

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



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## Gifting The Reward Of Virtuous Deeds To Others

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According to the Ḥanafī school of sacred law, it is permissible for one to gift the reward (*thawāb*) of their virtuous deed to another person, be they deceased or alive, and be that virtuous deed *ṣalāh*, fasting, ḥajj, *‘umrah*, *ṣadaqah*, recitation of the Holy Qur‘ān, any other form of *dhikr* of Allāh or any other form of *‘ibādah* – bodily, financial or a combination of both. The reward of such an act of *‘ibādah* will, by the grace of Allāh Most Gracious, reach the intended recipient.

Imāms Mālik and Shāfi‘ī (may Allāh be pleased with them) have excluded from this permissibility any *‘ibādah* that is purely bodily (that is, performed with the body only) – for example, *ṣalāh* and recitation of the Holy Qur‘ān, and have allowed those forms of *‘ibādāt* that are either financial or a combination of bodily and financial – for example, *ṣadaqah* and ḥajj respectively. The reward of an act of *‘ibādah* that is purely bodily, they say, will not reach the intended recipient.

However, some later jurists of the Shāfi‘ī school (for example, Imām Al-Nawawī in the *Kitāb al-Janā‘iz* of his authoritative *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, 2:139) have stated that the deceased person will benefit from the blessings of recitation near the grave and from the Divine mercy that such a recitation will attract, but they will not receive the reward of it. For this reason, it is considered *mustaḥabb* (desirable) to recite the Holy Qur‘ān near graves (*ibid*).

Likewise, some later jurists of the Mālikī school (for example, ‘Allāmah ‘Al-Ḥaṭṭāb’ in his *Mawāhib al-Jalīl fī Sharḥi Mukhtaṣar al-Shaykh Khalīl*, 2:535) have encouraged the recitation of the Holy Qur‘ān and other forms of *dhikr* like *‘Lā ilāha illAllāh’* near, or for, the dying or the deceased. ‘Allāmah ‘Al-Ḥaṭṭāb’, citing Ibn al-Furāt and Al-Qarāfī, states that the deceased will benefit from the blessings of recitation just as they will benefit from a pious person being buried near them, or they being buried near a pious person. He suggests that even though there is difference of opinion regarding the reward of recitation reaching the deceased, it ought not to be omitted. Perhaps, the truth is that it will reach them. One should, in this matter, have full trust in the infinite Grace of Allāh (*ibid*).

The great Ḥanafī jurist of Damascus, Imām Muhammad Amīn ‘ibn ‘Ābidīn’, states in his authoritative *Radd al-Muḥtār* (3:152) that the one gifting the reward may intend the gifting at the time of carrying out the virtuous deed or he may carry out the deed and then gift the reward. However, from amongst the Ḥanbalī jurists, ‘Allāmah Ibn Qayyim



al-Jawziyyah, in his *Kitāb al-Rūḥ* (2:392), inclines toward the impermissibility of gifting the reward *after* the performance of the deed (*ibid*). In this excellent work, he scrutinises in detail all the evidences and arguments of both parties - the Ḥanafī and Ḥanbalī schools versus the Shāfi‘ī and Mālikī schools -, refutes the arguments of the latter two schools with plenty of textual evidences from the Holy Qur‘ān and ḥadīth and establishes beyond doubt the permissibility of gifting the reward of virtuous deeds to another person, be they deceased or alive, and be those virtuous deeds *ṣalāh*, fasting, ḥajj, ‘umrah, *ṣadaqah*, recitation of the Holy Qur‘ān, any other form of *dhikr* of Allāh or any other form of ‘*ibādah* – bodily, financial or a combination of both (see: *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, 2:352-419).

If one performs a single virtuous deed and gifts the reward of it to more than one person, it will be distributed between them all. If he intended, for example, gifting just half the reward or a quarter, the reward will be received thus (*Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, 2:391). However, after quoting this from *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, Imām Ibn ‘Ābidīn disagrees. He states: “Ibn Ḥajar al-Makkī [al-Shāfi‘ī] was asked regarding one who recited Sūrah al-Fātiḥa (once) for the dwellers of a cemetery. Will the reward be divided between them all or will each individual receive the full reward of the recitation? He replied that a group of scholars have ruled [that each individual will receive the full reward]. I (Ibn ‘Ābidīn) say: This befits [the infinite grace of Allāh Most Gracious].” (*Radd al-Muḥṭār*, 3:153)

Imām Ibn ‘Ābidīn also quotes from the *Fatāwā Tātarkhāniyyah* and *Al-Muḥīṭ* that it is best for the one gifting the reward of a supererogatory (*nafl*) act of ‘*ibādah* to intend gifting it to all the believing men and women, for, it reaches them without the reward of the actual performer of the virtuous deed diminishing in the least. That is, he himself will also earn the full reward from Allāh Most Gracious.

The veracity of the arguments, in favour, by the Ḥanafī jurists on this matter, in comparison, is more thorough and convincing than that of the Shāfi‘ī and Mālikī arguments against it. Detailed juristic discussions and evidences from the Holy Qur‘ān and ḥadīth may be seen in the works of the great scholars given in the bibliography below. Details of the editions are given in the Arabic bibliography.

In view of brevity and to avoid confusing the layman, complex juristic arguments have been omitted in this article. For, indeed, it does not befit the non-scholar to delve into juristic arguments without the necessary training and qualifications. His duty is to strive



to follow his school of sacred law (*madhhab*) to the best of his ability without deviation, while bearing in mind that the ruling of the Ḥanafī school on this matter is also shared by the majority of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah, across the various schools of sacred law.

Therefore, Muslims should have no hesitation or doubt in their minds about the Graciousness of Allah and His Mercy in multiplying and sharing the rewards of their virtuous deeds with their deceased loved ones or, indeed, with any worthy Muslim soul, wherever they may be. For, Allah's Compassion and Mercy encompasses everything:

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٧﴾ غَافِرٌ ﴿٧﴾

*Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allāh] with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], “Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire.” (Ghāfir 40:7)*

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*Mīnaḥ al-Rawḍ al-Azhar*, p.369  
*Nayl al-Awṭār*, 4:540, ḥadīth 1487-1491  
*Radd al-Muḥtār*, 3:151, 4:10, 9:176  
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