147161 - Do the recording angels ever leave a person under any circumstances?

the question

When do the recording angels ever leave a person?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The scholars are unanimously agreed that people’s deeds are recorded against them, whether they do them in decent places or in disrespected places like toilets, whether they do them in obedience to Allah or in disobedience and sin. Everything that a person does during his lifetime, he will find it on the Day of Resurrection recorded in the book of his deeds, whether it is small or great, important or insignificant. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the Book (one’s Record) will be placed (in the right hand for a believer in the Oneness of Allah, and in the left hand for a disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah), and you will see the Mujrimoon (criminals, polytheists, sinners, etc.), fearful of that which is (recorded) therein. They will say: ‘Woe to us! What sort of Book is this that leaves neither a small thing nor a big thing, but has recorded it with numbers!’ And they will find all that they did, placed before them, and your Lord treats no one with injustice”

[al-Kahf 18:49].

Secondly:

The scholars differed as to whether the angels who are appointed to record people’s deeds may leave the person in some places or in some situations, or not. There are three opinions:

1. The first opinion is that the angels who are appointed to write down deeds never leave the person under any circumstances whatsoever.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Are these two – i.e., the two angels – always with the individual? Yes, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it)” [Qaaf 50:18]. And it was suggested that they do leave him if he enters the washroom, or when he is having intercourse. If that is proven to be soundly narrated from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), all well and good, but if there is no sound report to that effect, then the verse “there is a watcher by him ready (to record it)” [Qaaf 50:18] is general in meaning. End quote.

2. The second opinion is that the angels leave a person in some cases: in the toilet and when he is having intercourse. Some scholars also added: when he is doing ghusl (full ablution).

Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The recording angels do not leave us, except when we go to the toilet, have intercourse, or do ghusl, as it says in the hadith. End quote.

Al-Fataawa al-Hadeethiyyah (p. 47)

As-Safaareeni (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

They do not leave the person under any circumstances. It was said: In fact they leave him when he goes to the toilet. Al-Hasan said: The angels keep away from a person in two cases: When he is defecating and when he is having intercourse. The fact that they leave the accountable person at those times does not mean that they do not write down what he does or says at those moments, such as beliefs in the heart; Allah gives them signs for that. End quote.

Lawaami‘ al-Anwaar al-Bahiyyah (1/448)

They quoted a number of things as evidence for that:

-1-

it was narrated from Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“Beware of nakedness, for there are with you those who never leave you except when you defecate or when a man is intimate with his wife; so feel shy of them and honour them.

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (no. 2800)

But this hadith is da‘eef. At-Tirmidhi said after quoting it with its isnaad: This is a ghareeb hadith. End quote. It was also classed as da‘eef by al-Albaani in as-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (no. 2300)

Badr ad-Deen al-‘Ayni (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If it is said: It was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that the noble recording angels never leave a person except when he goes to the toilet or has intercourse, my response is: This is a da‘eef hadith that cannot be quoted as evidence. End quote.

Sharh Sunan Abi Dawood (2/397)

-2-

It was narrated by ‘Abd ar-Razzaaq in al-Musannaf (1/285) from Ibn Jurayj from a companion of his that Mujaahid said:

When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was at al-Hudaybiyah, behind a cloth that covered him, the wind blew and lifted the cloth, and he saw a man who was doing ghusl naked in the open. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) got angry and said: “O people! Fear Allah and feel shy before the noble ones (the angels), for the angels never leave you except at one of three times: when a man is having intercourse with his wife, when he goes to the toilet-” – the narrator said: and I forgot the third one.

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “When one of you does ghusl, let

him try to conceal himself by doing ghusl facing a wall, or beside a camel, or let his brother screen him.”

But this hadith is mursal and its isnaad includes a narrator who is unknown, so it cannot be quoted as evidence because it is da‘eef.

-3-

It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah forbids you to be naked, so feel shy before the noble recording angels who never leave you except when you go to the toilet, when you are junub (in a state of major impurity following sexual activity) and when you are doing ghusl. If one of you does ghusl naked, let him screen himself with a garment or a wall.

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated by Ibraaheem al-Harbi, and by Ibn Battah from the hadith of Ibn ‘Umar. That is saheeh from the mursal reports of Mujaahid.

End quote.

Sharh al-‘Umdah (1/401)

But I was not able to find the isnaad of the hadith going back to Ibn ‘Abbaas. It is well-known that it is from the hadith of Ibn ‘Umar, as mentioned above in its isnaad as given by at-Tirmidhi, were it is stated that it is da‘eef.

The third view is that what is proven in the Qur’an and Sunnah, which is that each person has two angels appointed to him who watch everything he does and write down his deeds, and they record everything that he does, whether it is a good deed or a sin, and whether it is in a decent place or an ignoble place.

But there is nothing in the Qur'an or Sunnah that explains how this counting and recording is done, and whether the angels have to enter every place a person enters and stay with him to record the details of every act he does, or whether Allah has created in them the ability to know what he does and write it down without any need to accompany the person in every place he enters.

What is appropriate in this case is not to speak about such matters of the unseen without evidence from the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of His Messenger, to attribute knowledge thereof to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and to believe that everything that a person does or says will be recorded against him. This is sufficient for any person with regard to this matter, and this is what will benefit him and help him. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it)"

[Qaaf 50:18]

"This Our Record speaks about you with truth. Verily, We were recording what you used to do (i.e. Our angels used to record your deeds)"

[al-Jaathiyah 45:29].

As-Suyooti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the question about whether the recording angels enter the toilet, the answer is that I do not know, and the fact that we do not know that is not an aspersion upon our religion. All that we can say is that if they are instructed to enter it, they will enter it, and if Allah honoured them by sparing them that and enabled them to know what happens in that place, so that they can write it down, then they do what they are instructed to do.

End quote. Al-Habaa'ik fi Akhbaar al-Malaa'ik (p. 90).

Perhaps the third view is the one that is most likely to be correct, and is more appropriate in terms of etiquette with regard to such matters, because it adheres to what is mentioned in the texts and

does not go beyond that without any strong evidence or sound proof.

And Allah knows best.