

Why deceased punished due to crying of family

How are we Obligated to Interpret the Qur'aan? Shaykh al-Albaanee

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question:

There are some who say that if a hadeeth contradicts an ayah in the Qur'aan, it should be rejected no matter what level of authenticity it has. Then they use as an example the hadeeth: "**Indeed the deceased person will be punished (in the grave) due to the crying of his family for him.**"¹ They use the statement of 'Aa'ishah in which she used Allaah's saying to refute this hadeeth:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى

[**And no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another.**]²

How do we respond to those who say this?

Answer: Rejecting this hadeeth falls under the issues related to rejecting the Sunnah by way of the Qur'aan. So this shows the deviation of this way of thinking.

As for the response to this hadeeth – and I am referring here particularly to those who adhere to the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah, then it is as follows:

First: From a hadeeth standpoint: There is no way to reject this hadeeth from a hadeeth standpoint due to two reasons:

1. It has been reported through an authentic chain of narration from Ibn 'Umar (radhi Allaahu anhu).
2. Ibn 'Umar (radhi Allaahu anhu) is not alone in reporting it, rather he was followed in that by 'Umar bin Al-Khattaab (radhi Allaahu anhu). Furthermore, he and his son are not alone in reporting it either, for they were also followed in that by Al-Mugheerah bin Shu'bah (radhi Allaahu anhu). This is what comes to my mind at this time since the reports of all three of these Companions can be found in the two Saheeh Collections.

And if a person were to conduct an exclusive research on this hadeeth, he would find other paths of narration for it. These three ahaadeeth all have authentic chains of narration so they cannot be rejected just based on the claim that they "contradict" the noble Qur'aan.

¹ Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer (1970)

² Soorah Faatir [35:18]

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Second: From a Tafseer standpoint: This is since the scholars have explained this hadeeth in two ways:

1. This hadeeth only applies to a deceased person who knew during the course of his life that his family would commit oppositions to the Religion after his death and did not advise them. Nor he did direct them to not cry over him since this crying would serve as a means for his being punished in the grave.

The usage of the word "the" when referring to the "deceased person" is not all encompassing and inclusive. Meaning: The hadeeth does not mean that every deceased person will be punished due to the crying of his family members. Rather, the word "the" is for a specific designation, meaning it refers to only those who do not advise others to not commit what opposes the Religion after his death. So this is the type of person who will be punished by the crying of his family over him.

As for the one who takes charge of advising his family and directing them with religious guidelines such as to not wail over him and to not commit the offenses that are done, particularly in this era, then such a person will not be punished. But if he does not direct and advise (his family), he will be punished.

This is the detailed breakdown that we are required to understand from the first explanation, in accordance to the interpretation of many well known and famous scholars such as An-Nawawee and others. So when we come to comprehend this detailed breakdown, it becomes clear that there is in fact no contradiction between this hadeeth and Allaah's statement:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

[And no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another.]³

A contradiction only becomes apparent if the word "the" in the word "the deceased person" is understood to be all-inclusive, meaning that it encompasses everyone who dies. This is where the hadeeth becomes obscure and contradicts the noble ayah in the Qur'aan. But if we comprehend the meaning of the hadeeth according to what was mentioned before, there would be no more contradictions or obscurities since we would understand that the one who is being punished (in the grave) is only like that because he failed to advise and direct his family members (before his death). This is the first manner in which this hadeeth has been interpreted in order to repel this so-called "contradiction."

2. A second interpretation has been mentioned by Shaykh-ul-Islam Ibn Taymeeyah, (may Allaah have mercy on him), in some of his writings. And it is that the punishment here does not refer to the punishment in the grave or the punishment in the Hereafter but rather, that it only refers to pain and sorrow. Meaning: When a deceased person hears the crying of his

³ Soorah Al-An'aam [6: 164]

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family for him, he will feel bad and sorrowful for their grief over him. This is what Shaykh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah said. If it is correct, it would eradicate the root of the misconception.

However, I say: Such an explanation goes against two facts, which is why we can only rely on the first explanation of this hadeeth:

The First Fact: The report from Al-Mugheerah bin Shu'abah (radhi Allaahu anhu) that I indicated previously has an addition to it that clarifies that the punishment here does not refer to just pain and sorrow, but rather that it refers to actual punishment, i.e. punishment in the Hellfire, unless Allaah forgives him. This is clearly stated in Allaah's saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْزُبُ أَنْ يُشْرِكَ بِهِ وَيَعْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

[Verily, Allaah does not forgive that partners be associated with Him (in worship), but He forgives what is less than that to whom He wills.]⁴

In the narration of Al-Mugheerah (radhi Allaahu anhu) it states: "**Indeed, the deceased person will be punished due to the crying of his family over him on the Day of Judgement.**" So this clearly states that the deceased will be punished due to his family crying over him on the Day of Judgement and not in his grave, which is what Ibn Taymeeyah explained as meaning pain and sorrow.

The Second Fact: When a person dies, he does not feel anything that goes on around him whether good or bad, as indicated by evidences in the Qur'aan and Sunnah, except in certain cases, which have been mentioned in some ahaadeeth either as a rule for every deceased person or for some only whom Allaah enables to hear some things that will cause them pain.

So firstly there is the hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree in his Saheeh from Anas bin Maalik (radhi Allaahu anhu) in which he narrated that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: "**Verily, when a servant (of Allaah) is placed in his grave, and his companions depart from him – at the point where he can still hear their footsteps – two angels come to him.**"⁵

This authentic hadeeth affirms a special type of hearing that a deceased person will have at the time he is buried and the people are walking away from him. Meaning: At the time that the two angels come to sit by him, his soul returns to his body and in this state of being, he is able to hear the footsteps (of his loved ones walking away).

Therefore, the hadeeth does not mean on the outset that this deceased person and all deceased people will have their souls returned to them and that they will remain with the ability to hear the footsteps of the people passing by the graves up until the day that they will be resurrected. No.

⁴ Soorah An-Nisaa [4:48]

⁵ Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer (1675)

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This is a specific circumstance and a special type of hearing on the part of the deceased since his soul has returned to him. So if we were to go by the interpretation of Ibn Taymeeyah at this point, we would be forced to expand the senses of the deceased person to include everything that goes on around him whether at the time he is being transferred to his grave before his burial or after he is placed in his grave – meaning that he can hear his living family members crying over him. This requires a textual proof, which is missing. This is first.

Secondly, some texts from the Qur'aan and the authentic Sunnah indicate that the deceased cannot hear. This is a huge topic and requires an in-depth discussion. However I will mention one hadeeth by which I will close the answer to this question. And it is the statement of the Prophet ﷺ in which he said: "**Verily, Allaah has angels that roam throughout earth who convey to me the greetings (of Salaam) on behalf of my Ummah.**"⁶

What is meant by "roam" is that they frequent gatherings. So every time a Muslim sends Salaat (praises) on the Prophet ﷺ, there is an assigned angel that conveys this greeting from that Muslim to the Prophet ﷺ. So if the deceased could hear, the one with the most right from those deceased to hear would be our Prophet ﷺ due to Allaah's favouring him and particularising him with special qualities and attributes over all of the prophets, messengers, and rest of mankind. So if anyone had the ability to hear, it would surely be the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. And furthermore, if the Prophet ﷺ were able to hear anything after his death, he would hear the Salaat (praises) of his Ummah) on him.

So here we come to understand the error, or the deviation, of those who ask assistance – not from the Prophet ﷺ – but rather from those less than him, whether messengers, prophets or righteous people. This is since if they were to ask assistance from the Messenger ﷺ, he would not hear them as is clearly stated in the Qur'aan:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ

"**And those whom you call besides Allaah are servants (of Allaah) just like you.**"⁷

And in His saying:

إِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءَكُمْ

"**If you supplicate to them, they cannot hear your supplication.**"⁸

So therefore, after they die, the deceased cannot hear unless there is some text that applies to a particular situation – as I mentioned before – such as the deceased hearing the footsteps. This concludes the answer to this question.

All Praise belongs to Allaah, may His peace and blessings be upon our final Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions and all those who follow his guidance.

⁶ Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer (2174)

⁷ Soorah Al-A'raaf [7:194]

⁸ Soorah Faatir [35:14]