. If matters got worse for him, it would be too bad not to have been able to learn of this good news, and he thought, “The locusts are too small today to do any harm.” So he sent the meat home with the boy telling him that he should explain that he had to go to his uncle’s house. Then he started the eight hour walk westward, and reached the village of El-Rebah in the evening.

The Sheikh’s room was packed with neighbors who were checking how he was doing. Two hours passed and Ismail realized that they planned to continue to sit with the old Sheikh, who was respected and loved. Next day and the day following the same thing happened, with visitors arriving continually. More than once Ismail tried to ask about locusts to gather some suggestions without actually asking for advice, but no one was interested in talking about locusts.

On the third day, towards sunset the old man cheered up a little and said, “Go to the feast, my boys, I feel better, and no one needs to stay with me tonight.” He ate the soup that was brought to him, covered himself with his robe, and slept peacefully. Ismail alone looked after him that night, taking a seat close by his uncle’s bed. The old man slept well and did not get up until the next morning when everyone came to work. Then the old man said he would like to sit in the sun in front of his house. Poor

Ismail struggled with his impatience, for the nightmare of the locusts was always on his mind, so he decided to talk to his uncle after he had settled in his seat in the sun. "You asked me to come see you, my uncle, and I have obeyed and come, but I need to return to my work,"

"That is true, my son," replied the old man. "If I had been near death I would have told you many things, but now, thanks to the Almighty, I am better. I may live longer, so I had better say nothing. If you have to go back to work, my blessing goes with you." When he heard that, Ismail said goodbye with a smile on his lips and anger in his heart.

He hurried back and arrived early in the morning to his farm. The path to his field was grayish. What did this mean? The small locusts had become twice as large in three days, and were marked with black and yellow lines, jumping all together in the same direction, like an army.

Ismail thought, "That is all right, they are about to go away." Two kilometers of the path and the meadows on each side were covered with locusts, and Ismail was terrified to see that his farm was ruined. His farm which had been full of green sprouts, had now turned black in one part and gray in another. The barley was eaten up down to the roots, and his harvest was lost. However, this was not all, for his neighbors were cursing him, too, as their farms were also threatened with ruin through the locusts. They complained to the Judge, who charged him with a heavy fine, which used up everything he owned, even his robe. Then he started to work to earn bread for his family and try to save a little money to buy more seed for his farm. This was hard, but it was the result of his carelessness and pride.

THE INTERPRETATION

There is a more terrible calamity than that of locusts. God says, "Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin." Listen, my friend. You allow an evil desire to come into your heart. This desire may appear to have gone, and you may forget it, but it leaves behind a dangerous nest of eggs which may develop and "bring forth sin". The sin may appear so small and insignificant as to cause no fear, just as the small locusts on the Ismail's farm. You may go on living life, letting sin take root in your heart, spoiling every bit of justice, purity and virtue you may have. "When it has conceived it brings forth death." Yes, the death of the harvest you hoped would gather a heavenly reward. But sin is difficult to stop. You destroy one sin, and miss thousands, just like the multitude of locusts. What, then, can you do?

Listen - if Ismail had been a wise man, he would have done two things: he would have confessed to his neighbors that he had allowed the locusts to lay eggs, and he would have also asked how to get rid of them. But neighbors can't help you against the results of sin. Confess to God, for He alone can help you, even if your sins are as many as the hairs on your head. "Take with you words and turn to the Lord, and say to Him, Take away all sin and receive us graciously." Then you will be ready to receive God's great blessing.

God has sent our Lord Jesus Christ to die for your sins, and in His tomb, your sins can be buried and never rise again. In the future, He can clear away from your heart, your soul and your desires all sins that surround you, by means of His Spirit. Then he can produce a good harvest from the good seed that he sows in your heart.

Is not this the blessing that you desire, my friend? Tell God that you need it, and it will soon be yours.

Optional Questions to Follow-up Story-parables

Questions - The Robe of Rashid

1. Why were the beautiful robes of Rashid's four friends not accepted by the king?
2. Why was Rashid's robe accepted?
3. What did the colors of the four friends' robes represent? How was that different from Rashid's robe?
4. What did Rashid's robe represent?
5. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Weaving of Said

1. Why was Said in prison, and how could he escape death?
2. Did Said try to obey the king?
3. What happened to his hard work?
4. Was Said pardoned? How?
5. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Bedouin and His Camel

1. Was the camel useful to his master?
2. Why did the Bedouin first let the camel into his tent?
3. How did the camel become the master?
4. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Debt of Ali Ben Omar

1. How did Ali fall into debt?
2. Who came to his rescue? What did he offer Ali?
3. How did Ali respond to his master's son? Why?
4. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Letter That Came from a Far Country

1. Who was Abdelkader?
2. Who became his master?
3. Who sent him a letter, and what did the letter tell Abdelkader?
4. Who worked to redeem Abdelkader's rights?
5. How could Abdelkader receive his inheritance?
6. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Lost Ones in the Sahara

1. Why did the brothers leave the mountains to travel over the Sahara?
2. Was the Bedouin a good guide?
3. Why did El-Tahir choose to keep going instead of turning back with his brother?
4. What did El-Tahir find?
5. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Stream and its Source?

1. Why did Shareefa want her clothes to be washed?
2. What happened when she washed them in the stream?
3. Where did she have to go to get her clothes clean?
4. What is the meaning of this parable?

Questions – The Year of the Locusts?

1. Why was Ismail really an ignorant boy?
2. What did Ismail think of the locusts when they first appeared?
3. What do the locusts represent?
4. What should Ismail have done when he first saw the locusts?
5. What is the meaning of this parable?