763 - What Benefits the Dead and Can They Hear Those Who Visit?

the question

My father passed away about two weeks ago. I wanted to know when me or my family members go to his grave, is he able to hear us and what we are saying to him? ... And if not, is there any way we can have him hear what we say?

Summary of answer

What benefits the dead is the following: 1- Offering charity on his behalf, 2- beneficial knowledge which the deceased has left behind, and 3- a righteous child who will make du`a for him.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Can the dead hear the living?

The principle is that the dead do not hear the words of the living, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "but you cannot make hear those in the graves." [Fatir 35:22] and "Verily, you cannot make the dead to hear" [al-Naml 27:80]

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) addressed the slain disbelievers after the Battle of Badr, Allah caused them to hear his words, although they were at the bottom of the well in which they had been buried. This was a special case, as the scholars, may Allah have mercy on them, have stated. (See Al-Ayat al-Bayyinat fi ‘adam Sama’ al-Amwat).

Perhaps the psychological motive for wishing that your father could hear you is an attempt to do something to re-establish the communication that has been cut, in order to alleviate the pain you are feeling.

What benefits the dead in Islam?

You should understand, my sister, that Islam has explained what actions on the part of the living may benefit the dead, and what may reach them in their graves. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When a person dies, all his deeds come to an end except three: sadaqah jariyah (ongoing charity, e.g. a waqf or endowment), beneficial knowledge (which he has left behind), or a righteous child who will pray for him." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no 1376; he said this is a sahih hasan hadith)

- The most important thing that will benefit your father after his death, and that you can do for him now that he is in his grave, is to strive to pray for him and ask for forgiveness and mercy for him, and for Paradise and salvation from the Fire, and other good and beautiful du`as (prayers).

Prayers for forgiveness offered by both sons and daughters of the deceased bring great benefits, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "A man's status will be raised in Paradise and he will ask, How did I get here? He will be told, By your son's du'as (prayers) for forgiveness for you." (Reported by Ibn Majah, no 3660; see also Sahih al-Jami, 1617)

- Another thing that may reach the deceased is sadaqah (charity) given on his behalf, because `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that a man said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "My mother has passed away, and if she could have spoken, she would have given something in charity. Will she receive a reward if I give something on her behalf?" He said, "Yes." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Fath, 1388)

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the mother of Sa'd ibn Ubadah (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) died when he was away from her. He said: "O Messenger of Allah, my mother has died and I am away from her. Will it benefit her anything if I give in charity on her behalf?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Then I ask you to be my witness that I am giving my garden al-Mikhraf (so called because it bore so many dates) in charity on her behalf." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Fath, 2756)

Abu Hurayrah reported that a man said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "My father has died and left money behind. He did not make a wasiyyah (a will); will it expiate for his sins if I give some of it in charity on his behalf?" He said, "Yes." (Reported by al-Nasai)

Sa'd ibn Ubadah said: "I said: O Messenger of Allah, my mother has died. Should I give charity on her behalf? He said, Yes. I asked, What kind of charity is best? He said, Providing water." (Reported by al-Nasai)

Other deeds that may also benefit the dead

- Other deeds that may also benefit the deceased are Hajj and ‘Umrah on their behalf, after the living person has first performed Hajj and ‘Umrah on his or her own behalf.

‘Abdullah ibn Buraydah reported that his father (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "While I was sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), a woman came to him and said: I gave my mother a slave-woman in charity, and now my mother has died. He said: You have got your reward, and your right of inheritance has brought your gift back to you. She said, O Messenger of Allah, she still had one month to fast. Can I fast it on her behalf? He said, Fast it on her behalf. She said, She never went to Hajj. Can I perform Hajj on her behalf? He said, Perform Hajj on her behalf." (Reported by Muslim, may Allah have mercy on him, in his Sahih, no. 1149)

- This shows that it is also permissible to fast on behalf of the deceased.
- Another thing that may benefit the deceased is to fulfil their nadhr (vow), because Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that a woman came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: "My mother made a vow to perform Hajj but she died before she could do it. Can I perform Hajj on her behalf?" He said, "Yes, perform Hajj on her behalf. Don't you think that if your mother owed a debt you would pay it off?" She said, "Yes." He said, "Then pay off what is owed to Allah, for Allah is more deserving of having vows fulfilled." (al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 7315)
- Another thing that may benefit the deceased is if his relative devotes a share to him of a

sacrifice he offers. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) offered a sacrifice, he said: "In the name of Allah, O Allah, on behalf of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad" (reported by Muslim, no. 1967) and the family of Muhammad included both the living and the dead.

The question of whether women may visit graves has already been addressed (please see question# **127**)

You should also know that keeping yourself busy with praying for your father is more important and better for you, and more beneficial to the deceased, than thinking about whether he can hear your voice. So try to do whatever will be of benefit both to him and you. You and your family should avoid forbidden innovations (bid'ah) such as marking the fortieth day after death, or the passing of one year since the death, or gatherings for reciting al-Fatihah (the first chapter of surah of the Quran), doing forbidden acts at graves, and so on, deeds which are done by those who are ignorant and are imitated by others.

I ask Allah to forgive your father and have mercy on him and on all the deceased Muslims, for He is the Forgiving, Most Merciful.

For more, please see these answers: 9979 , 43138 , and 9304 .

And Allah knows best.