

Can a Hadeeth contradict a Verse from the Qur'aan?

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: There are some who say that if a hadeeth contradicts an ayah in the Qur'aan, it should be rejected no matter what level of authenticity it has. Then they use as an example the hadeeth: "Indeed the deceased person will be punished due to the weeping (i.e. wailing) of his family over him"¹ and use the statement of 'A'ishah in which she quoted Allaah's saying to refute this hadeeth: "And no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another."² So how do we respond to those who say this?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said: Rejecting this hadeeth falls under the issues related to rejecting the Sunnah by way of the Qur'aan. So this shows the deviation of this way of thinking.

As for the response to this hadeeth – and I am referring here particularly to those who use the hadeeth of 'A'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her – then it is as follows:

First:

From a Hadeeth Standpoint: There is no way to reject this hadeeth from a hadeeth standpoint due to two reasons:

1. It has been reported through an authentic chain of narration from Ibn 'Umar (radyallaahu 'anhu).
2. Ibn 'Umar (radyallaahu 'anhu) is not alone in reporting it since he was followed in that by 'Umar bin Al-Khattaab (radyallaahu 'anhu). Furthermore, he and his son are both not alone in reporting it either, for they were also followed in that by Al-Mugheerah bin Shu'bah (radyallaahu 'anhu). This is what comes to my mind at this time since the reports of all three of these Companions can be found in the two Saheeh Collections.

Additionally, if a person were to conduct an exclusive research on this hadeeth, he would find other paths of narration for it. These three ahaadeeth all have authentic chains of

¹ Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer (no. 1970)

² [Soorah Faatir: 18]

narration. So they cannot be rejected merely on the claim that they “contradict” the noble Qur'aan.

Second:

From a Tafseer Standpoint: This is since the scholars have explained this hadeeth in two ways:

1. This hadeeth only applies to a deceased person who knew during the course of his life that his family would commit oppositions to the Religion after his death but yet he did not advise them. So (for example) he did not direct them to not weep over him since this weeping would serve as a means for him being punished in the grave.

The usage of the word “the” when referring to the “deceased person” is not all-encompassing and inclusive. So the hadeeth does not mean that every deceased person will be punished due to the crying of his family members. Rather, the word “the” here is for a specific designation, meaning it refers to only those who do not advise others to not commit what opposes the Religion after his death. So this is the type of person who will be punished by the weeping of his family over him.

As for the one who takes charge of advising his family and directing them with religious guidelines such as not to wail over him and not to commit the offenses that are done particularly in these times, then such a person will not be punished. However, if he does not direct and advise (his family) with this, he will be punished.

This is the detailed breakdown that we must be aware of with regard to the first explanation. It is in accordance with the interpretation of many well known and famous scholars such as An-Nawawee and others. So when we come to comprehend this detailed breakdown, it becomes clear that there is in fact no contradiction between this hadeeth and Allaah's statement: **“And no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another.”**³

A contradiction only arises if the word “the” in the word “the deceased person” is understood to be all-inclusive, meaning that it encompasses everyone who dies. This is where the hadeeth becomes obscure and contradicts the noble ayah in the Qur'aan. But if we understand the (true) meaning of the hadeeth that we just mentioned previously, then there is no more contradictions or obscurities since we would come to realise that the one who is being punished is only that way because he failed to advise and direct his family members (before his death). This is the first manner in which this hadeeth has been interpreted in order to repel this so-called “contradiction.”

2. A second interpretation has been mentioned by Shaykh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, in some of his writings. And it is that the punishment here does

³ [Soorah Al-An'aam: 164]

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not refer to the punishment in the grave or the punishment in the Hereafter but rather that it refers to pain and sorrow. Meaning: When a dead person hears his family members weeping over him, he will feel bad and sorrowful for their grief over his loss.

This is what Shaykh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah said. If it were correct, it would remove the misconception from its root. However, I say: Such an explanation goes against two facts, which is why we can only rely on the first explanation of this hadeeth:

The First Fact: The report from Al-Mugheerah bin Shu'abah (radyallaahu 'anhu) that I indicated previously has an addition to it, which clarifies that the punishment here does not refer to just pain and sorrow but rather to actual punishment, i.e. punishment in the Hellfire, unless Allaah grants His forgiveness. This is clearly stated in Allaah's saying: **"Verily, Allaah does not forgive that partners be associated with Him (in worship), but He forgives what is less than that to whom He wills."**⁴

In the narration of Al-Mugheerah (radyallaahu 'anhu) it states: **"Indeed, the deceased person will be punished due to the weeping of his family over him on the Day of Judgement."** So this clearly states that the deceased will be punished due to his family crying over him on the Day of Judgement and not in his grave, which is what Ibn Taymeeyah explained as meaning pain and sorrow.

The Second Fact: When a person dies, he no longer has a sense of anything that goes on around him whether good or bad, as indicated by evidences from the Qur'aan and Sunnah, except in certain cases, which have been mentioned in some ahaadeeth either as a rule for every deceased person or for only some, such as those whom Allaah enables to hear certain things that will cause them pain.

So firstly there is the hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree in his Saheeh from Anas bin Maalik (radyAllaahu 'anhu) in which he narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: **"Verily, when a servant (of Allaah) is placed in his grave, and his companions depart from him – at the point where he can still hear their footsteps – two angels come to him."**⁵

This authentic hadeeth affirms a special type of hearing that the deceased will have at the time of his burial while the people are walking away from him. This means that at the time the two angels come to sit by him, his soul returns to his body and in this state of being, he is able to hear the footsteps (of his loved ones walking away). So the hadeeth does not mean on the outset that this deceased person and all deceased people will have their souls returned to them and that they will remain with the ability to hear the footsteps of the people passing by the graves up until the day that they are resurrected. No.

⁴ [Soorah An-Nisaa: 48]

⁵ Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer (no. 1675)

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This is a specific circumstance and a special type of hearing on the part of the deceased since his soul has come back to him.

Therefore, if we were to go by the interpretation of Ibn Taymeeyah, we would then be forced to expand the senses of the deceased person to include everything that goes on around him whether at the time he is being transferred to his grave before burial or after he is placed in his grave so that he can hear his living family members weeping over him. Such a claim requires textual proof, which is not present. This is the first point.

Secondly, some texts from the Qur'aan and the authentic Sunnah indicate that the deceased cannot hear. This is a vast topic and it requires an in-depth discussion. However I will mention one hadeeth with which I will conclude the answer to this question. And it is the statement of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) in which he said: **“Verily, Allaah has angels that roam throughout earth who convey to me the greetings (of Salaam) on behalf of my Ummah.”**⁶

What is meant by “roam” here is that they frequent gatherings. So every time a Muslim sends Salaat (praises) on the Prophet, there is an assigned angel that conveys this greeting from that Muslim to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). Therefore, if the deceased were able to hear, the one with the most right to hear out of all of those deceased would be our Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) due to Allaah's favouring him and particularising him with special qualities and attributes over all of the prophets, messengers, and rest of mankind. So if anyone had the ability to hear, it would be the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). And furthermore, if the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) were able to hear anything after his death, he would hear the Salaat (praises) of his Ummah on him.

So here we come to understand the error, or the deviation, of those who ask assistance – not from the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) – but rather from those less than him, whether messengers, prophets or righteous people. This is since if they were to ask assistance from the Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), he would not be able to hear them as is clearly stated in the Qur'aan: **“And those whom you call besides Allaah are servants (of Allaah) just like you.”**⁷

And in His saying: **“If you supplicate to them, they cannot hear your supplication.”**⁸

So therefore, after they die, the deceased cannot hear unless there is some text that applies to a particular issue – as I mentioned before – such as the deceased hearing the footsteps. This concludes the answer to this question.

⁶ Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer (no. 2174)

⁷ [Soorah Al-A'raaf: 194]

⁸ [Soorah Faatir: 14]