



Sayyiduna Abu Burdah (rahimahullah) once mentioned:

When my father, Sayyiduna Abu Moosa Ash'ari (radhiyallahu 'anhu) was close to passing away, he said to me, "O my beloved son! Always remember the incident of the man and the bread."

Sayyiduna Abu Moosa Ash'ari (radhiyallahu 'anhu) then narrated the incident:

Once, there was a man who remained in a monastery for seventy years, engaged in the worship of Allah Ta'ala. This man would only emerge from the monastery on a Sunday.

One Sunday, as per his routine, he emerged from his monastery. However, on this occasion, Shaitaan managed to make him glance at a woman, and Shaitaan made the woman appear beautiful and attractive in his eyes. The man (thus fell in love with her, abandoned his 'ibaadah and) spent seven nights and seven days with this woman.

After the seven days and nights had elapsed, he returned to his senses, realizing what he had done. He thus left in repentance and remorse. Such was his regret that with every step he took, he would perform salaah and prostrate before Allah Ta'ala.

As night set in, he sought refuge on a platform which had twelve destitute people on it. (By this point,) he was exhausted and collapsed on the platform between two of the destitute people.

It so happened that there was a monk living in that area who would send loaves of bread for these destitute people every night, giving one loaf to each person. That night, when the monk sent the bread, then the person who brought it handed one loaf to each of the destitute people. As he passed by the man who had emerged from his monastery in repentance, he mistook him to be one of the destitute people and also gave him a loaf.

As a result, there was one loaf short, causing one of the destitute people to not receive his daily loaf. He thus addressed the man distributing the bread and said, "Why have you not given me my loaf? I am also in need of it!" The man replied, "Do you see me withholding any bread from you (i.e. I have distributed all the bread)? Ask your companions whether I have given any of them two loaves." However, when they were asked, they all replied that they had received only one loaf each. The distributor then became irritated and said, "I will not give you anything. By Allah! I will not give you anything tonight!"

Having observed what had transpired, the man who had left the monastery in repentance realized that he was to blame, as he had taken the loaf meant for the destitute person. He thus approached the destitute person who did not receive his bread and handed the loaf to him.

That same night, the man who had left his monastery in repentance passed away. When his seventy years of worship were weighed against the seven nights which he spent with the woman in sin, the seven nights of sin proved to be weightier. However, the loaf which he gave to the destitute person was then weighed against the seven nights of sin and it proved weightier, resulting in his salvation.

Sayyiduna Abu Moosa (radhiyallahu 'anhu) then repeated his advice saying, "O my beloved son! Always remember the incident of the man and the bread."

(Musannaf Ibnu Abi Shaibah #35353 & 'Uyoonul Hikaayaat pg. 29)

Lessons:

1. Often a person feels brave enough to disobey Allah Ta'ala as he feels that his good deeds will 'cover up' for his sins and will balance the scales. However, the reality is that although we may have carried out many good deeds, we do not know whether these deeds will have any weight on the scale or not. Sometimes, a person may have performed one good deed that was so beloved to Allah Ta'ala that it outweighed all his sins. On the contrary, it may be that a person committed a sin that was so disliked by Allah Ta'ala that it outweighed all his good actions, and in a few moments, he destroyed a lifetime of good. Hence, we can never be complacent or confident, but should always be cautious and beg Allah Ta'ala to accept us and forgive us.

2. No matter how pious a person may be, or how much 'ibaadah he may carry out, or how pure he may be from sin, or whose company he remains in – he should always fear the attack of Shaitaan. He should never ever feel that he is immune to Shaitaan's attack and his desires are under complete control. Likewise, one should never feel that he can sin now as there will be ample time to repent later on. In the case of the man who left the monastery, the seven nights of sin were among the last eight nights of his life. Had he passed away just one night earlier, he would have died in sin.

3. When the man in the monastery came to his senses, he immediately set out in repentance and tried to make amends. Hence, with every step that he took, he performed salaah and fell into sajdah before Allah Ta'ala. When we fall into sin, we must adopt the same procedure. Over and above repenting to Allah Ta'ala, we must try to make amends by exerting ourselves in avenues of righteousness.

4. When the man realized that he was the cause of the destitute person not receiving his bread, he immediately gave him preference and handed the bread to him, choosing to remain hungry that night. It was this act of giving preference to the next person, despite also being in need, which became the means of his salvation.

5. Just as the monk would feed the destitute people on a daily basis, we too should try to give some sadaqah, within our means, on a daily basis. This will not only be a means of us earning reward, but will also be a means of us earning the du'aas of people and attracting them to Islam.