



The evil, reprehensible quality of miserliness stems from excessive love for wealth. When a person is overpowered by miserliness, he will behave in the most foolish manner. Though he may have much wealth, due to this terrible quality he will even be miserly towards his own near and dear ones. Below are two incidents of misers:

There was once an extremely miserly man who instructed his children to buy him some meat. After they bought and prepared the meat, he sat to enjoy it, and ate it all, until only a single bone was left in his hand! The eager eyes of his children were watching him all along, hoping for a piece. With the bone in his hand, he said to them, "I will not give any of you this bone until you first describe to me the manner in which you will eat it."

Hence, the eldest son said, "O father! I will gnaw at it and suck it until I have not left on it even enough food for an ant!" However, the miserly father was unimpressed and said, "You are not deserving of this bone."

The second son said, "I will chew at the bone and lick it until it is so clean, that a person looking at it will not know whether it was eaten one year ago or two years ago!" Again, the father was unimpressed and said, "You are not deserving of this bone."

Finally, the youngest son said, "O beloved father! I will first lick the bone clean. Thereafter, I will crush it and swallow the powder!" At last, the miserly father was satisfied and gave the bone to his youngest son. (Al-Mustatraf vol. 1, pg. 283)

Abul Aswad was renowned for his miserliness. On one occasion, a Bedouin came to his door while he was partaking of his midday meal. When the Bedouin greeted him (hoping to be invited to join the meal), he merely replied to the greeting and continued eating, without calling the Bedouin to join him. The Bedouin (still standing at the door and hoping to garner an invitation)

commenced a conversation.

He said to Abul Aswad, "I passed by your family." Abul Aswad replied, "The path which you took led that way, so you had to pass them." The Bedouin, still hopeful, next said, "Your wife is expecting." Abul Aswad replied, "That's exactly what I last knew of her as well." Still undeterred, the Bedouin ploughed ahead, "Your wife gave birth." Abul Aswad nonchalantly answered, "It had to happen, considering that she was expecting." The Bedouin next said, "She delivered twin boys." Abul Aswad, still eating, replied, "Her mother had done the same before her." The Bedouin then said, "One of the twins passed away." Abul Aswad, unaffected, replied, "It was probably because the mother did not have the strength to feed both." The Bedouin continued, "The other twin also passed away." To this, Abul Aswad said, "He could not bear living without his twin brother." The Bedouin was now nearing his wit's end and said, "The mother also died." Abul Aswad replied, "Probably out of grief over losing her two children."

Finally reaching the limit of frustration, the Bedouin exclaimed, "Your food seems to be very delicious!" Abul Aswad retorted, "It is exactly for that reason that I am eating it alone!"  
(Al-Mustatraf vol. 1, pg. 283)