98311 - If he has been wronged by his family and his brothers, does he have the right to limit his interaction with them to greeting them with salaam?

the question

If someone has been wronged by his family and brothers, and they are persisting in their attitude, does he have the right to reduce his interactions with them, and limit it to greeting them with salaam? Is that permissible, or is it regarded as shunning which is prohibited?

Detailed answer

For a woman to uphold ties of kinship with her brothers and sisters is something that is emphasized in Islamic teachings, because of what is mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the command to uphold ties of kinship and the prohibition on severing such ties. This upholding of ties may be achieved by visiting, keeping in touch and asking after them, according to whatever a person is able to do.

You should not fall short in this important righteous deed, and you should not let the harshness of your siblings or their mistreatment of you prompt you to do that, for you will be rewarded for upholding ties with them, even if they fall short in their treatment of you. Muslim (2558) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that a man said: O Messenger of Allah, I have relatives with whom I try to uphold ties, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they mistreat me. I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me. He said: "If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot ashes in their mouths. Allah will continue to support you against them so long as you persist in doing that."

What is meant by "putting hot ashes in their mouths" is a metaphor for what they incur of sin, which is likened to the pain that the one who eats hot ashes feels. And it was said that what is meant is that what they consume of your kindness is like hot ashes that burn their stomachs.

But if mixing with them is hurtful to you and increases resentment between you and your relatives, then you can limit it to greeting them with salaam, and you can visit them and talk to

them less frequently.

Greeting with salaam negates the shunning that is prohibited, and protects you from sin.

Al-Bukhaari (6237) and Muslim (2561) narrated from Abu Ayyoob that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “It is not permissible for a Muslim to shun his brother for more than three days, each of them turning away from the other when they meet. The better of them is the first to greet the other with salaam.”

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr said: The scholars differed with regard to two people who shun one another, then one of them greets the other with salaam: does that negate the shunning or not? Ibn Wahb narrated from Maalik that he said: If he greets him with salaam, then he has ended the shunning. It is as if – and Allah knows best –he understood this from the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “The better of them is the first to greet the other with salaam,” or from the words of the scholar who said that greeting with salaam puts an end to shunning.

Abu Bakr al-Athram said: I said to Ahmad ibn Hanbal: If he greets him with salaam, does that suffice instead of speaking to him? He said: That depends on how it was before he shunned him. If it is known that he used to speak to him and be friendly with him, then it does not negate that shunning unless it is a greeting which is not followed by turning away from him or turning his back on him.

This meaning was narrated from Maalik." (A*t-Tamheed* 6/127).

An-Nawawi said in *Sharh Muslim*: “The better of them is the first to greet the other with salaam” means that he is the superior one. This offers support for the view of ash-Shafa‘i and Maalik, and those who agreed with them, that greeting with salaam negates shunning and protects completely against sin. End quote.

And Allah knows best.