75411 - Family problems

the question

My mother is a very pious lady. She is someone who measures our family success not by money or gold, but by the depth of our faith and the love that we share. Praise be to Allah. However, from my childhood, I've been seeing family conflict with her and my close relatives, such as my aunts (her sister-in-law), my cousins (daughters of her brother-in-law). Those relatives always make baseless slanderous remarks and they shamelessly lie. They are never thankful for my parents' contribution to the family; instead, they talk behind our back and make fun of her religious commitment. Still my mom tried to uphold the ties of kinship and was patient with them. Sometimes she complained to my father, saying why he doesn't ask his nieces to stop insulting her. But he never really did anything, saying that it might wreck the relationship forever and asked her to be patient. So my mom took the mistreatment, did opposite of which they have done to her, only to earn pleasure and mercy of Allah. But recently, the situation got worse and my cousins' husband insulted my father as a result of the fight. So my father has decided to cut off the relationship with them. And my aunt (my father's sister) also asked my mother to stop contacting with them. In the middle of this mess, I am really lost and I don't know how to deal with it. My parents asked me strictly not to contact with them. But knowing that those who cut off the family ties, Allah said that He will cut him off in the Day of Judgment, I talk to them once in a while; make phone calls on their birthdays, although they don’t. But I know that if my parents come to know this, they will get hurt and will be angry with me. I told my mother to forgive them and start contacting with them, and she says that she wants to, but she doesn't wanna go through the misery and the insults that she had to go through for years. And she says that she has been asked not to keep contact with them. What would be the correct way to deal with such a situation? Should I make an effort to uphold the kinship with the people who insulted my parents? How to put an end to this mess?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We ask Allaah to reward you and your mother greatly and to reunite you with your relatives in a good way, and to guide them and set them straight.

Upholding the ties of kinship is very important in Islam, and it includes tangible and intangible matters, of which the intangible matters are far more important. The tangible matters include being generous towards them with your wealth and the intangible matters include enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. This is the most important form of upholding ties of kinship.

In the event that these relatives are misguided and corrupt, and the Muslim fears that he may be influenced by them, then he should forsake them in a good way, which does not involve causing harm or severing ties of kinship. He should make a lot of du'aa' for them and exhort them and remind them by means of letters, phone calls and other means which will maintain ties and not cut them off, but without letting them influence him.

Secondly:

You have to uphold ties of kinship even if your father tells you not to. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "There is no obedience if it involves disobedience towards the Creator. Obedience is only with regard to that which is right and proper." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (6380) and Muslim 91840).

But it is not permissible for you to upset your father by openly going against him. You can uphold ties of kinship with your relatives without telling him about that, and you can keep trying to end the conflict between him and his relatives. But we advise you to look for relatives who do not openly commit immoral actions, lest they have any influence on your household. And strive to look for those among them who are religiously committed and good. With such people it would be a loss to sever ties with them, and you will have a great reward for upholding ties between them and your family.

Thirdly:

There are some things which will help to uphold ties between relatives, and we advise you to tell your family and relatives about them:

1.Tell them all that it is obligatory to uphold ties of kinship and it is haraam to sever them.

2.Tell them what upholding ties of kinship really means, and that it is not responding in kind, rather it means upholding ties with the one who cuts you off and offering kindness in return for bad treatment.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that a man said: O Messenger of Allaah, I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me. I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me. He said: “If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot ashes in their mouths. Allaah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that.”

Narrated by Muslim (2558).

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “Abuse me” (lit. behave in an ignorant manner towards me) means they mistreat me. Ignorance here refers to bad speech. What this hadeeth means is that it will be like feeding them hot ashes. This is a metaphor for the pain they will feel, like the pain of one who eats hot ashes. There will be no sin on this doer of good, rather they will be sinning greatly for cutting him off and causing him harm.

And it was said that what is meant is that by treating them kindly you will make them feel ashamed of themselves because of how kindly you treat them and how badly they have treated you.

And it was said that what they receive of kindness from you will turn into ashes that will burn their insides.

Sharh Muslim (16/115).

3.Forgive them if they do anything wrong or upset you.

4.Make your visits brief and avoid joking. Perhaps visiting too often with transgressions of sharee'ah or overdoing permissible things is one of the reasons that led to them severing ties.

5.Try to avoid living too close to relatives. Perhaps living too close is what causes people to sever ties, either because of the children or the wives or some other reason.

It was narrated that 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) wrote to his governors saying: "Tell relatives to visit one another and not to live next to one another."

Al-Ghazaali said, commenting on 'Umar's words:

He said that because living next to one another may lead to conflicts and may lead to alienation and severing of ties."

Ihya' 'Uloom al-Deen (2/216).

Aktham ibn Sayfi said: If you live further away from one another you will have greater love for one another."

6.Not listening to trouble-makers who try to cause problems between a man and his family, or who hate to see a family united, for they are malicious gossips who commit major sins.

7.Seek the help of Allaah by calling upon Him (du'aa') in your prayer and at the end of the night, asking Him to guide your relatives to the best of attitudes and deeds.

And Allaah knows best.