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عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: مَنْ نَفَسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ. وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ. وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ، وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلَّا نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ. وَمَنْ أَبْطَأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ - رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ فِي هَذَا اللَّفْظِ.

It was related on the authority of Abu Hurairah, (رضي الله عنه), that the Prophet, (ﷺ), said: "Whosoever relieves from a believer some grief pertaining to this world, Allah will relieve from him some grief pertaining to the Hereafter. Whosoever alleviates the difficulties of a needy person who cannot pay his debt, Allah will alleviate his difficulties in both this world and the Hereafter. Whosoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother. Whosoever follows a path to seek knowledge therein, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. No people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquility descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah makes mention of them amongst those who are in His presence. Whosoever is slowed down by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage." [Muslim]

## Background

This hadith was recorded by Imam Muslim by the above text. However, there is another version of the hadith where it was recorded by both Imam Muslim and Imam al-Bukhari with the following text:

"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim - he does not wrong him nor does he forsake him when he is in need; whosoever is fulfilling the needs of his brother, Allah is fulfilling his needs; whosoever removes distress from a believer, Allah removes from him a distress from a distressful aspect of the Day of Resurrection; and whosoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection."

We see that in this hadith the obligations towards other Muslims are emphasised and the fulfillment of brotherhood is again stressed.

## Lessons

**"Whosoever relieves from a believer some grief pertaining to this world, Allah will relieve from him some grief pertaining to the Hereafter."**

This means that the reward of an act is of a similar nature to the act itself. Or the reward to the act is relevant to the act itself or from the same type. There are many hadiths that emphasise this principle. Grief or distress in this hadith means a great difficulty or hardship a Muslim is facing. In one version of the hadith, it is stated as "whosoever **relieves**" and in another version "whosoever **removes**". There is obviously a difference between the two versions because 'to relieve' means to minimise the difficulty or distress, whereas 'to remove' means to totally eradicate the difficulty or hardship.

Ibn Rajab says the one who successfully removes a grief or distress that a Muslim is encountering will be rewarded more than the one who helps and tries his best to minimise the consequences of a certain difficulty. This is natural because there are two different situations: The first one is related to the capacity of the person who is able only to minimise the distress. The other situation is not just a matter of capacity

but also a willingness to do more to remove the distress totally. Ibn Rajab emphasises that we have to motivate Muslims to help others and to remove the distress or difficulties of one another.

The Prophet, (ﷺ), says that the reward for the removal or relief of the distress of a Muslim will be rewarded by a removal of a similar distress or difficulty in the Hereafter. Ibn Rajab questions the difference between the two situations where in the first one the hadith mentioned only the relief or removal of the distressful aspect of the Hereafter and not in this world. He says that not everyone is subject to such distress in this world - this is contrasted to ale'sar (unable to repay). He explains that since the difficulties of this life are incomparable to the distress aspects of the Hereafter (which nobody can endure as it is beyond human capacity), Allah reserves the reward for removing a distress of a distressful aspect of this life until the Day of Judgment.

**"Whosoever alleviates the difficulties of a needy person who cannot pay his debt, Allah will alleviate his difficulties in both this world and the Hereafter."**

Here, it is not wise or appropriate for a Muslim to demand his money back from a poor or needy Muslim who honestly cannot afford to pay him. He should either give him a chance until he is able to repay his money or forgive him. The first choice is an obligation because Allah commands us to do so in Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah 280. The second way of alleviation is that the person who is owed the money might forgive the borrower and try to help him not just by giving him more time but also by reducing the amount of money owed or forgiving him.

The Prophet, (ﷺ), says in one of his great hadiths: "A man of the previous nations was very rich and people used to borrow money from him. Not only did he lend them money, which is indeed a good deed, but he also asked his sons to alleviate and forgive those who could not repay the money." The Prophet, (ﷺ), says that in the Hereafter Allah will reward him and forgive his sins because of his generosity. Allah says in Surah al-Furqan, Ayah 26 that "it will be a very hard day for the disbelievers". This means that there is a situation where a person who is kind to those in need and Allah will relief that person by rewarding him a great reward from Allah's Mercy and Help.

**"Whosoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter."**

*Ibn Rajab says that people can fall into two categories:*

1. Those who are not known for transgression or committing bad deeds. For these people, if by any chance they commit a mistake, it should not be revealed. On the contrary, it should be concealed and not even talked about.
2. Those who are very well known as transgressors or wrongdoers, and who even speak proudly about their shameful and sinful acts. Ibn Rajab mentions that if there is a need to mention the qualities of these people, we should do so for the benefit of the Muslim community.

The statement in this hadith does not apply to the second category of people. The general rule that we derive from the hadith is that Muslims should not reveal the mistakes of their Muslim brothers to others. Some Muslims today take it as a topic for fun and entertainment to reveal the mistakes of others even on very minor issues. As Muslims we should refrain ourselves from such acts. Consequently, the reward will be that Allah will conceal our faults from others. In this life we are subject to faults. If we do not conceal the faults of others, Allah will put us in a situation where our faults will be exposed to other people and

everyone will be talking about them. So the punishment is relevant or of the same nature of the act if it is a bad act.

Another thing that is also worth mentioning is the faults of the ulama' or scholars. Nowadays we can notice a very strange attitude coming from some seekers of knowledge who try to find out and reveal the mistakes of very well-known scholars. This sort of situation is even worse because they are revealing the mistakes of not just regular persons. If it is a matter of academic discussion or research, we should handle it in an appropriate way that upholds the status of our scholars.

**"Allah will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother."**

This statement is a principle. Before this statement, the Prophet, (ﷺ), gives us three examples of Allah helping those who help others.

But should we confine ourselves only to the needy mentioned in the hadith? Of course not. The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, wants to convey to us that we should help our brothers in any way possible. There are hundreds of forms of need. For example, helping the blind to cross the street or any of the great and charitable acts that are mentioned in Hadiths 25 and 26. The greater the help, the greater the reward. This is something that Muslims should take seriously because if we have a community which care about each other and help one another, then there would be no needy. This should be our attitude - we should seek to be motivated to offer our help at any time to our Muslim brothers.

**"Whosoever follows a path to seek knowledge therein, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise."**

Here we can find the encouragement of Islam in seeking and gaining knowledge. The knowledge seekers will be rewarded if the knowledge is beneficial to oneself as well as for the betterment of the Muslim community.

*This statement of the hadith can be interpreted in 3 ways:*

1. Allah will make it easy for the knowledge seeker to gain the knowledge that he is seeking.
2. Allah will make it easy for the knowledge seeker so that he will benefit from the knowledge he is seeking. This means that he will benefit from the knowledge and this will lead him to enter Paradise. There are many people who seek knowledge but there are no blessings in the knowledge they seek. The crucial point here is the person should seek knowledge with good intentions.
3. For the one who seeks knowledge with good intentions, Allah will safely help him go through the horrible incidents and situations on the Day of Judgment.

*Ibn Rajab classifies ilm (knowledge) into two types:*

1. The outcome of knowledge is placed in the heart. That is the knowledge about Allah and His attributes that implies fearing Allah, glorifying Him, and loving Him.
2. The knowledge that we merely memorise or speak about - without our hearts being influenced or affected. This means that if the person does not abide by the knowledge that he has already

obtained, then he is in a very critical situation where he may be subject to the punishment of Allah.

**"No people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquility descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah makes mention of them amongst those who are in His presence."**

Here the hadith implies a preferable act: to go to the mosque, to recite and study the Qur'an, or attending lectures. Ibn Rajab says that this can be applied to all branches of knowledge and not just the Qur'an. The hadith mentions four rewards for those who gather in the mosque:

1. Tranquility - this is a great reward which includes relief from stress and being calm.
2. The Mercy of Allah over them.
3. The angels surrounding them.
4. Allah making mention of them amongst those who are in His presence.

**"Whoever is slowed down by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage."**

This indicates that doing deeds are the means of getting the rewards and that will lead a person to Paradise. Allah says: "For all shall be judged against their actions". If the good deeds are not enough, the person's lineage or ancestry will not benefit him. This is because Allah made rewards related to good deeds and not lineage.

No ties of kinship will prevail amongst them. [Surah al-Mu'minun: Ayah 101]

## **Conclusion**

**"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he does not wrong him nor does he forsake him when he is in need; whoever is fulfilling the needs of his brother, Allah is fulfilling his needs."**

This version of the hadith starts by stating a great principle: Muslims are brothers - one will not harm another nor will he do injustice or fail him when he is in need. Then the hadith states a motivation factor: Whoever is fulfilling the needs of his brother, Allah is fulfilling his needs.

This version is more than simply stating a principle - it can be taken as a motivation for helping other Muslims, especially those who are in need. We just need to imagine the situation of the ummah when we help each other and fulfill the needs of others. We will end up being a better society, with less needy people, and stronger social ties that will lead to the strength of the Muslim ummah at large.