47061 - Sponsoring an orphan who is a relative

the question

One of my maternal uncles passed away and he had six children. Can I sponsor one of his children or does sponsorship of orphans not apply to relatives? If it is permissible to sponsor him, will this sponsorship be regarded as valid, as I am in one Arab country and they are in another Arab country? Will it be sufficient for me to send a sum of money each month as well as taking gifts when I visit them, knowing that I only visit once a year during my annual leave? Can the money I send be given in two annual installments?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Undoubtedly sponsoring an orphan is a great righteous deed, and a good and praiseworthy action. Allaah has enjoined it in His Book, and our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has spoken of its virtue in his Sunnah.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Worship Allaah and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masaakeen (the poor), the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allaah does not like such as are proud and boastful”

[al-Nisa’ 4:36]

“but Al-Birr (righteousness) is (the quality of) the one who believes in Allaah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, the Prophets and gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, …”

[al-Baqarah 2:177]

It was narrated from Sahl ibn Sa’d that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “I and the one who sponsors an orphan will be like this in Paradise,” and he gestured with his index and middle fingers. Narrated by al-Bukhaari, no. 5659.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The one who sponsors an orphan, whether he is related to him or not, he and I will be like these two in Paradise,” and Maalik gestured with his index and middle fingers. Narrated by Muslim, 2983.

Sponsoring an orphan is not limited to non-relatives. It is recommended with regard to relatives and non-relatives like. Indeed the reward for sponsoring an orphan who is a relative includes sponsoring an orphan and the reward for upholding the ties of kinship.

This indicated by the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) quoted above.

Al-Haafiz said in al-Fath: What is meant by “related to him” is when a grandfather, paternal uncle, brother or other relative sponsors the orphan or if the child’s father has died and his mother takes his place. (10/436).

Al-Nawawi said: With regard to the phrase “whether he is related to him or not”, “related to him” means if he is a relative, such as his grandfather, mother, grandmother, brother, sister, paternal uncle, maternal uncle, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, or other relatives. “Or not (related to him)” means if he is a stranger (a non-relative). Sharh Muslim, 18/113.

If this is understood, then it is permissible for you to send money to sponsor the orphan, even though you are in another country, and it is permissible for you to send it in two or more installments. When you send this money, you should make sure that you send enough so that he will not be in need.

If you send the money to the orphan’s country, then the one who is looking after the orphan has to spend it on him in a reasonable manner, without being either extravagant or miserly.

It should also be noted that one of the most important matters with regard to sponsoring an orphan is striving to give him a sound Islamic upbringing, so try to teach him in a manner that is suited to his age, which will have an effect on him, such as giving him books and tapes, and paying attention during your annual leave to things that will have a good effect on him by Allaah's leave, by showing him compassion and kindness. We ask Allaah to reward you and to create more people like you in the ummah.

See also question no. 5201.