

Punishment in Barzakh for Non-Fulfillment of the Rights of Others

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

It is mentioned in the book of Misbahul Harmain that in the last days of his life, a respected personality named Shaykh Abdul Tahir Khorasani travelled to Mecca and made a vow that as long as he was alive he would remain there only and serve the holy house. During those days a person had a bag full of gems, jewels and money and he was looking for a reliable person who may hold it as a trust.

People suggested the name of Shaykh Abdul Tahir Khorasani and said that he was one of the most reliable and honest personality in Mecca. Thus he placed his trust with the Shaykh. After a period of time the Shaykh passed away. When the person who had kept his bag as trust returned, he was informed that the Shaykh was dead. When he approached the successors of the Shaykh, they expressed ignorance about the matter. That man was devastated and he was reduced to penury due to this.

However he was aware of the fact that the souls of believers arrive in Wadius Salaam and that they are free and communicate with each other. So he prayed to the Almighty Allah to enable him to see the deceased so that he can ask him about his money.

After a long time, when he did not get any reply from the valley he inquired from some scholar why it was so; that he was supplicating so much but not getting any reply from the Shaykh. They told him that it was possible that he might be in the place fixed for wrong doers. That is he might be Wadi Barhut, which is in Yemen.

Wadi Barhut is a dangerous valley having horrible wells and pits etc. It is often mentioned that extremely terrifying voices are heard in that place, in other words just as Wadius Salaam in the neighborhood of Amirul Momineen (a.s.) was a place of peace and safety for noble souls, in the same way, Wadi Barhut was a place of stay for wicked souls. [1](#)

In any case, that person set out for Wadi Barhut and became engrossed in prayer, fasting and supplications till one day he saw Shaykh Abdul

Tahir. He asked: Are you, Abdul Tahir? Yes, replied the Shaykh. But are you not the one who served the holy shrine in Mecca? Yes, said the Shaykh. That person asked about his bag and why the Shaykh was in such a bad condition. The Shaykh said: Your trust is buried in such and such corner of the house. You did not come to collect it for such a long time, so I could not return it to you before my death. Now you may go there and direct my survivors to restore your trust.

Sin, which Makes One Eligible for Chastisement in Barzakh

But as for your question at my bad condition; you should know that it is due to three sins: One is rights of others, which are like a rock attached to the wing of a bird that does not allow it to fly away.

Such is the seriousness of this matter that even though a person might have performed the Ziyarat of Kerbala, Mashad or served at holy Kaaba, he cannot get the neighborhood of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) if he has not observed this properly. No matter where the body of that person might be buried: in Mecca. Medina or Wadius Salaam, but it would not be allowed to proceed to the high heavens if it has not fulfilled the rights of others.

The following are those three rights.

Three Rights

The first sin, about which I was reminded is that I had cut off relations from my relatives in Khorasan and gone and settled down in Mecca. It is prohibited to sever relations. You paid no attention to the community and tribe. There are so many people who do not pay for the obligatory expenses of their children and parents and they do not care even if they are involved in some difficulty. They settle down in some other town and do not pay any heed to their condition and well-being.

And the second sin was that I had given a dinar to an undeserving person. The statement of the book is as follows: Perhaps one dinar was not given to a deserving person, instead it was given to an undeserving person and it is unlawful to deprive a deserving fellow.

Insulting a Scholar and Severe Chastisement

The third sin was that a scholar of religion resided in our neighborhood, and we caused insult to him. The scholar is having a right upon us and we learn about our religion from him. The scholar is having rights upon the society.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said: One who has insulted a scholar; it is as if he has insulted me. If

one is not attentive and has caused insult to a scholar or had been rude to him; it is as if he has denied the rights of the scholar and he would be answerable for that.

O God, what we shall do if You were to deal with justice with us? O God, we are fearful of Your justice.

O God, deal with us with mercy and grace; we are not having the capacity to bear Your justice.

Asking the Forgiveness of Neighbors at the Time of Death

It is recommended for one who feels that his death is near, to seek the forgiveness of his neighbors, friends and companion travelers. He should not say that in this way he has done a favor. Many a times one acts against the rights of neighborhood; for example one might have spoken to a neighbor in a raised voice or caused pain to him; but now one does not remember it.

Do not trespass on the rights of those who cultivate your company and understand the importance of travelling companion through this traditional report.

Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Jew Travel Companion

It is narrated that Imam Ali (a.s.) was returning to Kufa from a journey; when a person accompanied him on the way and during that journey the Imam (a.s.) asked him about his name, address and faith etc. He said: I am a resident of such and such locality near Kufa and I follow the Jewish religion. Amirul Momineen (a.s.) said: I also reside in Kufa and I am a Muslim. Both were traveling together.

The Jew started talking and after traveling for some time they reached a junction from where one road led to Kufa and another to the locality of that Jew. On reaching there Amirul Momineen (a.s.), instead of proceeding to Kufa continued walking with the Jew. Suddenly the Jew noticed this and asked: You are not going to Kufa? Imam Ali (a.s.) replied: Why not? The Jew said:

The road to Kufa is different; did you miss it? Why? The Imam asked, I had noticed this at that same place, but since you were my companion on a journey, I wanted to fulfill the rights of traveling companions. So I walked a few steps with you to bid farewell to you. The Jew was astounded and he asked: Is it your personal belief or your religious duty? Is this kind of fulfillment of human rights related to your religion? He replied: Yes, it is the command of my religion and school.

The Jew fell into contemplation: What religion is so concerned about human rights? The following day that Jew came to Kufa and saw in a nearby Masjid that his travel companion was surrounded by a huge crowd and every person was extending respect and honor to him. The Jew asked someone who that man was. He was told that he was the Caliph of Muslims and Amirul Momineen (a.s.).

The Jew began to think: Is this person really the leader of Muslims who was the previous day behaving with me with such humility and sincerity? All of a sudden that Jew fell at the feet of Amirul Momineen

(a.s.) and embraced Islam and became one of the special Shia followers of the Imam.

Siraat Bridge and Hell

If a person does not properly fulfill the right of others and dies in this condition, he would be involved in severe chastisement on Judgment Day and on Siraat Bridge. Some points are mentioned from the introduction for explanation of about the Siraat Bridge. The literal meaning of Siraat is way and in terminology whatever has been mentioned in the holy Shariat and what the Muslims are obligated to have faith in and also that which is included in the fundamentals of religion², it is a bridge over Hell.

Siraat is a Bridge over Hell

It is narrated from the seal of the prophets that he said: When Judgment Day would be established, they would haul Hell into the field of gathering³. It would have a thousand reins and each rein would be held by a hundred thousand powerful angels. When they would be hauling it, a call would be raised from Hell, which would pull the surrounding creatures to itself.

All would be calling out: O Allah come to help us! Except for the seal of the prophets; he would be saying: O Allah, help my Ummah. Like an affectionate father, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) would be concerned about the salvation of his Ummah. Thus it is mentioned in traditional reports that when the Hell would be brought, they would make a bridge above it so that people may cross it to enter Paradise. And hell is made to appear on that day. On that day shall man be mindful, and what shall being mindful (then) avail him?

On the Siraat Bridge for Three Thousand Years

Siraat is the way to Paradise; but it is a strange way. It is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) that the length of Siraat is equal to travel of three thousand years, in which there is an elevation of a thousand years and then a thousand years of decline and then a thousand years of travel through rocky terrain and through scorpions and wild animals. It is not an easy matter to cross the Siraat. Every person would pass over the Siraat Bridge according to his faith and the quantum of his good deeds.

Light of Belief and Deeds and the Siraat Bridge

There is no particular light on the Siraat Bridge; on the contrary there is darkness on it. Sun and moon are of no use over there. There is no light, except the effulgence of elegance of His Eminence Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.s.). On Judgment Day, the effulgence of Muhammad and Aale Muhammad (a.s.) and the effulgence of their Wilayat would be of use to man. Recitation of Quran and remembrance of the Almighty Allah, effulgence of sincerity of intention would illuminate the surroundings from all directions.⁴

Finally, how much effulgence one has obtained in this world and the illumination of a person would be to the extent an eye can see. Another light would be to a length of one Farsakh and the third would be such that he would be able to see before his feet. It is narrated that the light of someone would be so less that he would be able to illuminate only his toe and he would stumble all the time.

How to Traverse the Long Dark Path without Any Light?

The effulgence of Wudhu and Ghusl is worship. It would shine from all the physical parts of the body subject to the condition that darkness of sin should not have covered the shining effulgence. This long way is equal to travel of three thousand years. How can it be traversed without the effulgence of good deeds? As much effulgence we can take with us to the grave would be less.

Siraat Bridge is Perceptive

All the things of the Hereafter possess perception and feelings. They are completely different from the material world. So much so that even the earth is having the perception of Judgment Day. The Siraat Bridge is also having perception, feelings and understanding. One who steps on the Siraat Bridge; if he is a believer, his feet would be pure, clean and broad.

And the Siraat Bridge would be pleased with his passing over it. And if the infidel or a sinner would pass over it, the Siraat Bridge would start trembling and the Holy Quran has declared that the whole Hereafter is alive.⁵ Life has enveloped the whole of the after world. Thus the Siraat Bridge recognizes individuals.

When it notices an obedient servant passing over it, it becomes leveled and smooth for him and when it sees a disobedient man walking on it, it begins to tremble under his feet to such an extent that it becomes thinner than a strand of hair, sharper than sword and darker than night. There are many passes of Siraat, from which three are mentioned here, which are related to worship acts under discussion.

A Terrible, but True Dream

Haji Noori (r.a.) has narrated from a respected Shaykh in Mustadrakul Wasail that he said: There was a Masjid in our locality. Its caretaker was a person named Muhammad bin Abi Uzniya and that Shaykh was also among the managers, founders and teacher of that Masjid and every day he came to it on the appointed time and delivered discourses. One day they continued to wait for a long time, but that Shaykh did not arrive.

Some people were sent to look for him and seek information why he had failed to show up. They reported that the Shaykh had taken ill. All the people waiting for him in the Masjid arose and set out to visit him. When they came to his house, they found the Shaykh in bed, and he had a towel around his head and was groaning in pain; saying again and again: I got burnt! I got burnt!

When they asked what was wrong, he said: Except for the thigh, my whole body is burning from head to toe. They asked how this was so. He replied: I was asleep last night, when I dreamt that Qiyamat has been established. They have brought Hell near and a bridge was placed over it for people to cross.

I also was among those who were passing over it. In the beginning, I was all right, but as I moved forward, it was becoming difficult for me. The space below my feet was becoming narrower. I began to stumble. The way narrowed down further.

There was only fire below my steps and it was beating me like melted butter. One of my feet was collapsing. I shifted my weight on the other leg and at last regained balance. But the flames were pulling me down. I could see nothing. I was thrashing my limbs here and there, but it was of no use and no one hearkened to my entreaties. Suddenly a thought came to me that was Imam Ali (a.s.) not a helper? Thus, love for Ali (a.s.) impelled me to call out O Ali!

As soon as I uttered this statement I perceived the effulgence of Imam Ali (a.s.) at my head. When I raised my head, I saw that Imam Ali (a.s.) was standing near the Siraat Bridge and saying: Give me your hand. I stretched out my hand and when Imam Ali (a.s.) extended his hand the fire moved completely aside. His graceful hand saved me and brought me up. Then he passed his affectionate hand over my thigh; after that I awoke from that terrifying nightmare.

My whole body had burned down except that spot where Amirul Momineen (a.s.) passed his hand. The Shaykh removed the towel from his body and except for some portions of his thigh, his whole body was covered with boils. The Shaykh received treatment for three months and only then he was cured. After that whenever he was asked in a gathering and he narrated the incident, he used to get fever due to fear.

Who can Remain Steadfast on the Straight Path all the Life?

There is a traditional report in the third volume of Biharul Anwar that no one from the past and the future persons can pass over the Siraat Bridge without hardships and difficulties, except for the Seal of the Prophets and his Purified Ahle Bayt (a.s.).

His Eminence has himself said: O Ali, no one can pass over the Siraat Bridge without problems, but I, you and your descendants: they are fourteen purified lights, who can traverse the Siraat Bridge without any problem; but the remaining creatures would not pass over the Siraat Bridge without stumbling. Who is steadfast on the Straight Path all the life? Who is it that passes a whole day without any mistake? Who is it that does not deviate from the true path even for a moment?

Explanation of Thinner than a Strand of Hair and Sharper than a

Sword

There are so many days, which pass in disobedience from morning to night and they do not pass in obedience of the Almighty Allah. On the contrary, all the day is spent in following the carnal desires. So much do we deviate from our destination that we do not even notice it. It is a fact that the identification of path of true religion is very intricate and it is thinner than a strand of hair and acting on religious law is more difficult than a sharp sword.

Everyone would be Caused Distress by Hell

In the end, everyone would have to pass through Hell and everyone would be distressed by it. At the time of crossing the Siraat Bridge every person would be terrified of Hell and would be surrounded by flames, burning of the heart and crying; and a flame would arise from Hell, which would surround all the people and shake up the prophets as well. We don't know what has befallen us! All would be hiding their heads between their knees ⁶All would be saying: O Allah, help us! In any case, salvation is only for those who are pious.⁷ In other words., if someone thinks that he can escape the Siraat Bridge; he should know that it is impossible, because the Siraat Bridge is path to Paradise and there is Hell below it.

Reality of the Hereafter Cannot be Imagined

The condition of the afterworld can never be imagined or understood by the people of this world. It is an impossible thing. As long as man is alive, he cannot truly understand the reality of Paradise and Hell. The commonality of words leads one to form a vague idea, but the reality is much beyond that. For example, if we say: The fire of Hell; due to use of common words, we at once form an imagination of a fire produced by coal. Or when we say: Snakes and scorpions of Hell: at once we get an imagination of worldly snakes and scorpions, because our perception can form only this imagination.

¹. Maad, Ayatullah Dastghaib

². Surah Mominoon 23:74

³. Surah Fajr 89:23

⁴. Surah Hadid 57: 12

⁵. Surah Ankabut 29:64

⁶. Surah Jathiya 45:25

⁷. Surah Maryam 19:72

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/fr/barzakh-purgatory-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi/punishment-barzakh-non-fulfillment-rights#comment-0>