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Ad-Duha Institute

Storytime Series | Book 5

THE MYSTERIOUS PIZZA MUNCHER OF MEATBALL CORNER

Dear Little reader,

In this book, you will meet Khalil, a young man who learns why it is so important to always tell the truth. As Rasulullahﷺ taught us in this hadith*...

“It is obligatory for you to tell the truth, for truth leads to virtue (good behavior), and virtue leads to Jannah (Paradise), and the man who continues to speak the truth and endeavors to tell the truth is eventually recorded as truthful with Allah (God).

“And beware of telling of a lie, for telling of a lie leads to obscenity (bad behavior), and obscenity leads to Jahannam (Hellfire), and the person who keeps telling lies and endeavors to tell a lie is recorded as a liar with Allah.”

(Sahih Muslim)**

*Rasulullahﷺ: This is a respectful title meaning ‘The Messenger of Allah (God), may peace be upon him’ that is used to refer to Muhammed, the last prophet of Islaam. A hadith is a saying or story from Rasulullahﷺ that teaches an important lesson.

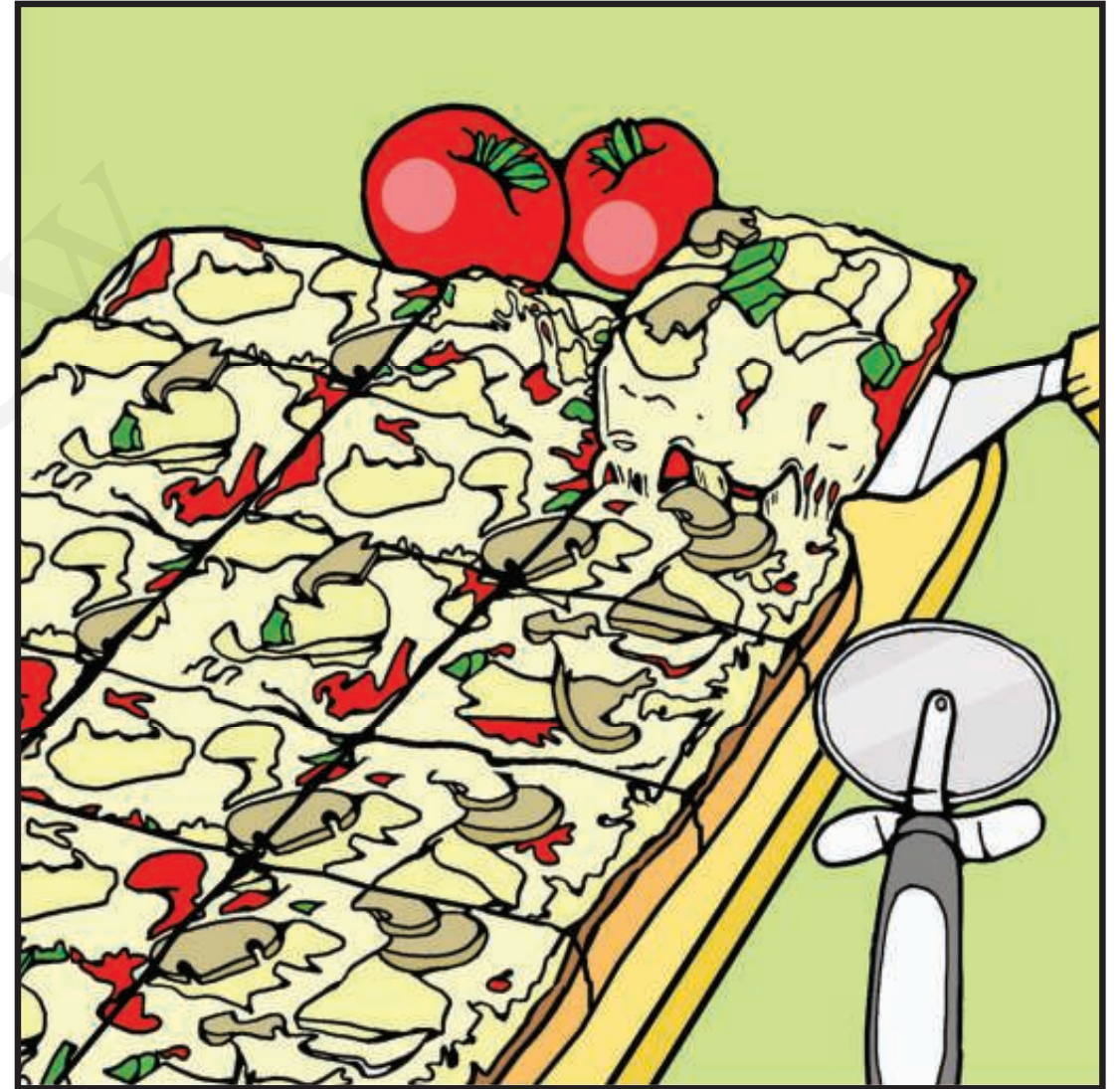
** Sahih Muslim is one of the most authentic and widely accepted written collections of hadith in Islaam.



Once upon a time, in a small town called Meatball Corner, there lived a young man named Khalil. He loved pizza so much, that for his first job he applied to work at the biggest pizza shop around, Papa Pablo's Pizzeria Palace. It was famous for the tastiest, cheesiest, most irresistible pizzas.

Khalil thought that as an employee he would be able to get all the free pizza he could eat anytime he wanted. So on his first day at work, he marched right into the kitchen and said, "I want five extra-large, supersized, double deluxe, tummy-buster pizzas (the biggest ones Papa Pablo made) with twelve toppings each!"

Saleem, the cook's assistant, stopped cutting mushrooms in mid-slice. He didn't even know they had that many toppings (they did, Khalil had counted).



Hameed, the cook, stopped kneading dough and looked at Khalil. “Are you joking?” he asked.

“Of course not,” replied Khalil, “I work here now, so hurry up and make my free pizzas.”

Hameed burst out laughing and said, “You can’t just order as many pizzas as you want. Who do you think you are? Even Papa Pablo can’t do that! Now get back to work if you know what’s good for you.” Then he pointed to the stack of orders that needed to be delivered.

Khalil frowned, picked up the boxes, and stormed out of the kitchen secretly vowing to get his pizzas... **another** way. He thought to himself,

*“Pizza is my favorite food of all time,
I am going to get it. It has to be mine.
Laugh at me now, but soon you will see,
How much YOU will pay if mine is not free!”*



Khalil angrily loaded the pizza boxes on the back of his scooter. He would get back to work alright, working on getting his free pizza!

After driving a short distance from the pizzeria, he parked in an empty alley, opened the first pizza box, and took a slice; so warm, cheesy, and delicious! Khalil ate another and another and another.

He had a brilliant plan. Since the pizzas were rectangular, he would just eat the center row and then slide the remaining sides back together to make a smaller rectangle. He was sure no one would notice.

Khalil closed the box and headed off to deliver what was left of the pizza thinking to himself proudly,

*“I am really smart. Such a clever young man,
It takes real brains to think of such a plan.
No one can stop me! I’ll show them who’s won,
Besides, why feel guilty for just taking some?”*



Khalil did the same thing with every pizza he delivered that night and for the next three nights. Soon, customers started to complain. Papa Pablo had no idea who the thief was, so he called the police to investigate.

Officer Bashir spoke to Khalil first, “Do you know anything about the missing pizza?”

Khalil thought now would be a good time to get back at the cook for laughing at him, so he lied, “No, I don’t. But if I were you, I would keep an eye on Hameed. He has been acting suspiciously.”

Officer Bashir felt Khalil was the one acting suspiciously, but for now he just took notes and went to question the other employees. Khalil thought to himself,

*“The police don’t scare me. My lies are too good,
They’ll never suspect me and no one should.
I deserve what I’m taking. Besides, it’s not right,
That I have to lie to get free pizza each night!”*



Khalil felt sure he was not a suspect, but he wanted to keep it that way. So from then on, each time he went to the kitchen to get his deliveries, he would swipe pizza from some of the other boxes and hide it in his own (to eat later), that way pizza was missing from other deliveries, not just his.

Another week passed, and news of the Mysterious Pizza Muncher, as everyone in Meatball Corner was now calling him, continued to drive more and more of Papa Pablo's customers away.

Papa Pablo even started a Pizza Patrol to watch the streets around the pizzeria. But the patrol did not scare Khalil. He thought to himself proudly,

*“Lying is becoming so much fun,
I feel so smart fooling everyone!
The Pizza Patrol will never succeed,
No silly patrol will ever catch me!”*



Days passed, but the Pizza Patrol still hadn't found a single clue. So, Papa Pablo called a meeting in the masallah¹.

"If we don't catch the Mysterious Pizza Muncher soon, the pizzeria will have to close. Does anyone know who it might be?" he said.

Musa, a delivery boy, thought it was a monkey ninja grabbing slices at traffic lights, Saleem suggested aliens (he read way too many science fiction books), and Amr thought maybe the customers were lying just to get refunds.

Someone was lying alright, but it wasn't the customers.

Khalil said, "I heard Marconi's Manicotti Mansion is trying to put you out of business."

"Subhan-Allah²," said Papa Pablo, "Marconi and I have been friends for years. Why would he want to do that?" Papa Pablo shook his head sadly. He was no closer to solving the mystery than before.

¹ Prayer area.

² Arabic phrase meaning, "Praise is to Allah (God)."

