

Hikaayat Series

The Fable of the Vizier of King Khaishuwan

Hikaayat (lit. stories) refers to the morals and fables that are presented in the books of Da'wat. Many of these Hikaayat are presented in the Rasail of Ikhwanus Safa. The morals presented in these stories often highlight the transience of this world and the importance of the goodness of character. We are pleased to present a selection of these Hikaayats on Fatemidawat.com.

The Sijill article in issue 61 refers to the belief of Ikhwanus Safa that the soul (nafs) survives after it leaves the body (jism). The body is a vessel through which the soul prepares for its salvation. In demonstrating that this belief is held by many noble people, and that this belief is the source of selfless kindness and sincere friendship, the Rasail of Ikhwanus Safa present the story of the vizier of the king Khaishuwan. The vizier sacrifices himself to save the king and the people of the kingdom because of his belief that his body is a transient vessel, and because of his willingness to sacrifice himself for others.

Introducing this Hikaayat, the Ikhwan start by stating:

“Know my brother, that he who does not believe that he will be rewarded for his friendship and kindness to you after he leaves his body, he is surely not a true friend and not a sincere advisor. Do not be lured by one who helps you only for material gain – to protect his body or to provide benefit for it; those who seek an advantage in which there is a fear of one suffering and the other being saved, each one hopes that he will gain that advantage, so that he is the fortunate one and the other is aggrieved. That is certainly not the belief of the Brethren in helping one another; quite the contrary. The Brethren’s goodness and nobility of character is manifest in what is narrated about the vizier of king Khaishuwan, the king of the Turks .”

The histories tell that when King Fairouz, king of the Persians, intended to wage war against him, and the news reached King Khaishuwān, he gathered his viziers and

consulted them. Some advised him to fight, others to flee, and some advised him to use trickery. One of those who suggested trickery said (and he was a wise man): O King, I have a subtle trick. If you accept it and work according to it, you, your army and your subjects will survive, your country will be saved, and your enemy will be annihilated.

The king said, "Go ahead and share with me your opinion and wisdom!"

The wise man said, "Let me talk to you in private."

The king did. So he said, "My opinion is that you should collect your treasures and head to such place, for it is a strongly-fortified place, and you and your army pass by such place, and leave me there after you amputate my arms and legs, and gouge out my eyes, and show your anger on me, and say to those around you and those at your door: You have shown treason and acted ill-advisedly, and this is your punishment! Then then you should depart if you know that the king of the Persians is near, and leave me in my place, and wait for me to complete my trick."

The king said, "By God, I have not seen or thought that one exists who would allow what you have allowed!"

The wise man said, "Others have allowed things similar to the intelligent trickster."

The king said, "Tell me his story."

The wise man said, "They said that there was a group of divers who went to an island looking for pearls, and a trickster joined them to trick them and gain some of what they found. When they finished and were about to return, the man did not attain what he wanted; they gave him small pearls for his service. Then some thieves apprehended them, and when the divers saw this, they swallowed their precious pearls, and the man did not have anything he was afraid would be taken from him, so he did not swallow anything.

When the robbers did not find anything with them except for small pearls, they said to the divers: “Where did you hide the big ones?”

They said, “We did not find anything other than this.”

They said, “You swallowed them. We will cut open your stomachs.”

They kept them hostage that night, and determined to cut open their stomachs.

The divers thought all night, and the trickster thought to himself – and he was an intelligent man – so he told them privately, “I only joined you for such and such reason, and I did not get what I wanted. I know that you all swallowed something except for me, and if they cut open one of your stomachs then we will all die. So I have decided to die in your place, so you may be saved, and that is by saying to them, ‘If it is must be, then cut open one stomach, and if you find something, then have the rest. But if you don’t find anything, then know that we are honest. But give us a chance to randomly pick one from amongst ourselves, and you will have what you want!’ If they agree to this, then I will make it so that I am picked, and if I perish and you are saved, then I ask you to be good to my children, and console them with what you have, if you are saved, God willing.” This was done, and nothing was found in his stomach, and the rest were saved. So I, O King, know that if our enemy catches us, then I will perish any way, and I wish that my trick would work, and the king, his entourage and subjects and those with them are saved, and that our enemy would perish, even if my body is destroyed. And I see that that man was more generous than me, because he was a young man who wanted to live, whereas I am an old man who has grown weary of living. And I know that the king, if he is spared, would do good to my children more than that man could wish from the divers, and I would leave behind a good legacy like that man. And those whom I would die for are more in number than those that the man saved.”

Then the king did what the wise man told him, and when the King of the Persians Fairouz was near, he left and the man remained behind. When the companions of Fairouz saw the man in that state, they asked him what happened to him, and who did this to him. He claimed that he was one of the viziers of Khaishuwān, king of the Turks, and that when he was consulted about waging war against Fairouz, he suggested peace and the paying of taxes. Khaishuwān hated that and did what you can see. His story was told to Fairouz, and he was brought to him, and he was asked so he answered. Fairouz believed him and said, “You advised him well!” He said, “O King, have mercy on me, and carry me with you so that I do not get eaten by wild animals. I can lead you to a shorter and more hidden way.” His advice was taken, and he said, “Pack food for two days!” And he took him on a long route. When they had walked for two days, the food ran out. They said, “How much left?” He said, “Just a short distance. Walk hard.” They walked all day, and when the next day came, they said, “How much left?” He said, “I do not know. I took this path when I was able to see, and now you see my state. Seek salvation!” They scattered in the wilderness and many died. Fairouz and a few of his companions survived, and returned to his country, and Khaishuwān made peace with him, and returned safely to his country with his entourage. The children of the old man became the dearest in the kingdom and the most wealthy, and the king’s reputation was good among his brothers, friends and mankind.