

Strengthening Ties of Kinship with Non-Muslim Relatives

- a. Narrated Asma' bint Abu Bakr: My mother came to me during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (p), and she was a polytheist. I said to the Prophet (p) (seeking his verdict), *"My mother has come to me and she desires to receive something from me, shall I keep good relations with her?"* The Prophet (p) said, *"Yes, keep good relation with her."*¹ From other versions of this hadith, some scholars have concluded that Asma's mother desired to improve her relationship with her daughter², and also brought her gifts.³ She had no desire to accept Islam and was still inclined to her polytheism (*shirk*).⁴
- b. The Prophet's companion, Abu Hurayrah relates that after Qur'an 26:214 was revealed,⁵ the Prophet (p) summoned the Quraysh and said to them, *"O Bani Abd Shams, O Bani Ka'ab ibn Lu'ayy, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Bani Murrah ibn Ka'ab, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Bani Abdul Manaf, safeguard yourselves against the Fire, O Bani Hashim, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Bani Abdul Muttalib, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Fatimah, safeguard thyself against the Fire, for I*

¹ Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, vol.24, p.78; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith nos.2620, 5979 and 2477; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.2372; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad*, (ed. Shu'aib al-Arnaut and others), 2nd Ed., Muassasah al-Risalah, Beirut, 1999, hadith no.26915; Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzaq bin Hammam al-San'ani, *Musannaf Abd al-Razzaq*, (ed. Habib al-Rahman al-A'zami), 2nd Ed., Al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 1403AH, hadith no.9932.

² Abu Zakariyyah Yahya bin Sharaf an-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1392AH, vol.7, p.89; Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol.3, no.103a, in *Alim 6.0*; Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Adam al-Ethiopy, *Al-Bahr al-Muhiyt al-Thajjaj fi Sharh Sahih al-Imam Muslim bin al-Hajjaj*, Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, Riyadh, 1432AH, vol.19, p.304.

³ Al-Qurtubi, quoted by Shaykh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghudda, *Islamic Manners*, (Trans. by Muhammad Zahid Abu Ghudda and Edited by S.M. Hassan Al-Banna), Awakening Publications, 2001, pp.76-77; See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.3, no.789 for the hadith.

⁴ Abu Zakariyyah Yahya bin Sharaf an-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1392 AH, vol.7, p.89; Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Adam al-Ethiopy, *Al-Bahr al-Muhiyt al-Thajjaj fi Sharh Sahih al-Imam Muslim bin al-Hajjaj*, Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, Riyadh, 1432AH, vol.19, p.304.

⁵ The verse reads, *"So do not invoke with Allah another deity and [thus] be among the punished. And warn, [O Muhammad], your closest kindred."* (Qur'an 26:213-214)

*can avail you nothing against Allah. I have ties of kinship with you, and these I shall continue to honour.”*⁶

Supporting Texts

“As for such (of the unbelievers) who do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably.” (Qur’an 60:8)

The Prophet (p) said, *“No one begins to give (charity) intending thereby to unite ties of relationship without Allah providing him with much more because of it, and no one will begin to beg, seeking thereby to gain abundance, without Allah giving him still more scarcity because of it.”*⁷

Umar bin Khattab said, ‘I heard the apostle of Allah say, *“an oath or vow to disobey the Lord (Allah), or to break ties of relationship, or about something over which one has no control, is not binding on you.”*⁸

Abu Hurayrah reported that a person said to the Prophet Muhammad (p), “I have relatives with whom I try to have close relationship, but they sever (this relation). I treat them well, but they treat me ill. I am sweet to them but they are harsh towards me.” Upon this he (the Prophet (p)) said, *“If it is as you have said, then you in fact throw hot ashes (upon their faces), and there would always remain with you on behalf of Allah (an Angel to support you) who would keep you dominant over them so long as you adhere to this (path of righteousness).”*⁹

Abdullah bin 'Amr reported that the Prophet (p) said, *“Al-Wasil is not the one who recompenses the good done to him by his relatives, but Al-Wasil is the one who keeps good relations with those*

⁶*Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.522; *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, hadith no.8402; *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, hadith no.48; *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, hadith no.3185; *Sunan al-Nasai*, hadith no.3684.

⁷*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, hadith no.1319.

⁸*Abu Dawud*, hadith no.1448.

⁹*Sahih Muslim*, hadith no.6689, *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, hadith no.7992, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, hadith no.52, *Mujam al-Awsat*, hadith no.2786.

relatives who had severed the bond of kinship with him."¹⁰

Comments

According to Ibn 'Uyainah, it was on the occasion of the above-mentioned case of Asma and her mother that the Qur'an verse 60:8 was revealed, "*As for such (of the unbelievers) as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably.*"¹¹

Asma's mother, Qutaylah was a polytheist from the hostile polytheists of Mecca when she came to visit her daughter. Asma's hesitation about admitting her mother into her home might be tied to the history of their relationship, or a concern for the safety of her father Abu Bakr and her husband Zubayr bin al-Awwam, both of whom were important figures within the Muslim community.¹²

Despite this concern, the Qur'anic verse and Prophet's (p) statement still encouraged Asma to show hospitality and kindness to her mother, when he said, "*keep good relations with her*".

Another version of the hadith as related by Abu Dawud reads: "My mother came to me *ragibah* (i.e., demanding) during the period of Quraish, then, she *ragimah* (disliked - Islam) and she was a *Mushrikah* (polytheist)". Imam Nawawi commented on the above hadith that, 'Al-Qadi said: *Ragibah* means that she is yearning and seeking for my kinship, while *ragimah* means she disliked Islam and hated it.' Then al-Nawawi said: this implies the permissibility of tying the kinship of a polytheist relative".

Imam al-Bukhari mentioned this hadith under the chapter titled: "*Giving Presents to Al-Mushrikun (Polytheists)*"; and Imam Badr al-Din al-'Ayni said while commenting on this hadith:

¹⁰*Sahih Bukhari*, hadith no.5645, *Abu Dawud*, hadith no.1699, *Tirmidhi*, hadith no.1908.

⁷⁴ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3.13, vol.8, p.16.

¹²Omar Suleiman and Mohammad Elshinawy, *How the Prophet Muhammad Rose Above Enmity and Insult*, Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 2016, p. 29.

“Maintaining ties of kinship with closely related people becomes permissible if there has not been betrayal, even if they are not Muslims.”¹³

Implications and Lessons

This narrative shows the permissibility of maintaining good relations, exchanging gifts, and being kind to non-Muslims. Thus, maintaining ties of kinship is something that should be actively pursued, irrespective of the difference in faith. It also negates the opinion of those who claim that Muslims are not supposed to interact with people of other faiths in a generous and friendly manner.

¹³ Badr al-Din al-‘Ayni, *‘Umdah al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3.13, vol.22, p.402.