



On one occasion, Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) went to the outskirts of Madeenah Munawwarah with some of his companions. On arriving at the outskirts, they spread a dastarkhaan (eating cloth) and began to partake of some food.

While they were eating, a shepherd, caring for a flock of goats, happened to pass by and greeted them with salaam. Seeing him, Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) invited him to join them in the meal saying, “Come, O shepherd, come, and share in our meal!” However, the shepherd excused himself saying, “I am fasting.”

Hearing this, Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) remarked, “You are fasting on such a scorching day, when hot winds are blowing, and you are a shepherd in the mountains, caring for goats?” The shepherd responded, “I am hastening in acquiring the reward of ‘ayyaamul khaaliyah’ (the shepherd was referring to the verse of the Quraan Majeed which mentions that the people in Jannah will be told, ‘Eat and drink with pleasure, as a reward for what you did in advance during ayyaamul khaaliyah [past days in the world]).”

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) then wished to test the shepherd’s taqwa and thus said to him, “Why do you not sell us one of the goats from your flock? We will pay you for the goat, and will also give you some of the meat to enjoy at the time of iftaar.” The shepherd (immediately) responded, “The goats (do not belong to me – they) belong to my master.”

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) asked the shepherd, “What can your master do if the goat is missing and you tell him that a wolf devoured it?” As soon as the shepherd heard this, he turned and walked away, pointing his finger to the sky and saying, “Then where is Allah? (i.e. I may be able to deceive my master, but I cannot deceive Allah Ta‘ala)”

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) began to repeat the words of the shepherd (out of happiness with his response) saying, “The shepherd replied, ‘Then where is Allah?’”

Thereafter, when Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) returned to Madeenah Munawwarah, he called for the master of the slave. He then purchased the flock of goats and the slave from him. After purchasing the slave and the goats, he set the slave free and gave the flock of goats to him as a gift.

(Shu‘abul Imaan #4908)

Lessons:

1. The words of the shepherd – ‘Then where is Allah?’ – encapsulate the essence of taqwa. Though his master was not watching him, he was mindful that his true Master, Allah Ta‘ala, is watching him, and hence, he ensured that he remained obedient to Allah Ta‘ala.

Thus, when one acquires taqwa, then no matter what the evil temptation may be – temptation for wealth, fornication, etc. – one will abstain and safeguard his relationship with Allah Ta‘ala.


2. A Muslim will never risk his relationship with his beloved Allah Ta‘ala. Hence, the instant he is invited to something impermissible, he will refuse the invitation and will separate himself from those inviting him towards sin.

Hence, when Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhuma) tested him by inviting him to haraam, he turned and walked away.

3. When a person leaves out haraam and sin for the sake of pleasing Allah Ta‘ala, then often, apart from the reward he will receive in the Hereafter, Allah Ta‘ala also blesses him in this world with better than that which he sacrificed for Allah Ta‘ala’s pleasure.



Thus, when the shepherd expressed that he was prepared to sacrifice the haraam money in lieu of one goat, Allah Ta‘ala blessed him with the entire flock, as well as his freedom.

4. Despite the intense heat, the harshness of the mountainous terrain, and the exertion of tending to a flock of goats, the shepherd was still fasting. Such was his focus towards the Hereafter that he did not squander the valuable opportunities to earn Jannah. Rather, in all circumstances, he dedicated himself to striving for the great rewards that Allah Ta'ala has in store for the believers.



The essence of taqwa is for one to be mindful that Allah Ta'ala is watching him, and hence, ensure that he remains obedient to Allah Ta'ala.

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