

What to do after the Demise of Parents

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at-tazkiyah

From the priceless blessings of Allāh ﷻ, one of the greatest is the blessing of parents. Through the medium of parents, Allāh ﷻ bestows us with countless blessings. They become the means of our existence in this world and thereafter their lives revolve around our upbringing, nurturing and care. Even after we become independent, they continue to worry for our wellbeing. Therefore, we remain ever indebted to our parents and should not leave any stone unturned in fulfilling their rights and keeping them happy for as long they remain in our midst. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that our duty towards them remains even after their demise. In order to benefit our parents after their demise and to be regarded dutiful to them, one should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Pay off their debts and fulfil their bequests. If our parents have left this world with outstanding debts and their estate is sufficient to repay these debts, then this is the first duty that should be fulfilled. Thereafter, from one third of the estate, monetary bequests should be given to their rightful recipients. Similarly, worship related obligations which they may have bequeathed such as fidyah for missed ṣalāh or fasts, or performance

of hajj, should be fulfilled at the earliest opportunity. The remaining estate should be distributed amongst the inheritors according to the Islamic rulings of inheritance. It is important that a reputable Muftī is consulted for guidance in these important matters.

One should endeavour to pay off the debts and fulfil the obligations of parents such as fidyah for missed ṣalāh or fasts, or performance of ḥajj, even if they had not bequeathed that they be fulfilled on their behalf. Similarly, if they had bequeathed but their estate is not sufficient, then too one should make an effort to repay their debts and fulfil their obligations using one's own money. Spending a portion of our money, time and energy for our parents is the least we can do for them. The reality is that we can never repay them for the great favours they confer upon us.

2. Adopt piety by following the entire Dīn of Allāh ﷻ. Resolve to carry out every Command of Allāh ﷻ and abstain from every disobedience to Him. If one fails in this resolve and falls into disobedience, then it is a part of piety to sincerely repent with remorse and a resolve to never disobey Allāh ﷻ again. Adopting piety is the best way to benefit our parents. We understand from a Ḥadīth of our Beloved Nabī ﷺ that from among the

things that perpetually generate reward for a person even after his demise is a pious child. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

إِذَا مَاتَ الْإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ ثَلَاثَةٍ: إِلَّا مِنْ
صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ، أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ، أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ

When a human passes away, (the reward of) his actions stop except from three things; sadaqah jāriyah, knowledge through which benefit is derived and a pious child who makes du‘ā for him. (Muslim)

3. Regularly make du‘ā and seek forgiveness for them. Sayyidunā Usayd Ibn Mālik ؓ narrates, ‘Once whilst we were sitting in the company of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, a man from the Banū Salimah tribe came to Nabī ﷺ and said, ‘O Rasūlullāh! Is there any way left for me to be obedient to my parents after their demise?’ In reply, the first thing Nabī ﷺ mentioned was, ‘Yes, making du‘ā for them and seeking forgiveness for them...’ (Abū Dāwūd)

In another Ḥadīth, Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَمُوتُ وَالِدَاهُ وَهُوَ عَاقٌ بِهِمَا فَيَدْعُو اللَّهَ لَهُمَا
مِنْ بَعْدِهِمَا فَيَكْتُبُهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْبَارِّينَ

Indeed, a person’s parents pass away whilst he is disobedient to them. After their demise, he makes du‘ā

for them and as a result Allāh writes him (i.e. includes him) amongst those dutiful (to their parents). (Ibn Abid-Dunyā)

We should endeavour to make du‘ā for our parents at least after every farḍ ṣalāh. Imām Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyaynah رضي الله عنه said:

مَنْ صَلَّى الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسَ فَقَدْ شَكَرَ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى، وَمَنْ
دَعَا لِوَالِدَيْهِ فِي أَذْبَارِ الصَّلَوَاتِ فَقَدْ شَكَرَهُمَا

Whoever performs the five times ṣalāh has certainly been grateful to Allāh ﷻ, and whoever supplicates for his parents after the ṣalāh has certainly been grateful to them.

We should regularly make du‘ā for them at times of acceptance too, during their life and more after their demise. One should recite the du‘ā taught to us by Allāh ﷻ Himself in the Glorious Qur’ān:

رَبِّ اَرْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

O my Rabb! Be merciful to them (i.e. my parents) as they have nurtured me when I was little. (17:24)

Seeking forgiveness for parents will not only be a means of their sins being forgiven but will also elevate their status. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said,

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَرْقَى الدَّرَجَةَ، فَيَقُولُ: مَا هَذَا؟ فَيَقَالُ: بِاسْتِغْفَارِ
وَلَدِكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ لَكَ

Indeed, a man will ascend a rank (in Jannah) and will ask, 'What is (the reason for) this?' It will be said to him, 'Due to your child seeking forgiveness for you after your demise. (Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah)

4. Send them the reward of good deeds. When the reward of good deeds is sent to the deceased, their souls experience joy upon receiving it and acknowledge who it is from. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said,

إِذَا حَجَّ الرَّجُلُ عَنِ وَالِدَيْهِ تَقَبَّلَ مِنْهُ وَمِنْهُمَا وَاسْتَبَشَّرَتْ
أَرْوَاحُهُمَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَكُتِبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى بَرًّا

When a person performs ḥajj on behalf of his parents, it is accepted from him and from them (i.e. they are all granted the reward of the ḥajj). Their souls feel joy in heaven and he is written in the Court of Allāh ﷻ as a dutiful (child). (Sunanud-Dāraqutnī)

Only after death can the reward of good deeds be really appreciated as it is then that one will realise their true value and worth. We should therefore donate towards ṣadaqah jāriyah projects e.g. digging wells,

building masājid, assisting madāris and students of dīn, distributing Islamic literature, etc. and send its reward to parents. Similarly, we should regularly perform optional good deeds such as recitation of the Glorious Qurʾān, dhikrullāh, ḥajj, ʿumrah, uḍḥiyah and ṣadaqah, and send their reward to them. One can send the reward of all the optional deeds carried out during the day to his parents on a daily basis. Sending reward to our parents will not decrease our reward in any way but will benefit them greatly.

A common way of sending reward is through recitation of the Glorious Qurʾān. It should be borne in mind that this is best done individually. When reciting individually, one is more likely to concentrate on the quality of recitation whilst adopting sincerity, giving more hope of its acceptance in the Court of Allāh ﷻ. Inviting family and friends for the purpose of reciting the Qurʾān often leads to many vices. Many a time people feel compelled to attend and only come and recite the Qurʾān to register their attendance. This results in ostentation and lack of adherence to the requirements and etiquettes of recitation, yielding no reward. If the recitation is void of reward, then how can any reward possibly reach the deceased? Similarly, specifying a certain date of the year

for this purpose should be avoided as there is no basis for this in Islām. Instead, parents should be remembered daily.

5. Maintain a good relationship with their family and friends. We should visit them, look out for them and send gifts to them when possible. This is a part of good treatment to parents. In the Ḥadīth of Sayyidunā Usayd ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه, Rasūlullāh ﷺ was asked if there is any way left to be obedient to parents after their demise. One of the things Nabī ﷺ mentioned was, ‘...joining ties with their relatives and honouring their friends.’ (Abū Dāwūd)

Rasūlullāh ﷺ also said,

إِنَّ أَبْرَّ الْبِرِّ صَلَاةُ الْوَالِدِ أَهْلَ وُدِّ أَبِيهِ

Indeed, the best form of duty towards parents is that a child maintains ties with those who loved his father and were beloved to him. (Muslim)

6. Regularly visit their graves after their demise. By doing so, we will have an opportunity to say salām to them, make du‘ā for them and send them the reward of good deeds. Whilst visiting we should contemplate regarding our own death too. We should remind ourselves that

a day will come when we will also be buried and left to lie six feet under the ground. Thereafter, we will be resurrected and made to stand before our Creator and will be reckoned for every second of our lives. This will, inshā'allāh, be of great benefit to us and assist us in preparing for the eternal life of the Hereafter.

Let us make a firm resolution that we will value our parents in their lifetime and remain dutiful to them after their demise too. These beautiful teachings of our beautiful Dīn are a means of great solace for those who feel they were neglectful with regards to their duty towards their parents during their lifetime. They give us hope that there is still much we can do after the demise of parents to make up for our shortcomings. Inshā'allāh, by adhering to these guidelines, it is hoped that we will be resurrected on the Day of Qiyāmah among those who were dutiful to their parents.

May Allāh ﷻ grant us the tawfīq to value our parents, fulfil their rights and thereby acquire the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ and Jannatul-Firdaws. Āmīn.

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