260437 - If a person benefits others, is he compelled to do that, because it is Allah Who grants benefits?

the question

Can a person benefit or harm another? How can we reconcile between that and the fact that it is Allah Who is the Giver of benefits and the Causer of harm? Does the fact that it is Allah Who is the Giver of benefits and the Causer of harm lead us to believe in the view of the Jabris, who say that man is compelled to help others, financially or otherwise, [and has no choice]? I hope that you will respond to all my questions, because I am very confused and the matter has reached the point of intrusive thoughts [waswas].

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Undoubtedly one of the basic principles of the Muslim’s belief is that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is the Creator of all creation and the Owner of Sovereignty; He alone is the Creator and Controller. He has no partner in His dominion, no rival in His might and power, and no equal, may He be Glorified and Exalted.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Say, “O Allah , Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent

You cause the night to enter the day, and You cause the day to enter the night; and You bring the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living. And You give provision to whom

You will without account” } [Al ‘Imran 3:26-27].

Allah alone, may He be Glorified and Exalted, has the power to benefit and harm, to the exclusion of all others. This is one of the signs of His greatness and of His Lordship and Oneness: that He alone has the power to harm and benefit, to give and withhold, to lower and raise.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Say, “Do you worship besides Allah that which holds for you no [power of] harm or benefit while it is Allah who is the Hearing, the Knowing?”} [Al-Ma’idah 5:76]

{And they worship other than Allah that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say, “These are our intercessors with Allah.” Say, “Do you inform Allah of something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?” Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him} [Yunus 10:18]

{Say, “Who is Lord of the heavens and earth?” Say, “Allah.” Say, “Have you then taken besides Him allies not possessing [even] for themselves any benefit or any harm?” Say, “Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Or is darkness equivalent to light? Or have they attributed to Allah partners who created like His creation so that the creation [of each] seemed similar to them?” Say, “Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Prevailing”} [Ar-Ra`d 13:16].

Allah has told His slaves that true monotheism is to worship Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, the Owner of Sovereignty, in Whose hand is the dominion over all things, and that worshipping anyone or anything other than Him, that has no power to cause harm or bring benefit, is grievous wrongdoing.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And [commanded], ‘Direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth, and never be of those who associate others with Allah

And do not invoke besides Allah that which neither benefits you nor harms you, for if you did, then

indeed you would be of the wrongdoers.’”} [Yunus 10:105-106].

And Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.

He invokes instead of Allah that which neither harms him nor benefits him. That is what is the extreme error.

He invokes one whose harm is closer than his benefit - how wretched the protector and how wretched the associate} [Al-Hajj 22:11-13].

For more information about the divine names al-Daarr (the Causer of harm) and al-Naafi’ (the Bringer of benefits), please see the answer to question no. 84270.

Secondly:

Once it becomes clear that Allah alone, may He be glorified and Exalted, is the One Who has the power to harm and benefit, to give and withhold, this does not mean that a person does not have the ability to benefit or harm other humans by means of what Allah has granted to him of power and ability. By the same token, the fact that Allah, may He be Exalted, is the Giver and the Withholder does not mean that a person cannot give to others or withhold from them, and so on and so forth. For Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted is the Giver in reality, because He is the Creator of all things. A person may give to someone else what he owns and what it is possible for one like him to give, in a real sense, but the attribution of these deeds differ, for it is Allah Who is the Giver by way of creation and decree, and the person is the giver by way of the actions he does and.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Say: I have no power either to harm or benefit myself, except as Allah wills. For every nation

there is an appointed time; when their appointed time comes, they will not be able to delay it for a single moment or bring it forward} [Yunus 10:49].

Similarly, just as a person has free will in a real sense, and he does what he does on the basis of his free will and choice, even though all his deeds occur by the creation and control of Allah and His running of the affairs of His creation, no one goes beyond His power and authority, and whatever any individual wills is within the framework of Allah's power and authority, and happens after He, may He be glorified, wills that it should happen.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Indeed, this is a reminder, so he who wills may take to his Lord a way

And you do not will except that Allah wills. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise} [Al-Insan 76:29-30].

This is what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught to `Abdullah ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him): that the people's ability to give and withhold, and to harm and benefit, lies within the bounds of what creatures like them can do, but it is subject to the control, decree and plan of Allah.

[The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to Ibn `Abbas:] "O boy, I shall teach you some words. Be mindful Allah and He will take care of you. Be mindful of Allah and He will protect you. If you ask then ask of Allah, and if you seek help then seek help from Allah. Know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you in some way, they would not benefit you except in something that Allah has decreed for you, and if they were to gather together to harm you in some way, they would not harm you except in something that Allah has decreed for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried."

At-Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This is a sound, authentic (sahih hasan) hadith.

Ibn Rajab said, regarding this isnad of at-Tirmidhi: It is sound and good (hasan jayyid). End quote from *Jami` al-`Ulum wal-Hikam*, 1/483; classed as authentic (sahih) by al-Albani in *Sahih at-*

Tirmidhi.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not say: If they were to gather together to benefit you with something, they would not benefit you; rather he said: “they would not benefit you except in something that Allah has decreed for you.”

People undoubtedly benefit one another, help one another and aid one another, but all of that is something that Allah has already decreed for a person, for all favours come first and foremost from Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted; it is He Who prompts a person to benefit you, treat you kindly and relieve your distress.

The converse is also true: if they were to gather together to harm you with something, they would not harm you except with something that Allah has already decreed should befall you.

Believing in this inevitably dictates that a person should place all his hope in his Lord and put his trust in Him, and not pay any attention to anyone else, because he knows that even if all of creation were to come together to harm him with something, they would not harm him except with something that Allah has already decreed for him. Once a person believes that, he will put all his hope in Allah and turn to Him, and will not worry about people, even if they come together against him.

End quote from *Sharh Riyad as-Salihin* (1/492).

See also the answers to questions no. 34898 and 96978.

Thirdly:

The individual has free will and choice, on the basis of which he decides to act or refrain, to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey, and on that basis he will be brought to account and will be rewarded or punished. Even though Allah, may He be Glorified, already knows what man will do, what he will choose and what his fate will be, He does not compel him to commit evil or to choose

disbelief; rather He has made the path clear to him, and has sent Messengers to him and has sent down the Books to him, and has shown him the right path. Then whoever is guided is only guided for the benefit of his own soul, and whoever follows the path of doom has no one to blame but himself.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And say, “The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve.”} [Al-Kahf 18:29]

{Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful} [Al-Insan 76:3]

{So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it

And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it} [Az-Zalzalah 99:7-8]

{And they will be called, “This is Paradise, which you have been made to inherit for what you used to do.” } [Al-A`raf 7:43]

{ And taste the punishment of eternity for what you used to do. } [As-Sajdah 32:14].

Allah, may He be Glorified, has stated that if a person believes and does righteous deeds, by his own choice and free will, he will enter Paradise; but if he disbelieves and does bad deeds by his own choice and free will, he will enter Hell.

As citing the divine decree to justify one’s actions is invalid and goes against common sense, no nation accepted that argument, nor is it the view of any people of reason who are consistent in their thinking. That argument will not serve the interests of anyone, whether in this world or the hereafter.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 1/167.

Shaykh as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

No rational person will accept citing the divine decree to justify his actions, and even if he got away with this argument on one occasion, he will not be able to base his life on that.

From an Islamic point of view, Allah, may He be Exalted, has refuted the argument of those who cite the divine decree to justify their actions, and He has only mentioned this as an argument given by the polytheists who disbelieve in His Messengers.

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di* (1/763).

See also the answer to question no. 96978.

Our advice to the questioner is to pay no attention to these intrusive thoughts (waswas), because when intrusive thoughts take hold, they will spoil all a person’s affairs and will undermine both his religious and worldly interests. Let him beware of splitting hairs with regard to arguments that are pointless and in which there is no benefit to be gained. Let him remember Allah, may He be Exalted, a great deal, and uphold his purity and prayer, for that is a great means of protection against the schemes and whispers of the Shaytan.

And Allah knows best.