Title: I am a Misbaha
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July 22nd, 1951

The most beautiful Misbaha ever made.\(^1\) Thirty-four beads from flawless yellow amber strung together and tied off by stunning shining sterling silver. After the Turkish artisan polishes me off, he gently wraps me up in paper and puts me in a box. A box full of other Misbahas, but mind you, none are like me, I am unique. They have amber beads, but they are not flawless like mine. Yes, silver hangs off them, but it does not shine like mine. Three silver coins are chained to the bottom of my silver ornament, each is a silver lira. I must be going to Syria, probably to the president.

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\(^1\) Abdulqader (Abode) Saafan is a fourth-year student specializing in Computer Science. This paper was written for Dr. Scott's RLG301 course. I want to thank my parents for their inspiration and for providing the misbaha which is the focus of the paper. I also want to thank Dr. Scott for creating the prompt for this paper and the editor of Prandium for his assistance in the paper's publication.
August 12th, 1951

After what seems like an eternity, I’m out of that cramped box, but I don’t see a president and I’m under some sort of display glass. Ah, I’m at a museum! Someone has surely noticed my perfect beads, and my beautiful silver and decided this is the best place for me. I can now get the admiration I deserve. No, it’s not a museum, there’s a price tag under me, I don’t understand. Of course, I’m inside an art gallery, yes, of course. It would be unjust to take someone’s opportunity to own me and display me in their collection.

This is not an art gallery, hundreds of people walk by each hour but in front of my glass home is not a rare painting, it’s a clothes shop. I’m in a market. It must be a high-end market though, I’m sure I’ll stay here a while, not many can afford me.

August 14th, 1951

I’m out of the display box and being inspected, I think I am about to be bought- wait, haggling? They’re haggling over me? Me? I am being haggled for? But, I’m art, I am impeccable, I should be admired and bid on, not haggled for.

August 30th, 1951

In the early morning, he brings me with him to the mosque. After he finishes his prayer he sits back against the wall. He moves his fingers through my beads while he repeatedly whispers the same prayers. During the afternoon, he takes me with him to the coffee shop. He sits around for hours and as he reads the newspaper and drinks his coffee, he continues to pass his oily fingers over my flawless beads over and over again. He often walks around after his coffee, going to
markets and shops of all sorts. It’s not so bad I guess, I like being out and seeing the city. I quite enjoy the first time a new person sees me and admires my beauty.

November 10th, 1952

In a closed box sitting atop a Quran, it must have been a month since the last time I was taken out. I’ve been gifted, to his newborn grandson. I am no longer taken to the morning prayers nor am I taken out during the afternoon to see the streets. In fact, although I am in Baghdad, I have yet to see the city. All day and all night I sit on a shelf in a room, watching the baby.

July 7th, 1961

The baby has grown up now, but throughout all those years I stayed in the same corner of the shelf, never taken out, never appreciated as I should be. Dust sits on my glamorous beads. He packs me up in a box. I overheard him, he is leaving his house and moving to Sheffield, England.

July 20th, 1961

He keeps me on the nightstand in his dorm. Although he never cared much for me when he was at home, now that he is away he picks me up almost every night and just like his grandfather, he passes his fingers over my beads and whispers his prayers. A few times a year he even takes me to the mosque with him. It reminds me of his grandfather and the time when I was with him.

May 14th, 1965
A few years later and we have returned to Baghdad. I am in a new home though and this time I hang in the living room. Every guest that comes through gets to see my amber beads, and my incredible silver. I’ll stay here, and people will be admiring my craftsmanship for years to come.

September 4th, 1996

I knew it could not last forever. It has been a while since my last move though. He has a family with three kids and a newborn son. But, we’re moving and this time in a rush, they throw me in a box with the rest of the living room décor. Shockwaves rock the van throwing me around in the box, scratching my beads.

June 6th, 2005

After being in that moving box for longer than I remember, I’m taken out. It’s much colder. I am not sure where I am, but I know that it isn’t my home. There’s snow outside, a foreign language on the magazines, and hanging on the wall a white and red flag with a leaf in the middle. I am laid into a drawer with random ornaments. I am not admired anymore. My beads are scratched and cracked from the moves and my silver has tarnished. No longer am I a masterpiece. My beauty has never been respected. I should have been in a palace or a gallery. I should be polished daily, not thrown in a box or a drawer. Or at least, I should have been taken out, just like the grandfather used to take me out, giving me a chance to showcase my beauty and see the world. Instead, I just wait here.

September 29th, 2018

It’s been years since I’ve been taken out of the drawer, are we moving again? No, because I’m not thrown in a box. Instead, I’m being inspected. They’re talking about me, he’s asking his
mother questions about me. He must have discovered my true worth, finally! He takes me upstairs and puts me down on his desk. He is using some sort of device and the words are magically appearing on a window above his desk. Every few minutes he picks me up and looks at me and then continues to write.

He’s writing a story about me, someone has finally discovered my true purpose. I’m more than a Misbaha, more than just art, I am history.
Bibliography

Al-Safi, Saafan. Telephone interview by Abode Saafan. "Misbaha Significance Interview". September 30, 2018

