

Responsibility 59: Serving the Imam

Serving the Imam to the best of one's ability is another responsibility of a true believer and even the Angels and the Prophets take pride in assisting the Imam! In addition, we are told that one of the Prophets who holds a very high status namely Prophet Khir comes to the assistance of the Imam when a need arises.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

وَلَوْ أَدْرَكْتُهُ لَخَدَّمْتُهُ أَيَّامَ حَيَاتِي

“If I would have met him (al-Mahdi), I would serve him for my entire life.”¹

Helping other believers is a highly recommended act in Islam which carries a great reward. In addition, it is one of the distinct characteristics of the true believers and leaders of the faith, that they can be easily recognized through their assisting the creations of Allah.

Therefore, providing assistance to the Imam who is the true leader of our time and for all the faithful, is the best form of worship and obedience (to Allah)

Prophet 'Isa b. Mariam has said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْخَوَارِجِينَ لِي إِلَيْكُمْ حَاجَةٌ أَقْضُوها لِي. قَالُوا قُضِيَتْ حَاجَتُكَ يَا رُوحَ اللَّهِ. فَقَامَ فَقَبَّلَ أَقْدَامَهُمْ (أَوْ فِي بَعْضِ النُّسخِ فَغَسَلَ أَقْدَامَهُمْ) فَقَالُوا: كُنَّا نَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِهَذَا يَا رُوحَ اللَّهِ! فَقَالَ: إِنَّ أَحَقَّ النَّاسِ بِالْخِدْمَةِ الْعَالَمُ إِنَّمَا تَوَاضَعْتُ هُكْذَا لِكَيْمَا تَتَوَاضَعُوا بَعْدِي فِي النَّاسِ كَتَوَاضَعِي لَكُمْ

“O’ assembly of disciples! I have a desire which I wish you to fulfill for me.” They said: “Consider it done O’ Spirit of Allah!” So he (‘Isa) stood up and kissed their feet [in some narrations it is mentioned that he washed their feet]. The companions said: “We were more worthy to do this for you, O’ Spirit of Allah!”

He said: “Indeed the person who has the most right to serve the people is the scholar. I have displayed

this humility (to you) so that after me, you too will show this form of humbleness to the people just as I have done for you.”^{[2](#)}

Indeed, Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) is the most worthy of people who is deserving of our assistance and there are many proofs for this.

Thus, assisting Imam al-Hujjah (ajtf) can be accomplished through helping his friends, followers and the Shi'a of the Imam fulfilling their needs, alleviating the difficulties and solving issues which may come up their lives all of these are ways in which one can assist the Imam.

In addition, establishing gatherings for the remembrance of the Imam or to write and spread the teachings in relation to him strengthening the theological seminaries, etc if these are done with the intention that one wishes to assist the Imam, then they are counted and recognized (by Allah) as being things done to help the Imam.

Therefore, we see that there are many ways in which one can assist the Imam, however they must be performed with the intention that they are being doing with the purpose of assisting him.

It must be mentioned that there is a difference between 'serving' and 'helping'. The word 'serving' is much more specific in its meaning than 'helping', and thus, every form of 'helping' does not necessarily mean that one is 'serving' someone.

'Serving' another person can be accomplished through overseeing and also directly acting and performing a task, however 'helping' and assisting does not require overseeing nor the direct performance of a task.

Thus, assisting someone can be done without anyone overseeing the task and can also be done indirectly and through the help and assistance of other people.

In other words, in regards to serving, the one who is serving another person must himself be overseen and perform the actions himself. However the act of helping can even be done by hiring someone else to do the job.

Another difference is that with serving, a person who is performing this task is humbling and lowering himself and expressing his insignificance to the one whom he is serving however this is not the case in regards to helping someone else.

It is also important to mention that if the act of assisting is done with the intention of serving a person and there is some form of overseeing in this issue, then it would be counted as serving (that person) as well. ³

¹ Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 51, pg. 148, sec. 6, no. 22

² al-Kafi, vol. 1, pg. 37, sec. 'The Characteristics of the 'Ulama,' no. 6

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