

Abu Hurayrah narrated that:

1

A man came to God's Messenger (peace be upon him) and asked: 'Of all people, who has the first claim to my good companionship?'

2

The Prophet said: 'Your mother'. The man asked: 'Who comes next?' The Prophet said: 'Next is your mother'. The man asked: 'And who comes next?' The Prophet said: 'Then your mother'.

3

The man again asked: 'Who comes next?' The Prophet said: 'Next is your father'. And in another version, the Prophet said: 'Your mother, then your mother, then your mother, then your father,

4

then the nearest and the nearest'.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5971; Muslim (his version) 2548.

From the Qur'an

﴿Anything good you spend of your wealth should go to parents and the near of kin.﴾ (2: 215)

﴿We have enjoined upon man to show kindness to his parents: in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. His bearing and weaning takes thirty months.﴾ (46: 15)

﴿Your Lord has ordained that you shall worship none but Him, and that you must be kind to your parents. Should one of them, or both, attain to old age in your care, never say 'Ugh' to them or chide them, but always speak gently and kindly to them, (23) and spread over them humbly the wings of your tenderness, and say, 'My Lord, bestow on them Your grace, even as they reared and nurtured me when I was a child'.﴾ (17: 23-24)

The Narrator

Abu Hurayrah whose name according to the best reports was 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr' belonged to the Daws tribe, a branch of the Azd from Yemen. He embraced Islam in Year 7 AH, when the Battle of Khaybar took place. He always remained close to the Prophet and was keen to learn. He memorized numerous hadiths and was the leading narrator of hadiths among the Prophet's companions. He was appointed Governor of Bahrain during the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, but he then relinquished his post and lived in Madinah until he died in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

Summary

One of the Prophet's companions puts the question about the first claimant to his kindness and good treatment. The Prophet answered that his mother is the one who deserves this. He repeated this three times before mentioning the father on the fourth occasion. Then other relatives, according to the closeness of kinship.



Message and Meaning

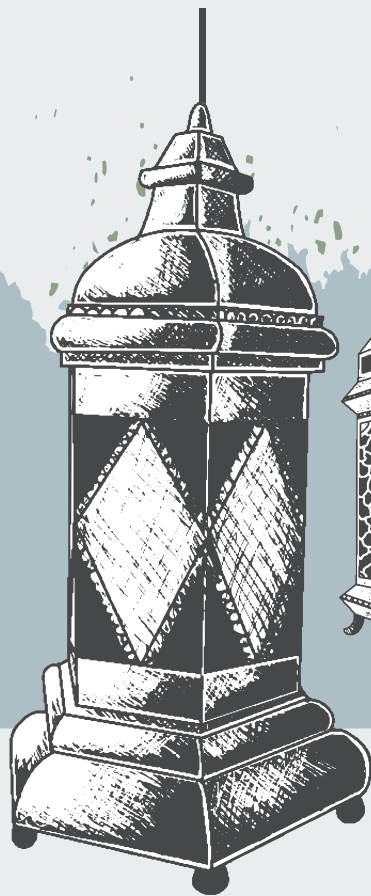
1

A man asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) who had the first claim to his good companionship, kind treatment, good will, as well as his financial support and any type of help.

2

The Prophet told him that his mother was the one who deserved this more than anyone else. The man asked who came second, but the Prophet gave him the same answer, mentioning his mother. This was to emphasize one's mother's right and fitting status. The man put the question a third time, but the answer that was given was the same.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) gives the same answer three times in order to give the mother her due of care and good companionship. She went through a long and difficult pregnancy, then a hard childbirth. She further took the trouble of breastfeeding and bringing her child up. Therefore, her claim takes precedence ahead of the father's claim and all other people. In fact, she has a claim for every aspect of what she does for her child. As such, she has double the father's claim.



3

The man again asked the Prophet who came next to the mother, and the Prophet mentioned his father. That the father came next is because he has a strong claim on his children because of having undertaken their upbringing and paid their living expenses. However, the mother has the first claim. The Prophet said: 'One's father is the middle gate of Heaven. One may lose or retain this gate'.⁽¹⁾ This order is useful when parents' claims are too many and a son or daughter cannot meet them all. In this case, the mother's claim takes precedence.

4

Other relatives come next, and when claims cannot all be fulfilled, then the nearness of kinship determines who is given priority. This is the same as in inheritance, as God gives right of inheritance to the nearest of kin then to the one who follows. Again this order applies when it is impossible to meet all claims and give their dues to all relatives, in-laws, friends, etc. If all claims can be met, then there is no prioritization. All should be fulfilled.

The hadith implies that people should be given their dues and their status respected. Each should be given their dues according to their close relationship.



1 Related by Ahmad, 28061; Ibn Mājah, 3663; al-Tirmidhī, 1900.

Implementation

1

Determining priorities of claims is not subject to personal preference. It must be according to what God says and the Prophet's Sunnah.

2

A Muslim should not take any action without first ascertaining the Islamic ruling applicable to it. The hadith tells us that the Prophet's companion asked him who deserves his care and love most, although one knows by nature that parents and close relatives are the ones to be preferred.

3

Every Muslim should make sure that he is dutiful and especially kind to his mother. She is the one who is first entitled to his love, care and kindness.

4

Educators and advocates of Islam should not feel irritated by being asked many questions, remembering that theirs is a role of teaching and pointing out what is of benefit to people.

5

Al-Ḥasan was asked what does dutifulness to parents mean in practice? He said: 'To make whatever you have available to them and to obey them in whatever they order you, unless it involves disobedience of God'.⁽¹⁾

6

There was a dispute between Abu al-Aswad al-Du'alī, who belonged to the *tābi'īn* generation, and his divorced wife. He wanted to take his son from her. He went to see Ziyād ibn Abīh, the Governor of Basrah. The woman said to him: 'What is this child to me? My tummy was his refuge; my lap his garden; my breast his drink. I took care of him when he was asleep, and looked after him when awake. I continued to do this for seven years. When he is now independent and I am hoping that he will be of help to me, his father wants to take him from me by force'. Abu al-Aswad said: 'This is my son. I had him within me before she was pregnant with him, and I separated with him before she gave birth to him. I am the one who looks after his education and provides for his keep'. The woman said: 'He tells the truth. He carried him when he was light, while I carried him heavy. He separated with him with desire but my separation was painful'. Ziyād said to him: 'Give the woman her child back. She deserves to have him more than you, and do not trouble me with your pedantry'.⁽²⁾

7

A person who denies his mother who brought him up with care and kindness her rights and dues is one from whom no good is to be expected.

8

'Ā'ishah narrated: 'I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) who has the best claim against a woman? He said: "Her husband". I said: And who has the best claim against a man? He said: "His mother"'.⁽³⁾

1 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Al-Tawqīh liSharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Vol. 28, p. 241.

2 Ibid, p. 240.

3 Related by al-Nasā'i, 9103; al-Ḥākim, 7244.

9

Dutifulness to one's father takes precedence over every other duty, including those due to one's wife, children and all others. Therefore, no Muslim should ever neglect his father's right.

10

A person who can fulfil his duty to both his parents at the same time should do so. It is his binding duty. If this is impossible, the mother's right takes precedence.

11

Dutifulness to parents does not cease when they die. Abu Usayd narrated: 'We were with God's Messenger when a man said: "Messenger of God, now that my parents are dead, is there any act of dutifulness left for me to do so as to be dutiful to them?" The Prophet answered: "Yes. There are four things: supplicating for them and praying that God grants them forgiveness; fulfilment of their wills; being kind to their friends and maintaining good relations with those of your relatives with whom your kinship is established only through them"⁽¹⁾.

12

All relations including one's own children, spouse, siblings, etc. are in a lower grade than one's parents. They cannot be equated with them in what is due to them of care and kind treatment.

13

When claims are numerous and it becomes unlikely that one can fulfil all the claims of one's family and relations, one must start with the closest relatives, according to the order of inheritance. The first claim is that of one's parents, then come those of one's children, spouse, siblings, etc.



1 Related by Ahmad, 16156; al-Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 35; Abu Dāwūd, 5142; Ibn Mājah, 3664.

