294681 - Does Receiving Payment to Lead Tarawih Decrease Rewards

the question

This year, I led the worshippers in the Tarawih prayers, and as the last days of the blessed month approached, one of the brothers came to me and placed 200 dinars in my hand. I thought to myself: If it comes without coveting it, then take it. What is the ruling on taking this money and spending it? I know that you say there is no harm in taking a fee for leading the prayers, but what I want to know is: Does taking this money decrease the reward for leading the Tarawih prayers? The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Nothing of this world that a servant receives will decrease his rank with Allah, even if it is something valuable." Does this Hadith apply to this case or not? And do you advise me to take this money and spend it, or should I give it in charity?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The ruling on an Imam receiving money for leading Tarawih prayers

There is no harm in the Imam accepting what is given to him, provided he does not fear obligation from the giver, and it does not decrease his reward.

Ibn Qudamah said in "Al-Mughni" (2/9): "It has been narrated from him [i.e., Ahmad] that he said: 'Do not pray behind someone who does not pay Zakat, and he said: Do not pray behind someone who stipulates conditions, but there is no harm if they give to him without stipulation." End quote.

Al-Buhuti said in "Kashshaf Al-Qina`" (1/475): "(If something is given to him) i.e., the Imam (without stipulation, then there is no harm, explicitly [i.e., Imam Ahmad stated this]). And likewise, if he is given from the public treasury or from a Waqf (endowment)." End quote.

This is despite the fact that the Hanbalis prohibit taking a fee for leading prayers, but they do not

consider a gift without stipulation as a fee.

Sheikh `Abdul `Aziz Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked: "What is the ruling on an Imam setting a fee for his prayers with the people, especially if he goes to distant areas to lead them in Tarawih?"

He replied: "Setting a specific amount should not be done, and a group of the Salaf disliked it, so if they help (gift) him with something unspecified, there is no harm in that.

As for the prayer, it is valid, and there is no problem with it - In sha Allah - even if they set a specific amount to help him; because the need may call for that.

However, it is preferable not to do that, and that the assistance be without stipulation, this is better and safer as stated by a group of the Salaf (may Allah have mercy on them)." End quote.

Clarification of the Hadith: A servant does not acquire anything from this world except that it decreases his degrees with Allah...

As for the Hadith: "A servant does not acquire anything from this world except that it decreases his degrees with Allah; even if it was given to him generously," the correct view is that it is from the saying of Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). It is established from him, and it is not authentic from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as his saying. Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said in "Sahih At-Targhib wat-Tarhib": "It was narrated by Ibn Abi Ad-Dunya, and its chain is good, and it was narrated from 'Aishah marfu`an (attributed to the Prophet), and the Mawquf (stopped at the Companion) is more authentic." End quote.

Moreover, this does not only apply to fees or gifts, but to all enjoyment of this world, and it is interpreted as referring to those who acquire from the world without right, or those who do not give thanks for what they have taken from it.

Ibn Al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"The more a person ascends in this world, the more his rank decreases in the Hereafter. Ibn `Umar

(may Allah be pleased with him) explicitly stated this, saying: By Allah, no one acquires anything from this world except that it decreases his degrees with Allah, even if it was given to him generously.

The fortunate one is he who is content with sufficiency, for time is too noble to be wasted in pursuit of worldly gains, except for one who is pious in his earning, self-sufficient from greed, aiming to help the people of goodness, and giving charity to the needy, for the earning of such a person is better than his idleness.

As for the ascent that is caused by associating with rulers, it is unlikely that one's religion will remain safe with it, and even if it appears safe outwardly, the outcome is dangerous." End quote from "Sayd Al-Khatir" (298).

Taking a fee for acts of obedience that benefit others, such as teaching knowledge and the Quran, does not prevent the attainment of reward, and perhaps it does not decrease his reward, if his intention is good, his purpose is sincere, and he only takes it to be able to devote himself to benefiting and teaching. And his aim from this work is not merely worldly gain and accumulating wealth.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The essence of this matter is that it is recommended to take in order to perform Hajj, not to perform Hajj in order to take.

This applies to all provisions taken for a righteous deed; so whoever seeks provision to learn, to teach, or to strive in Jihad, then it is good. As it was reported from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) that he said: The example of those who go out to fight from my Ummah and take their wages is like Umm Musa: she breastfeeds her son and takes her wage; he likened them to those who perform the act out of desire for it, like Umm Musa's desire to breastfeed; unlike a wet nurse who is hired for breastfeeding if she is a stranger.

As for those who engage in the appearance of a righteous deed in order to be provided for, this is from the actions of the world.

There is a difference between one whose goal is the religion, and the world is a means, and one whose goal is the world, and the religion is a means. And it is likely that such a person will have no share in the Hereafter, as indicated by texts that are not the subject here." End quote from "Majmu` Al-Fatawa" (26/20).

The Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta was asked: What is the ruling on taking a fee for teaching the Quran to young children? And if you permit it, does the teacher still receive a reward from Allah after taking the monthly fee?

They replied: "Learning and teaching the Quran is one of the best ways to draw closer to Allah, Exalted be He, if the intention is correct, and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged learning and teaching the Quran by saying: 'The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it.'

Taking a fee by Quran teachers for teaching does not contradict the attainment of reward and merit from Allah, Exalted be He, if the intention is pure.

`Abdul `Aziz ibn `Abdullah Ibn Baz... `Abdul `Aziz Al Al-Sheikh... `Abdullah ibn Ghudayan... Saleh Al-Fawzan... Bakr Abu Zaid" End quote from "Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da'imah" (15/99).

And Allah knows best.