83829 - Ruling on ‘ataaqah or reading Qur’aan for the dead

the question

My father has died, and he was sick for the last four years of his life. He died a month ago at the age of 52. He was sick with heart disease and could not move or walk; he also had diabetes and high blood pressure. I would like to know whether there is anything called ataaqah al-salaah for him. Some of the Shaykhs say that this means getting Shaykhs to read Qur’aan for him, but some people disagree. I would like an answer to this question. Aren’t his sins expiated because of his suffering during the last few years of his life, or should ‘ataaqah salaah be offered for him as they say?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Reading Qur’aan is a purely physical act of worship, and it is not permissible to accept payment for reading Qur’aan for the deceased, or to give payment to one who reads, and there is no reward in that case, and the one who takes payment and the one who gives it are both sinning.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: It is not correct to hire someone to read Qur’aan and give the reward for that to the deceased, because that has not been narrated from any of the imams. The scholars said: The one who reads for money will have no reward, so what does he have to give to the deceased? End quote.

The basic principle concerning that is that acts of worship are forbidden; no act of worship should be done unless there is shar’i evidence to show that it is prescribed. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And obey Allaah and the Messenger”

[al-Maa’idah 5:92]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever does anything that is not in accordance with this matter of ours will have it rejected.” According to another report: “Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected.” This action – hiring someone to read Qur’aan for the dead – is something that it is not known that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or any of his companions did it, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the worst of matters are those which are innovated. All goodness is in following that which the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) brought, with the proper intention. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whosoever submits his face (himself) to Allaah, while he is a Muhsin (good-doer, i.e. performs good deeds totally for Allaah’s sake without any show-off or to gain praise or fame and does them in accordance with the Sunnah of Allaah’s Messenger Muhammad), then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold”

[Luqmaan 31:22]

“Yes, but whoever submits his face (himself) to Allaah (i.e. follows Allaah’s religion of Islamic Monotheism) and he is a Muhsin then his reward is with his Lord (Allaah), on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”

[al-Baqarah 2:112]

All evil lies in going against that which was brought by the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and directing one’s intention in any deed to someone or something other than Allaah.

End quote from Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah.

There is no basis for this ‘ataaqah in sharee’ah; it is a reprehensible innovation that was not done by the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he did not tell us to do it, and

none of his companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) did it either. Whatever is like that, no believer should do it.

Secondly:

What is prescribed is to say du'aa' for the deceased, and to give charity on his behalf, as Muslim (1631) narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "When a man dies, all his good deeds come to an end except three: ongoing charity (sadaqah jaariyah), beneficial knowledge, or a righteous son who will pray for him."

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in Sharh Muslim: This indicates that the reward for du'aa' will reach the deceased, as will that of charity. As for reading Qur'aan and giving the reward for that to the deceased, offering prayers on his behalf, etc, the view of al-Shaafa'i and the majority of scholars is that this does not reach the deceased. End quote.

See also question no. 12652.

So say a great deal of du'aa' for your father, and give whatever you can in charity on his behalf; if he did not do Hajj or 'Umrah and you can do Hajj or 'Umrah on his behalf, then do that. This is what will benefit him, by Allaah's leave.

Another way of honouring one's deceased father is to honour his friends and uphold ties of kinship.

Allaah makes sickness an expiation for His believing slave, and it may also be a means of raising his status, if he is patient and seeks reward thereby. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "No hardship, distress, worry or grief befalls a Muslim, not even a thorn that pricks him, but Allaah will expiate some of his sins thereby." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5642) and Muslim (2573).

We ask Allaah to have mercy on the deceased Muslims.

And Allaah knows best.