321316 - The words of one of the righteous: “All I have to do is worship Allah, and it is incumbent upon Allah to grant provision as He promised”

the question

How sound is the following statement, and is there any element in it of poor etiquette with Allah when the speaker says that something is incumbent upon Him? The statement is as follows: It was said to Ibraaheem ibn Adham: Prices have risen. He said: BY Allah, I would not care if one grain of wheat cost a dinar. All I have to do is worship Allah as He enjoined, and it is incumbent upon Allah to grant provision as He promised.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If this statement can be soundly attributed to Ibraaheem ibn Adham, there is no problem with the meaning as it appears to be.

What is required of the Muslim is to be a true slave of Allah, meaning that his first and greatest priority is not to seek provision, in accordance with the words of Allah, may He be exalted (interpretation of the meaning):

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me

I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me

Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength”

[adh-Dhaariyaat 51:56-58].

With regard to the phrase “it is incumbent upon Him to grant provision as He promised,” what may be understood from it is that this is an affirmation that it is Allah Who is the Provider, and He has

guaranteed provision to everyone in this world; He has made this incumbent upon Himself, may He be glorified and exalted.

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

“And there is no creature on earth but that [incumbent] upon Allah is its provision, and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register”

[Hood 11:6].

At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“*but that [incumbent] upon Allah is its provision*” that is, its provision that reaches it comes from Allah, and He guarantees it. That refers to its food, provision and what it needs to survive.

End quote from *Tafseer at-Tabari* (12/324).

Shaykh al-Taahir ibn ‘Ashoor (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The phrase “*[incumbent] upon Allah*” is mentioned before “*its provision*” to imply exclusivity. In other words, it is incumbent upon Allah and not upon anyone else. This syntax gives the meaning that He guarantees its provision and is not neglecting it, because the word ‘ala (lit. “upon”) implies that it is incumbent and is something that is due from Him and owed by Him to people. It is well-known that no one could compel Allah to do anything; what is incumbent here is only incumbent because He has taken it upon Himself, in accordance with His attributes that would dictate that [He should provide for people] – as is referred to in the verse: *“[It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him” [at-Tawbah 9:111]*.

End quote from *at-Tahreer wa’t-Tanweer* (12/5-6).

Just as Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has guaranteed to provide for all creatures, He has also guaranteed to provide for all people.

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

“And how many a creature carries not its [own] provision. Allah provides for it and for you. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing”

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:60].

What is required of the Muslim who is sincere in his trust of Allah, may He be exalted, is not to panic when faced with a financial crisis, as this revelation teaches him.

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

“and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason”

[al-An‘aam 6:151]

“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin”

[al-Isra’ 17:31].

That is because provision is already decreed, and no soul will die until it has received its provision in full.

It was narrated that ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who is the most truthful one, told us: “The creation of any one of you is put together in his mother’s womb for forty days, then he becomes a ‘*alaqah* (a piece of thick coagulated blood) for a similar period, then he becomes like a chewed piece of flesh (*mudghah*) for a similar period, then Allah sends to him an angel who is enjoined to write down four things. It is said to him: Write down his deeds, his provision, his lifespan and whether he is doomed (to Hell) or blessed (destined for Paradise). Then the soul is breathed into him…”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3208) and Muslim (2643).

And the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “O people, fear Allah and be moderate in seeking a living, for no soul will die until it has received all its provision, even if it is slow in coming. So fear Allah and be moderate in seeking provision; take that which is permissible and leave that which is forbidden.”

Narrated by Ibn Maajah (2144); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah* (6/209).

What appears to be the case is that the one who said this interpreted the Qur’anic phrase “*[incumbent] upon Allah is its provision*” as meaning that Allah guaranteed provision for His slaves, and obliged Himself to do that out of generosity and grace, and he did not understand it as meaning that Allah should grant provision in return for the worship that His slaves offer Him. So Allah has perfect might and perfect dominion, and His favours and grace towards people are perfect, so no one could oblige Him to do anything.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars are agreed regarding that what Allah made incumbent upon Himself by His true promise is incumbent upon Him, but they disputed as to whether He would make something incumbent upon Himself by Himself. There are two views.

Those who say that that is possible quoted as evidence the verse (interpretation of the meaning): *“He has decreed upon Himself mercy” [al-An‘aam 6:12]*, and the saheeh hadith qudsi, “I have forbidden injustice to Myself and have made it forbidden among you.” This has been discussed in detail elsewhere.

As for those who believe that there are things that are incumbent upon Allah to do, may He be glorified and exalted, and that there are things that it is incumbent upon Him not to do, by analogy with His creation, this is a Qadari view, and it is an innovated notion that is contrary to the sound texts and sound reasoning.

Ahl as-Sunnah are agreed that Allah, may He be glorified, is the Creator and Sovereign of all things; that whatever He wills happens and whatever He does not will does not happen; and that people cannot make anything incumbent upon Him. Hence those among Ahl as-Sunnah who say that there are things that are incumbent upon Him say that this comes under the heading of that which He has decreed for Himself or forbidden for Himself, not that any person has the right to make anything incumbent upon Allah as one person may do to another. For Allah is the bestower of all blessings upon people, He is their Creator, the One Who sends the Messengers to them. It is He who makes it easy for them to believe and do righteous deeds.

Whoever among the Qadaris, Mu‘tazilah and their ilk imagines that Allah owes them anything, as the hired person thinks that the one who hired him owes him something, is ignorant in that regard.

End quote from *Iqtida’ as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem* (2/310-311).

And Allah knows best.