270306 - Why children rebel against parents and how to deal with it

the question

I want to talk about an important matter, which is that children sometimes do not appreciate their father’s circumstances. I am twenty-three years old, and I have siblings, among whom is a girl who is twenty years old, but unfortunately she does not care about my father’s situation. My father is facing financial difficulty, but she says: I want such and such, and such and such, and I don’t care even if he has to go and ask of people in order to get me what I want, because this is my right over him. By Allah, my father is going through a lot of distress because of his worries about his children, and the situation in which he is living. What is your opinion about this? What advice can you offer to such children? Does this come under the heading of defiant disobedience towards parents, or are there other explanations for it? Please note that she gets angry with my father for various reasons, and I do not know how to deal with her.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Girls’ impulsivity when dealing with one or both parents, or rebelliousness towards them and constant resentment towards them is usually due to one of two reasons: either it has to do with lack of understanding of Islamic teachings and weakness of faith, or it has to do with psychological and behavioural problems.

With regard to lack of understanding of Islamic teachings and weakness of faith, the problem can be discussed as follows:

It may have to do with weak or distorted understanding of the status of parents according to Islam, and the rights that parents have over their children.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “No son can repay his father unless he finds him enslaved and buys him, then manumits him.” Narrated by Muslim (1510).

It was narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The pleasure of the Lord is in the pleasure of the father, and the wrath of the Lord is in the wrath of the father.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (1899); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

Whatever there may be of misunderstanding or differences between a child and his father, it is still essential to accompany him with appropriate kindness. Even if the difference has to do with the fundamentals of religion and the foundations of the message of the Messengers, and the father tries to force his child to associate others with Allah, that does not cancel out the rights that the father has over his child, and does not give the child an excuse not to pay heed to the father’s rights. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination.

But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do”

[Luqmaan 31:14-15].

To sum up:

Talking to and debating with parents is not like talking to anyone else, because we are enjoined to lower the wing of humility to them by speaking gently and humbly, softening the voice and expressing humility in our body language, and not to repel them by doing something that they

dislike or by refusing to do something permissible that they like.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], ‘uff,’ and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.

And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, ‘My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small’”

[al-Isra’ 17:23-24].

Humility towards parents is likened to the weak bird lowering its wings in humility when it feels scared of another bird that is stronger.

It was narrated from Hishaam ibn ‘Urwah that his father said, explaining the phrase “And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy”: Do not refuse to do anything that they like.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, in the chapter Leen al-Kalaam lil-Waalidayn (speaking softly to parents). Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

For more information, please see a useful article on the following link (in Arabic):

http://www.saaid.net/Doat/alsakran/71.htm

Secondly:

Another of the significant matters that cause such problems as mentioned in the question is that many children do not adapt to the circumstances in which they find themselves, and they are not taught to be content with what Allah has allocated to them and what He has decreed for them of shares of this world. Rather you see them always looking at those who have been given more of provision, and demanding for themselves what others have, without either himself or his family having the means of attaining that. This always makes them discontent with their lot, and causes

them to complain about it and not be content with what they have been given.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [its being but] the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring”

[Ta-Ha 20:131].

Shaykh as-Sa ‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is, do not be unduly impressed and do not look repeatedly and admiringly at different aspects of this world and those who are enjoying them, such as delicious food and drink, fine clothing, beautiful houses, and adorned women, for all of that is merely the splendour of the life of this world. People who are deceived by this life are excited about these things and they dazzle the eyes of those who turn away from the truth, and the wrongdoers enjoy these things without paying any attention to the hereafter. But this world will soon come to an end, and everything in it will cease to be; it destroys those who love it and are infatuated by it, but they will regret it at a time when regret will be of no benefit, and they will realise, when the Resurrection comes, that what they were pursuing was no more than a trial and test from Allah, to find out who would make this world his sole concern and be deceived by it, and who would do good, as Allah (st) says elsewhere: “Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed And indeed, We will make that which is upon it [into] a barren ground” [al-Kahf 18:7-8].

“The provision of your Lord” in this world of knowledge, faith, and righteous deeds, and in the hereafter of eternal bliss and a good life in closeness to the Most Gracious Lord,

is better in essence and attributes than enjoyment in this life,

“and more enduring” because it will never end; its food and shade will be perpetual, as Allah says elsewhere: “But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring” [al-

A‘la 87:16-17].

This verse indicates that if an individual notices in himself any aspiration for the adornment of this world and finds himself interested in pursuing it, he should remind himself of what lies ahead of the provision of his Lord, and he should weigh up the two matters.

End quote from Tafseer as-Sa‘di (516).

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Look at the one who is at a lower level than you, and do not look at the one who is above you, for that may keep you from scorning the blessing of Allah.”

Narrated by Muslim (2963). There is a similar report in al-Bukhaari.

Thirdly:

It should be understood that according to Islamic teachings, the father is enjoined to spend on his wife and children according to his means, not according to his children’s demands and desires. It is not permissible for the wife or child to demand of him more than he can afford, for Allah, may He be exalted, has not enjoined that upon him. Rather his family and children should control themselves and limit their requests and needs to what the father can afford; it is not permissible for them to annoy him or burden him with more than he can bear, or to make him feel that he is falling short in his duties, or that he is not maintaining them as he is supposed to, or that they do not appreciate what he is trying to do for them or what he is spending on them.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Lodge them [in a section] of where you dwell out of your means and do not harm them in order to oppress them. And if they should be pregnant, then spend on them until they give birth. And if they breastfeed for you, then give them their payment and confer among yourselves in the acceptable way; but if you are in discord, then there may breastfeed for the father another woman.

Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth, and he whose provision is restricted - let him spend from what Allah has given him. Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it. Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease”

[at-Talaaq 65:6-7].

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

“out of your means” – Ibn ‘Abbaas, Mujaahid and others said: That is, from whatever you can afford.

“Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth” that is, let the father or the guardian of the child spend on the child according to his means.

“and he whose provision is restricted - let him spend from what Allah has given him” – this is like the verse: “Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity” [al-Baqarah 2:286].

End quote.

Fourthly:

With regard to psychological and behavioural causes, that has to do with pathological impulsivity that overwhelms the girl and she is unable to control it. This impulsivity usually occurs in the case of anxiety and stress disorders, and manifests itself more clearly in the case of borderline personality disorder.

If exhortations, religious reminders, education and discipline do not succeed with your sister, and she does not stop misbehaving and still does not show proper etiquette with her father, and does not stop burdening him with her demands and wants, then we advise you to consult a female psychologist who can evaluate her case and look for the causes of her bad temper and impulsivity, because it is important to use anti-stress and antianxiety medication alongside sessions of talk therapy such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for stress and anxiety disorders, or dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) in the case of borderline personality disorder.

And Allah knows best.