

Home > Pearls of Wisdom Stories and Sayings of Infallibles (as) and their Noble Companions > Are you Asleep or Awake

Are you Asleep or Awake

Taken from: **Anecdotes of Pious Men** by Murtadha Mutahhari,
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Habbah 'Arni and Nawf Bakali were lying in the courtyard of Darul-Amarah (fort) of Kufah. After the midnight, they saw that the Leader of the Faithful, 'Ali (as), was coming from the fort towards the courtyard. But his condition was bad; he was having extraordinary fear and was unable to keep the equilibrium of his body.

Keeping his hands on the wall and having his body in bent position, he was walking slowly with the support of the wall. And he was reciting the last Ayahs of Surah 'Ali 'Imran as follows:

“Indeed in the creation of the heaven and the earth and alteration of the night and the day, there are signs for men of acumen. Those who extol Allah, standing, sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): ‘Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Glory is Yours; protect us against the torment of the Fire. Our Lord! indeed whomsoever You enter the Fire, You have surely disgraced him, and there shall be no helpers for the wrong-doers. Our Lord! surely we have heard a caller calling to faith (saying): ‘Believe in your Lord’, so we did believe; Our Lord! forgive us, therefore, our sins and cover our evil deeds and recieve us with the righteous. Our Lord! grant us what You have promised us through Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the Resurrection Day; surely You do not break the promise (3: 190–194).”

As soon as he finished these Ayahs, his condition became bad; he then repeated these Ayahs again and again and his condition became bad to worse and he became almost unconscious.

Both Habbah and Nawf were witnessing this amazing scene, while lying on their beds. Habbah, while quite startled, was looking this astonishing scene.

But Nawf was unable to control his tears and he was continuously weeping. By this time, 'Ali (as) reached the bed of Habbah and said: “Are you awake or asleep?”

Habbah replied: “I am awake, O Leader of the Pious! If a person like you has such a condition with awe and fear of Allah, then what would happen to we poor people.”

The Leader of the Pious looked down and wept. He then said: “O Habbah! all of us will be presented before Allah one day. And no deed of ours is hidden from Him. He is very near to you and me. Nothing can act as an obstruction between us and Allah.

Then he said to Nawf: “Are you asleep?” (Nawf replied:) “No, O Leader of the Pious! I am awake. It is for some time that I am shedding my tears.”

‘Ali (as) said: “O Nawf! If today you shed your tears in fear of Allah, tomorrow your eyes will glitter.

“O Nawf! No one has more respect than that person who cries in the fear of Allah and that he likes to do it only for His sake.

“O Nawf! The one who loves Allah and that whatever he loves, he does it just for the sake of Allah, does not prefer anything over love of Allah. And the one who dislikes anything, and does it for the sake of Allah, he would receive nothing except virtue for his disliking. Whenever you reach such a stage, you have attained the truths of faith to their perfection.”

After this, he preached and gave a piece of advice to Habbah and Nawf. His last sentence was: “I have told you that you should fear from Allah.” Then he passed by both of them and got busy with his own work. He started his prayers and while doing so, he said: “O Allah! I wish I knew that when I am neglectful towards You, do You ignore me or do You still care for me? I wish I knew that in these long neglectful dreams of mine and in my shortcomings in thanking you, what is my position before You?’

Habbah and Nawf said: “By Allah! he kept on walking and he had the same condition continuously till dawn.”

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