4631 - Maintaining Ties of Kinship in Islam

the question

What is the meaning of Silat Ar-Rahm (upholding the ties of kinship)?

Summary of answer

Islam calls for the upholding of the ties of kinship because of the great effect that this has on achieving social cohesion and perpetuating cooperation and love among the Muslims.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Significance of Kinship in Islam

Islam calls for the upholding of the ties of kinship because of the great effect that this has on achieving social cohesion and perpetuating cooperation and love among the Muslims. Upholding the ties of kinship is a duty because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“… and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)…” [An-Nisa’ 4:1]

“And give to the kindred his due and to the miskeen (poor)…” [Al-Isra’ 17:26]

Allah has warned us against cutting the ties of kinship (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those who break the Covenant of Allah, after its ratification, and sever that which Allah has commanded to be joined (i.e., they sever the bond of kinship and are not good to their relatives), and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse (i.e., they will be far away from Allah’s Mercy); And for them is the unhappy (evil) home (i.e., Hell).” [Ar-Ra`d 13:25]

Rewards and punishments related to kinship

What punishment could be worse than the curse and the evil home that awaits those who sever the ties of kinship? They deny themselves the reward for upholding the ties of kinship in the Hereafter, in addition to denying themselves much good in this world, which is a long life and ample provision. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever would like his provision to be increased and his life to be extended, should uphold the ties of kinship.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 5986 and Muslim, 2557)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘Allah created the universe, and when He had finished, kinship (Ar-Rahm) stood up and said, “This is the standing up of one who seeks Your protection from being cut off.” Allah said, “Yes, would it please you if I were to take care of those who take care of you and cut off those who cut you off?” It said, “Of course.” Allah said, “Then your prayer in granted.”’” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Recite, if you wish (interpretation of the meaning): ‘Would you then, if you were given the authority, do mischief in the land, and sever your ties of kinship? Such are they whom Allah has cursed, so that He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.’ [Muhammad 47:22-23].” (Sahih Muslim bi Sharh An-Nawawi, 16/112)

Who is the one who upholds the ties of kinship?

Once we understand this, we need to ask: who is the one who upholds the ties of kinship ? This was explained by the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said: “The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him is not truly upholding the ties of kinship . The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 5645).

If the relationship is merely one of returning favours and giving like in return for like, and not taking the initiative, then this is not upholding the ties of kinship, it is only responding in kind.

Some people follow the principle of giving a gift in return for a gift, and visiting in return for a visit,

so if someone does not give them a gift, they do not give him a gift, and if he does not visit them, they do not visit him. This is not what is meant by upholding the ties of kinship at all, and this is not what is required by Islam. This is merely responding in kind, it is not the higher degree which Islam urges us to reach.

A man said to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), “I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me. I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me.” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot dust in their mouths. Allah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that.” (Reported by Muslim with commentary by An-Nawawi, 16/115)

Who could bear to put up with hot dust? We seek refuge with Allah from cutting off the ties of kinship.

And Allah knows best.