

## Things That Benefit the Dead

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"And that the human being can have nothing but what he has earned (good or bad)" (53:39)

Commenting on this ayah, Ibn Kathir rahimahullaah, said: "Imaam ash-Shafi'ee concluded from this ayaah that reciting the Qur'aan does not benefit the dead, because it is not from their doing and earning. For this reason, Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam did not recommend it to his ummah, encourage them to do it, or guide them to it with a text or a hint. Nor was such a thing reported from any of the sahaabah rahimahullaah. Had this been any good, they would have preceeded us in doing it. Matters of worship must be limited to the texts, and are not liable to modifications based on analogies and opinions." (Tafseer Qur'aan il-'Adheem) It is in general true that one cannot benefit from other people's deeds after his death. But this has important exceptions detailed in this chapter.

### JANAZAH PRAYER

When the Muslims pray janazah for their deceased brother, they are granted intercession for him. The more the number of Muslims who join in the prayer, the more beneficial it is for the deceased.

This means that Allaah takes their testimony and supplication regarding the deceased's apparent actions as a sufficient reason for forgiveness. Since those Muslims who associated with him did not find any major problem to prevent them from supplicating for him, Allaah the most generous accepts that and agrees to forgive many of his hidden sins that they did not know. Anas and 'Aishah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said:

*"Whenever a (Muslim) person dies, and a group of Muslims numbering one hundred pray janazah for him, all interceding on his behalf, their intercession is granted (by Allaah) and he is forgiven."* (Muslim and others).

Ibn 'Abbas rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"Whenever a Muslim man dies, and forty men stand for his janazah prayer, all of them not joining anything with Allaah in worship, Allaah grants them intercession for him."* (Muslim and others).

Maymunah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"Whenever a (Muslim) person dies, and a group of (Muslim) people pray janazah for him, they are granted intercession for him."* (an-Nasa'i, verified hasan by al-Albaanee, sahih ul-jami'. no. 5787).

Maalik ibn Hubayrah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"Whenever a Muslim dies, and three lines of Muslims pray janazah for him, he is granted forgiveness."* (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and others, verified hasan by al-Haafidh and others; al-Albaanee disagrees with this because Muhammad ibn Ishaq one of the narrators is known to be a mudallis (one who is ambiguous in stating his sources) and did not declare direct hearing of this report (Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 128). Yet the Prophet's sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam practice of forming three lines for janazah prayer provides a further supporting evidence for this hadith).

## DEEDS OF RENEWED BENEFIT

Any good deed that a Muslim starts during his lifetime, and that is of renewed benefit and ongoing use for the Muslims, will continue to benefit him and augment his record of good deeds, even after his departure - as long as its benefits continue to reach others. Allaah subhanahu wa ta'ala says - *"We record that (deeds) which they have put forward and their traces (that which they have left behind)."* (Yaa-Seen 36:12)

Abu Hurayrah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: *"When a human being dies, all of his deeds are terminated except for three types: an ongoing sadaqah, a knowledge (of Islaam) from which others benefit, and a righteous child who makes du'aa for him."* (Muslim and others).

Abu Qataadah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: *"The best that a man can leave behind after his death are three things: a righteous child who makes du'aa for him, an ongoing sadaqah whose rewards continue to reach him, and a knowledge that continues to be implemented after him."* (Ibn Maajah, and others. Verified to be sahih by al-Mundhiri and al-Albaanee).

Abu Qataadah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: *"Among the good deeds that continue to benefit a believer after death are: a knowledge that he taught and disseminated, a righteous child who lived after him, a Qur'aan book that he left as inheritance a masjid that he built, a house that he built for the two wayfarers, a stream that he ran, or a charity that he gave from his wealth during his healthy lifetime so that it would reach him (in rewards) after death."* (Ibn Maajah and others. Verified hasan by al-Mundhiri and al-Albaanee). Commenting on this, al-Mundhiri rahimahullaah said: *"Some scholars say that the deeds of a human being end with his death. However, since he had caused these things (which are mentioned in the above hadiths), such as the earning of a child, disseminating the knowledge among those who take it from him, compiling a book that remains after him, or establishing a sadaqah, the rewards of these things continue to reach him as long as they continue to exist."* ('Awn al-Ma'bud, 8:86)

The reason that one continues to receive rewards for these deeds even though they are done by other people, is that he had initiated them during his life or contributed to them to a certain degree, whether little or large. Since Allaah does not neglect an atom's weight of deeds, He records these contribution for a person even after his death. Abu al-Wafaa' bin 'Aqeel said: *"The best explanation for this in my view is that a human being, by his efforts and good conduct, had earned friends, produced children, married spouses, done good, and was amiable to the people. Because of this, they invoke mercy for him*

and do good on his behalf. All of this is then a result of his own earning." (ar-Ruh, Ibn al-Qayyim, p.171). And Rasheed Ridaa rahimahullaah said, "Among the deeds that benefit a person, even though they are done by others, are those that count like his own because he caused them, such as his children's supplication for him, or their performing hajj, giving sadaqah, or fasting on his behalf - all of which having been established with authentic hadiths." (Tafseer al-Manaar 8:247)

## CHARITABLE DEEDS FROM A CHILD

### *One's child is from his earning*

The above hadiths indicate that a righteous child benefits his deceased parents with du'aa. It is further demonstrated here that he can benefit them by spending sadaqah, as well as doing other charitable deeds, on their behalf. 'Aishah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, "*Indeed the best that one eats is that which he earns. And his child is from his earning.*" (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and others. Verified sahih by al-Albaanee in Akhaam ul-Jana'iz, 217).

The reason for this is that a parent benefits himself by rearing his child according to the teachings of Islaam, and exerting a consistent effort to raise him as a righteous person. As the child grows into adulthood and does righteous deeds, his parents deserve a merit in that they helped him accomplish that and his good actions are therefore, at least in part, from his parents' earning. Sadaqah from a child 'Aishah rahimahullaah reported that a man asked Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, "My mother had a sudden death, and did not have chance to bequeath anything. Had she been able to do, I think that she would have given sadaqah. Would she or I get any rewards if I give sadaqah on her behalf?" He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam replied, "*Yes! So give sadaqah on her behalf*" (al-Bukhaaree, Muslim and others).

Ibn 'Abbas rahimahullaah reported that Sa'd bin 'Ubadah's mother died during his absence on a trip. He came to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and asked him, "O Allaah's Messenger! My mother has passed away during my absence. Would it be of benefit to her if I give sadaqah on her behalf?" He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam replied, "*Yes!*" He said, "Be my witness then that I give my fruitful garden as sadaqah on her behalf."

Abu Hurayrah rahimahullaah reported that a man asked the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam "My father has died, leaving behind a wealth; but he did not bequeath anything. Would it help him if I give sadaqah on his behalf?" He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam replied, "*Yes!*". (Muslim, Ahmad and others).

Abdullaah ibn 'Amr rahimahullaah reported that al-'Aas bin Waa'il as-Sahmee (his grandfather) bequeathed that one hundred slaves be freed on his behalf. His son, Hishaam freed fifty; and 'Amr wanted to free the other fifty, but decided to ask Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam first. He came to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and said, "O Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam! My father has bequeathed that one hundred slaves be freed on his behalf. Hishaam has freed fifty and fifty are left. Should I free them for him?" He replied: "*Had he been a Muslim, your freeing slaves, giving sadaqah, or performing Hajj on his behalf would all have reached*

*(in rewards) and benefited him.*" (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, al-Bayhaqi, verified hasan by al-Albaanee, in Akhaam ul-Jana'iz, 218). Commenting on these hadiths, ash-Shawkaani said: "This indicates that the rewards for a sadaqah from a child reach the parents after their death - even if they had not bequeathed it. These hadiths restrict the general meaning of Allaah's subhanahu wa ta'ala saying: "And that the human being can have nothing but what he has earned." (53:39) But there is no indication in these hadiths that the sadaqah except from one's own child, helps. Since it is established that a person's child is his own earning, it is not possible to claim that the meaning (of these hadiths) needs to be restricted. As for the sadaqah from other than one's child, it is apparent from general Qur'aanic texts that it does not help the deceased. This should then be maintained unless an additional evidence can be brought to restrict it." (Nayl al-Awtar 4:97)

### *Charitable Deeds from a Non-Child*

Some scholars, such as an-Nawawi, hold the opinion that all charitable deeds on behalf of a deceased person can benefit him, whether done by his children or other people. This is refuted by ash-Shawkaani's above strong argument. Similarly, al-Albaanee says in this regard: "Some scholars have treated a non-child as a child (in this matter). This analogy is invalid for various reasons:

1. It conflicts with the general Qur'aanic texts that make a person's good deeds a condition for entering Jannah. There is no doubt that a parent benefits himself by raising his child and nurturing him. Thus unlike other people, he deserves a reward for this.

2. The difference between the two cases inhibits such an analogy. As in 'Aishah's hadith, Allaah has made a child part of his parent's earnings - but not of other people's earnings. Al-'Izz bin 'Abdus-Salaam said: "If one does an act of obedience and dedicates its reward to a living or dead person, the reward will not reach that person. And if he starts an act of worship intending it on behalf of a dead person, it would not be as intended - except for things excluded in Islaam such as sadaqah, fasting and hajj." (al-Fatawa 24:2)

3. Had this analogy been possible it would have implied that it is recommended to dedicate rewards to the dead. In such a case, the Salaf would have done this, because they surely used to have more concern than us about doing good. But they did not do it. Ibn Taymiyyah said: "It was not the practice of the Salaf, when they performed a voluntary prayer, fasting, hajj or Qur'aanic recitation, to dedicate the rewards of that to the dead Muslims. Thus, one should not abandon the way of the Salaf, because it is better and more complete." (al-Ikhtiyaaraat ul-'Ilmiyah 54. Note that Ibn Taymiyyah has another opinion contradicting this one, which was advocated by his student, Ibn al-Qayyim in ar-Ruh. That opinion conflicts with Ibn Taymiyyah's known position of rejected qiyas in matters of worship; and it was refuted in a strong and sound manner by Rasheed Rida' in Tafseer ul-Manaar 8:254-270).

### *Claims for Ijmaa'*

It should be noted that there are claims for Ijmaa' (consensus) that a dead person benefits from the good deeds, including Qur'aanic recitation, done on his behalf by other people. Whereas these claims have been demonstrated to be invalid in the above discussion, they further fall under the following two considerations:

1. It has been demonstrated by staunch scholars, such as Ibn Hazm (in Usul ul-Ahkaam), ash-Shawkwaani (in Irshaad ul-Fuhul), and 'Abd ul-Wahhab Khallaaf (in Usul ul-Fiqh), that it is not possible to justify Ijmaa' for other than the most obvious matters in Islaam. Imaam Ahmed has indicated this in his famous refutation against those who claim Ijmaa'.

2. I have investigated many of the cases for which there have been claims of ijmaa' and found that there is an obvious difference of opinion concerning them. I (Sheikh al-Albaanee) even found (in some cases) that the opinion of the majority of scholars is contrary to the claimed ijmaa'!" (Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 219).

### *A Dangerous Belief*

The danger of holding a wrong belief in regard to this issue has been clarified and emphasized by al-Albaanee: "We do not doubt this wrong belief's evil effects upon one who adopts it. He would rely upon others for acquiring rewards and high ranks (in the hereafter), because he knows that the Muslims dedicate hundreds of good deeds everyday to all of the living and the dead Muslims, and he is one of them; that would then relieve him from having to work hard when others are striving on his behalf!... A more dangerous saying is that it is permissible to perform Hajj on behalf of others, even if there is no valid excuse preventing them from performing it by themselves. This causes many of the wealthy people to drop hajj or other obligations, giving themselves the excuse, "They will perform hajj on my behalf after my death!.. There are many other similar opinions that clearly have evil effects on the (Muslim) societies. It is imperative for the scholars who wish to reform (the societies) to reject such opinions, because they conflict with the texts, as well as the spirit of the Shari'ah.. As for the person who rejects the opinions described above, it is inconceivable that he would ever rely on other people in doing deeds and acquiring rewards. He realizes that only his own deeds can save him, and he is rewarded in accordance with what he himself earns. It is then incumbent that he strives to the utmost to leave behind him good traces which will result in good rewards for him even in the loneliness of his grave - instead of those imaginary good deeds." (Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 222-223).

## **FULFILLING THE DECEASED'S VOWS**

### *Fasting the Vowed Days*

Aa'ishah rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "*Whoever dies while he has a fasting to fulfill (as a vow), his wali' (kin/guardian) should fast for him.*" (al-Bukhaaree, Muslim and others).

Ibn Abbas rahimahullaah reported that a woman was travelling in the sea, and she vowed that if Allaah saved her she would fast for one month. Allaah saved her, but she died

before fulfilling her vow. Her daughter came to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and mentioned this to him. He asked *"Had she owed money as debt, wouldn't you have paid it on her behalf?"* She replied, "Yes". He said: *"Allaah's debt is more worthy of being fulfilled. So fulfill (the vow) for your mother."* (al-Bukhaaree, Muslim and others).

Sa'd bin 'Ubaadah reported that he told Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, "My mother has died and she had an unfulfilled vow". He instructed him: *"Fulfill it for her."* (al-Bukhaaree, Muslim and others).

These hadiths clearly indicate that it is recommended for a deceased's wali to fulfill his vows of fasting. Fasting the Missed Days of Ramadhaan Some scholars recommended, in addition to this, fasting the days of Ramadhaan that the deceased had missed. However, the correct position in this regard is expressed by Imaam Ahmad rahimahullaah, "One may not fast for a dead person except in the case of a vow." (al-Masaa'il, 96 by Abu Dawud).

This position is confirmed by the understanding of two of the sahabah: 'Aishah rahimahullaah and Ibn 'Abbas rahimahullaah. 'Amrah reported that her mother died without making up her missed days of Ramadhaan. She asked 'Aishah rahimahullaah, "Should I make that up on her behalf?". She replied: "No! Rather give sadaqah to the needy in the amount of a half saa' (of grains or food) for every missed day." (at-Tahawi, Ibn Hazm, verified to be sahih by al-Albaanee, Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 215). Sa'id ibn Jubayr rahimahullaah reported that Ibn 'Abbas rahimahullaah said: "If a man gets sick in Ramadhan and then dies without fasting, food should be given on his behalf - without a need to make up for the fasting. But if he had made a vow (to fast), his wali' should fast for him." (Abu Dawud, Ibn Hazm, verified sahih by al-Albaanee, Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 215).

Commenting on this, al-Albaanee says: "This understanding is adopted by the Mother of the Believers, as well as Ibn 'Abbas, the great scholar of the Ummah, and is further held by the Imam of Sunnah, Ahmad ibn Hanbal. It is the most moderate and appropriate opinion in this regard; and it fulfills all of the relevant hadiths, without rejected any of them, especially the first, which the Mother of the Believers rahimahullaah did not find applicable to the fasting of Ramadhan. She is the reporter of the hadith, and it is established that a narrator of a hadith is more knowledgeable about the meaning of what he reports, especially when his understanding agrees with the rules and foundations of the Shari'aah, as is the case here." (Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 215-216).

And Ibn ul-Qayyim rahimahullaah comments on Aishah's above hadith by saying: "One group (of scholars) generaln and enable other people to follow it clean and pure, as it was revealed izes this, and says that both the vowed and missed obligatory fasting should be made up for the deceased. Another group rejects this and says that no fasting may be made up for him. A third group is more specific in saying that only the vowed fasting, but not the obligatory fasting, should be for his brother, the appointed angel says, *"Amin; and the same be given to you."* (Muslim and others).

## GUARDING IN ALLAAH'S WAY

As has been previously demonstrated (p.66) Standing guard in the way of Allah

subhanahu wa ta'ala benefits a person after his death. Fudaalah ibn 'Ubayd and 'Uqbah ibn 'Aamir rahimahullaah reported that Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: *"The deeds of a dead person are sealed (at the time of death) except the one who stands guard in the way of Allaah; his good deeds continue to increase until the Day of Resurrection, and he is protected from the trial of the grave."* (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, and others, verified sahih by al-Albaanee in Sahih ul-Jami' no. 4562).

## REVIVING THE SUNNAH

Calling to a forgotten Sunnah or fighting an established bid'ah are amongs the most important charitable deeds that a person can do during his lifetime. They help revive Allaah's deen to Muhammad sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam. Jareer bin 'Abdullah rahimahullaah reported that they (the companions) were with Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam in the middle of the day when a group of people arrived (from outside al-Madinah) to see him. They were barefoot, (almost) naked, wearing only woolen lined cloth pieces or cloaks, armed with swords, wearing no izaars or anything else beside that. Most or all of them were from (the tribe of) Mudar. The face of Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam changed (reflecting sadness) when he noticed their extreme poverty. He went in (to his house), then he came out. He commanded Bilaal to give adhaan, prayed dhuhur, then mounted a small minbar. He gave a khutbah in which he praised and thanked Allaah, and then said: *"After this, (I say that) Allaah has revealed in His book: "O people! Revere your lord who has created you from one soul, and created from it its mate, and from these two spread forth multitudes of men and women; and fear Allaah through whom you demand [your mutual rights], and [revere the ties of] the wombs. Indeed Allaah is ever watchful over you." (4:1)." And He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam says: "O you who believe! Revere Allaah, and let every person look to what he has sent forth for the morrow; and revere Allaah. Allaah is well Aware of what you do! And be not like those who forget (disobey) Allaah, and He caused them to forget themselves. Those are the disobedient. "Not equal are the dwellers of the Fire and the dwellers of Jannah. It is the dwellers of Jannah that will be successful." (59:18-20). Spend (in Allaah's way) before you are prevented from spending. Let a man spend of his dinars, dirhams, clothes, measure of wheat, barley or dates." Until he sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, "Do not belittle any amount of sadaqah (charity). Safeguard yourselves from the Fire, even with half a date."* Observing the people's slow response, the Prophet's face showed signs of anger. But then, one man from the Ansar came with a parcel full (of money) of silver and gold, which he could hardly hold in his palm. He handed it to Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, while he was still on the minbar, and said, "O Allaah's Messenger! Take this in Allaah's way." He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam took it. Abu Bakr rahimahullaah then stood and gave something. Then 'Umar rahimahullaah gave something. Then the rest of the Muhajiroon and Ansaar gave. Thus people followed each other in giving charity: This would give a dinar, this a dirham, this such and this such - until there were two piles of food and clothes; and the face of Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam lighted up with a reddish-golden colour. So he said: *"He who initiates in Islaam a good way gets his reward for it, as well as rewards similar to those who follow him into it, without reducing any of their rewards. And he who initiates in Islaam an evil way gets his burden for it, as well as burdens similar to those who follow him into it, without reducing any of their burdens."* He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam then recited: "We record that which they have done, as well as their traces - and We have enumerated

everything in a clear book." (36:12). And he sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam divided what was collected among them (the poor people from Mudar). (Muslim, Ahmad and others, Ahkaam ul-Janaa'iz, 224-226).

## **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion, we can conclude that:

1. A person's deeds are sealed by his death. Nothing that takes place after that can affect his records.
2. The exception to the above rule is that anything, good or bad, that takes place after a person's death, which he contributed to its occurrence in any manner during his lifetime, will appear in his records in proportion with his contribution to it.