# 70446 - The difference between qasd (objectives) and niyyah (intention) and the importance of intention in fiqh

**the question**

What is the difference between qasd (objectives) and niyyah (intention)? What is the importance of objectives in fiqh?.

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Objective (qasd) in the terminology of the fuqaha’ means the resolve to do something. Mu’jam al-Mustalahaat wa’l-Alfaaz al-Fiqhiyyah (3/96).

Niyyah, as al-Quraafi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, means: The intention in a person’s heart of what he wants to do. Al-Dhakheerah (1/20).

Al-Nawawi defined it as: Resolve in the heart to do an obligatory or other action. al-Majmoo’ (1/310).

From the definition given by al-Quraafi it is clear that niyyah and qasd are close in meaning. Hence niyyah is defined as being qasd, but Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) was of the view that there is some difference between them. He said: Niyyah is exactly qasd but there are two differences between it and qasd:

1 – Qasd may be connected to the action of the doer himself or the action of others, whereas niyyah is connected only to his own actions. It cannot be imagined that a man would intend the deed of another, but it may be imagined that he would want it.

2 – Qasd can only refer to an action that the person is able to do and wants to do, whereas niyyah may refer to a person intending to do what he is able to do and what he is unable to do. Hence in the hadeeth of Abu Kabshah al-Anmaari, which was narrated by Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi and others, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “There are four types of people in this world: a man to whom Allah gives wealth and knowledge, so he fears his Lord with regard to the way in which he disposes of his wealth, and he uses it to uphold ties of kinship and he realizes that Allah has rights over it. This man occupies the highest status. And a man to whom Allah has given knowledge but did not give him wealth, so he says, ‘If I had wealth I would have done the same as So and so is doing.’ So he will be rewarded according to his intention [niyyah] and the reward of both of them is the same. And a person to whom Allah has given wealth but not knowledge. That is the worst status before Allah. Then he said: A person to whom Allah has given neither wealth nor knowledge, and he says: ‘If I had money I would have done what So and so is doing’. So he will be judged  according to his intention [niyyah], and the burden (of sin) of both of them will be the same.” So niyyah has to do with that which is possible and that which is not possible, unlike qasd (objectives) and iraadah (will), which have nothing to do with that which is not possible, whether it is one’s actions or the actions of another.

End quote from Badaa’i’ al-Fawaa’id (3/190). See also al-Qawaa’id al-Kulliyyah wa’l-Dawaabit al-Fiqhiyyah by Dr. Muhammad ‘Uthmaan Shabeer, p. 93, 94.

Secondly:

Objectives are very important in fiqh. It is sufficient for you to know that one of the most important principles is that matters are judged by their aims and objectives, which is based on the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “Actions are but by intention and each person will have but that which he intended.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari (1) and Muslim (1907).

Al-Suyooti (may Allah have mercy on him) said: You should know that there are plenty of reports from the imams which speak of the great importance of the hadeeth about intention (niyyah). Abu ‘Ubaydah said: There is nothing in the reports of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that is more comprehensive, rich in meaning or more useful than this. Imam al-Shaafa’i,

Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Mahdi, Ibn al-Madeeni, Abu Dawood, al-Daaraqutni and others were agreed that it is one-third of knowledge, and some of them said that it is one-quarter thereof. Al-Bayhaqi based its being one-third of knowledge on the fact that a person earns reward by the actions of his heart, tongue and physical faculties, so intention (niyyah) is one of these three categories and the most important of them, because it may be an independent act of worship, and the others need it. … al-Shaafa'i said: It may be entered through seventy doors."(Al-Ashbaah wa'l-Nazaa'ir p. 9).

This points to the importance of knowing aims and objectives, and giving them their due weight.

And Allah knows best.