162787 - Serious consequences of falling short in raising children

the question

My mother is not compassionate or understanding. Since we were small, she has treated us harshly and has never shown us an ounce of compassion, and we have grown up in this atmosphere. She has never supported me as a girl and has never taught me how to interact with suitors or with people in a feminine way. She never taught me many things pertaining to the life of a girl, and she has fallen short with us in many matters. Will Allah hold her accountable for that, as He will hold a son accountable for his defiance towards his mother and not being kind to her? I hope that you will reply.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Just as the parents have rights over their children, so too the children have rights over their parents.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded”

[at-Tahreem 66:6].

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of his household and is responsible for his flock. A woman is the shepherd of her husband’s household and is responsible for her flock…” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (893) and Muslim (1829).

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no person whom Allah puts in charge of others, and when he dies he is insincere to his subjects, but Allah will forbid Paradise to him.” Narrated by Muslim (142).

Therefore children have rights over their parents to which the parents must pay attention. These rights are many and include the following:

1. A man must choose a good wife for himself and a woman must choose a good husband for herself. A man should choose a woman who will be a good mother for his children in the future, and a woman should choose a man who will be a good father to her children.

2. Giving the child a good name, taking care of him, and fulfilling his basic needs of food, drink, clothing and accommodation, according to what one can afford, without falling short or being extravagant.

3. One of the most important rights that children have over their parents is that they should give them a good upbringing and take care of them, paying attention to their manners and behaviour, and their practice of their religion in a manner that is pleasing to Allah, and following up with them regarding worldly matters in such a way that will help them to live a dignified and righteous life.

Many parents fall short with regard to this duty that they owe to their children, then they suffer the consequences of their falling short, which is defiant disobedience from their children, and the children’s mistreatment of them.

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

Whoever neglects to teach his child that which will benefit him, and leaves him without any guidance, has wronged him gravely. Most children’s deviance is because of their parents and the parents’ neglect and failure to teach them the obligatory religious duties and the sunnah of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so they neglected them when they were small.…

How many are the parents who were the cause of their children’s misfortune and suffering in this

world and the hereafter, because of their negligence and failure to discipline the child, and their encouraging and helping him to pursue his whims and desires. By doing that, they think that they are being kind to the child, at the time when they are disgracing him, and they think that they are showing mercy to him at the time when they are wronging him. Thus the child will be of no benefit to his parent, and the parent is the cause of the child's misfortune and of his missing out on opportunities for success in this world and the hereafter…

If you think of the causes of children's misguidance and corruption, you will see that it is mostly the fault of the parents.

End quote from Tuhfat al-Mawdood bi Ahkaam al-Mawlood (p. 229, 242).

It should be noted that if the father and mother fall short in raising their child, that does not mean that the child should fall short in his duties towards his parents and mistreat them; rather he has to treat them kindly and forgive any mistreatment on their part towards him. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"and to parents, good treatment"

[al-Isra' 17:23]

"But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness"

[Luqmaan 31:15].

For more information on the rights of children over their parents, please see question no. 20064.

And Allah knows best.