482976 - Benefiting from a Father’s Dubious Earnings

the question

There is someone whose father works in a government department for eight hours a day, but he does not do the full eight hours; he leaves early three or more hours before the work day ends. What is the ruling on his wife and children benefiting from the salary of this father, and is the food they eat regarded as haram?

Summary of answer

It is permissible for someone other than the one who acquired it to benefit from wealth that is unlawful because of the way in which it was acquired, but if he is able to look after himself and refrain from taking it, that is better.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

We cannot be certain that the salary your father receives is unlawful (haram) wealth, because in some departments the custom is that the actual time of work is five hours or thereabouts, even though what is officially stated is eight hours, and this is done with the knowledge of the upper management. Hence this comes under the heading of something that is customarily overlooked, and it has no impact on the salary that your father receives.

II.

If your father’s leaving before the end of regular work hours is by way of trickery, and he is not doing what is required of him, then the money he receives in return for those hours when he left the workplace and did not work is haram, because Allah, may He be Exalted, has enjoined fulfilling

contracts and rendering back trusts. So he should be gently advised and reminded that haram wealth will have bad consequences, and it is one of the things that prevent divine mercy and response to supplications. At the same time, you should pray for him and ask Allah to guide him to the right way in this matter and in all his affairs.

III.

Unlawful (haram) wealth is of two types:

- That which is unlawful in and of itself, such as wealth that has been stolen or taken by force and the like. This is prohibited for the one who stole it or took it by force, and for others who are aware of its source.
- That which is unlawful because of the way in which it is acquired, such as interest, bribes, cheating when buying and selling, and wages received when one has not spent work hours at work – as in the case described in the question. This type is unlawful for the one who acquires it only, as the scholars have determined.

It was soundly narrated from `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (may Allah be pleased with him) that a man came to him and said: I have a neighbour who consumes riba (usury, interest) and keeps inviting me for meals. He said: The enjoyment is yours and the sin is on him. Narrated by `Abd ar-Razzaq in his *Musannaf*, 13675; classed as authentic (sahih) by Shaykh Adam al-Ethiopi in *Sharh Sahih al-Imam Muslim*, 27/729.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Some of the scholars said: Whatever is unlawful because of the way in which it is acquired, the sin of it is only on the one who acquired it, not on the one who takes it from him in a permissible manner, in contrast to that which is unlawful in and of itself, such as alcohol and that which has been seized by force, and so on.

This view is sound and makes sense, based on the fact that the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) bought food for his family from a Jewish man, and he ate from the sheep that was given to him by the Jewish woman in Khaybar, and he accepted the invitation of the Jewish man, and it is well known that most of the Jews accept riba and consume unlawful earnings. And

perhaps this view is strengthened by the Prophet's words about the meat that was given in charity to Barirah: "It is charity for her and a gift from her to us."

End quote from *Al-Qawl al-Mufid `ala Kitab at-Tawhid*, 3/112.

And he [Ibn `Uthaymin] was asked about a man who found out that the source of his father's wealth was unlawful; can he eat his father's food? If he does not eat his father's food, is that regarded as disobedience towards parents?

He replied: Regarding the man who found out that his father's wealth comes from unlawful sources, if the wealth is unlawful in and of itself, meaning that he knows that his father stole this wealth from someone, then it is not permissible for him to eat his food. If you know that your father stole this sheep and slaughtered it, then do not eat and do not accept his invitation.

But if it is unlawful because of the way in which it was acquired, meaning that he deals in riba or cheats (in business) and so on, then you may eat, and the sin is on him.

End quote from *Liqa' al-Bab al-Maftuh*, 1888/14.

Based on the above:

If it so happens that your father is breaking the rules at work and is not doing what is required of him, then – despite that – it is permissible for you to benefit from your father's salary and eat his food, so long as you are dependent on him and he is spending on your maintenance.

But whoever Allah blesses with some income and he is able to look after himself, then Allah has given him a way out, but if you advise your father, gently and kindly, that is good, and perhaps Allah will make him mend his ways and grant him earnings from a lawful source, and cause him to repent.

And Allah knows best.