200103 - The life of the righteous in their graves is the life of al-barzakh and no one knows how it really is except Allah

the question

In Sunan at-Tirmidhi (2899) it is narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: One of the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) set up his tent on a grave, and he did not realize that it was a grave. Then to his surprise he heard a man inside it reciting Soorat al-Mulk to the end of the soorah. He went to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: O Messenger of Allah, I set up my tent on a grave, and I did not realize that it was a grave, and then to my surprise I heard someone inside it reciting Soorat al-Mulk to the end of the soorah. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “It is the protector, it is the saver, it will save him from the punishment of the grave.” Doesn’t this mean that the righteous close friends of Allah are alive in their graves and can recite verses of the Qur’an and other things that we could hear and perhaps they can hear what we say? I am confused because this is what the Sufis and Bareilawis do to deceive the people and make them believe that the dead can hear and help them.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It was narrated by at-Tirmidhi (2890), al-Bayhaqi in ash-Shu‘ab (2280); at-Tabaraani in al-Mu‘jam al-Kabeer (12801), and Abu Nu‘aym in al-Hilyah (3/81) via Yahya ibn ‘Amr ibn Maalik an-Nukri, from his father, from Abu’l-Jawza’, from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him), that he said: One of the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) set up his tent on a grave, and he did not realize that it was a grave. Then to his surprise he heard a man inside it reciting Soorat al-Mulk to the end of the soorah. He went to the Prophet (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him) and said: O Messenger of Allah, I set up my tent on a grave, and I did not realize that it was a grave, and then to my surprise I heard someone inside it reciting Soorat al-Mulk to the end of the soorah. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “It is the protector, it is the saver, it will save him from the punishment of the grave.”

Al-Bayhaqi said: This was narrated only by Yahya ibn ‘Amr, and he is not qawiy (strong). End quote.

This Yahya was described by Ibn Ma‘een, Abu Zar‘ah, Abu Dawood, an-Nasaa’i and ad-Doolabi as da‘eef (weak). Al-‘Uqayli said: His hadeeth is not be followed. Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: He is not anything. As-Saaji said: His hadeeth is to be rejected.

Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb, 11/260

His father, ‘Amr ibn Maalik an-Nukri was mentioned by Ibn Hibbaan in ath-Thiqaat, where he said: His hadeeth, apart from those that were narrated by his son from him, are regarded as odd.

Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb, 8/96

This hadeeth is da‘eef and cannot be quoted as evidence. It was classed as da‘eef by al-Bayhaqi, as stated above. It was also classed as da‘eef by al-Albaani in Da‘eef Sunan at-Tirmidhi. Al-Mubaarakfoori (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Its isnaad includes Yahya ibn ‘Amr ibn Maalik, who is da‘eef.

End quote from Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, 8/161

With regard to the words “It is the protector, it is the saver, it will save him from the punishment of the grave”, they are narrated in a sound report as being the words of Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him), as was narrated and classed as saheeh by al-Haakim, and adh-Dhahabi agreed with him.

Secondly:

The close friends of Allah, the Prophets, the martyrs and the righteous, are alive in their graves in

the sense of the life of al-barzakh, which is not like our lives in this world. We cannot give likenesses in an attempt to understand how it is; rather its real nature is known only to Allah.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas said:

The life of the Prophets, martyrs and the rest of the righteous (in their graves) is the life of al-barzakh, the real nature of which no one knows except Allah. It is not like the life they had in this world.

End quote from Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa'imah, vol. 1 (1/173-174).

Thirdly:

There is no proven shar'i text to indicate that the righteous read Qur'an in their graves, so it is not permissible to say that without knowledge. What some people say about dreams concerning that, or that they passed by So and so in his grave and he was reciting Qur'an, and so on, cannot be taken as proof; it cannot be regarded as proof even if it is true. But perhaps the person who says it is lying or maybe he is imagining something that did not happen, or maybe the Shaytaan showed him that in his dream, so as to confuse him and other people. With regard to the life in al-Barzakh, as we stated above, no one knows its real nature except Allah.

Fourthly:

The basic principle is that the dead cannot hear the words of the living, just as the living do not know anything about the situation of the dead except that concerning which texts have been narrated, because the life in al-barzakh is a matter of the unseen, which no one knows except Allah.

You can pass by the graves of the mushrikeen and not feel that anyone is there or hear any sound from them, when in fact they are being punished in their graves.

A righteous Muslim man may be buried next to a wrongdoer, and Allah may have mercy on the righteous man and make his grave spacious for him and illuminate it for him, and it may be like

one of the gardens of Paradise for him, whereas He punishes the wrongdoer, makes his grave constricted for him and then it may be like one of the ditches of hellfire for him, but their conditions will not be mixed (even though their graves are next to one another) and no one will be aware of either of them.

As to whether they can hear and know about things in this world, like the living, this is pure falsehood, and there is no evidence for it in any text or from the point of view of rational thinking. Even more false and misguided is the view of one who says that they can hear and respond.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas said:

The dead in general, including the Prophets (peace be upon them) cannot hear those who call them in the sense of responding. They cannot answer the one who calls upon them or comply with whatever he tells them or forbids them to do. This is something that Allah has stated does not happen, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): “Verily, you cannot make the dead to hear” [an-Naml 27:80]. With regard to what is mentioned in as-Saheehayn about the deceased when he is placed into his grave, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “He can hear the sound of their sandals when they turn to leave him”; and what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to the slain mushrikeen on the day of Badr when they were dragged and thrown into the dried well of Badr, and he said to them: “Have you found what your Lord promised you to be true?” and he said: “They can hear what I am saying now”; and like the deceased’s hearing the two angels when he is placed in his grave and they ask him about his religion and his Prophet etc; and other things that are narrated in the shar‘i texts, that is the hearing of al-barzakh, and Allah knows best what its real nature is. The deceased cannot hear all the time; rather it is only at these particular times, and his hearing is not like his hearing in the life of this world; rather it is particular to the circumstances of al-barzakh, and no one knows how it really is except Allah. This hearing does not result in any benefit for the deceased or any harm for the living, because no one has power over that except Allah, may He be glorified. As for what is narrated about the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saying: “No one sends greetings of salaam upon me but Allah will restore to me my soul so that I may return his greeting

of salaam," that is something that is unique to him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and that does not result in the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) benefitting or harming the living person who does that, apart from the reward that Allah, may He be glorified, bestows upon the one who sends blessings and peace upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). And one should not ask of him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when he is in his grave anything that was asked of him in this world of meeting needs and solving problems, because the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) did not ask any such thing of him, because they knew that it is not permissible.

End quote from Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa'imah, vol. 2 (2/456-457).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The deceased cannot hear if he is called upon or invoked in such a way as to respond to the one who calls upon him. This is what is meant by the verse (interpretation of the meaning): "Verily, you cannot make the dead to hear" [an-Naml 27:80].

End quote from Fataawa Noor 'ala ad-Darb by Ibn 'Uthaymeen.

Fifthly:

These sects of Sufis and Bareilawis are far away from the path of Prophethood, and are innovating sects that go against the teachings and Sunnah of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the path of the righteous early generations.

For more information on the Bareilawis and their beliefs, please see the answer to question no. 1487.

And Allah knows best.