

YAQEEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

40 HADITHS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

LECTURE NOTES

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YAQEEEN
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Chapter Eleven

Don't Shortchange Anyone: The Comprehensiveness of *Tatfeef*

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ لَمَّا قَدِمَ النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -
الْمَدِينَةَ كَانُوا مِنْ أَحَبِّ النَّاسِ كَيْلًا فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ (وَيْلٌ
لِلْمُطَفِّفِينَ) فَأَحْسَنُوا الْكَيْلَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ

It was narrated that Ibn Abbas said, "When the Prophet (ﷺ) came to Al-Madinah, they were the worst people in weights and

measures. Then Allah, Glorious is He, revealed: "Woe to the *mutaffifeen* (those who shortchange others)," and they became the best of people in how they dealt with weights and measures after that." [Ibn Majah]

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ. الَّذِينَ إِذَا اكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ. وَإِذَا كَالُواهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُواهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ

Woe to those who give less [than due], those who, when they take a measure from people, take it in full. But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss. [83:1-3]

Tatfeef : to shortchange

- 2 aspects: 1) When they take their product, they take it in full, but 2) when they are selling, they give as little as possible.
- Taking the maximum but giving the minimum; this is the problem with the concept of insurance.

There was a man by the name of Abu Juhayna who was a master salesman. When he'd collect his payments he would tip the scales with his hand a little and got rich this way. It is said these *ayaat* were about him.

Ibn Kathir says that *tatfeef* is (البخس في المكيال والميزان) to cheat/to be stingy/to be unfair in the way you collect and in the way you give back.

Allah ends the passage saying: يوم يقوم الناس لرب العالمين: "The day on which mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds" [83:6] because on that day, Allah will weigh things and give people their rights and the scales of Allah are the most just.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If you could put the entire heavens and earth on the scales that Allah will use on the day of judgment - it would fit them and it would weigh them accurately."

This means Allah will not cheat anybody. He may tip the scale, out of His Mercy, towards good, but He will never tip the scales towards evil; i.e., He does the opposite of what He is condemning in this *ayah*.

- For example, the *kalimah* will weigh very heavily on the scales.
- When Allah (swt) measures us, we are inherently deficient because we can never give Allah what He deserves. However, when Allah (swt) gives, He is الشكور
- He gives us far more than we deserve.
 - وما قدروا الله حق قدره "They have not praised Allah with true praise (i.e., the way He deserves)" [39:67]

The goal is to exemplify the attributes of Allah (swt) when there is a possible human application. This is the best way to fulfill the right of that name upon you. Allah (swt) does the opposite of *tatfeef* with us; therefore, we should strive to behave that way in our dealings with others.

It is a lot easier to do *tatfeef* today than back then because of the way money works today. We don't pay as much attention to it as we should. It is much easier to cheat people (e.g., round up for yourself but round down for others). That is why we have to be vigilant.

This was seen as a priority when the Prophet (ﷺ) first came to Madinah. So we have to take this very seriously in our dealings with others.

Tatfeef is a very broad concept; we tend to restrict it to the financial domain, but it applies in many different contexts:

I. ***Tatfeef* of your Lord**

- Once Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) left after doing the asr prayer and met a man who had not been there. Umar asked him what had kept him from the prayer and even though the man gave a good reason, Umar said, "You have shortchanged yourself." [Muwatta Malik]
- Hadith: There was someone who was rushing through their prayer and the Prophet (ﷺ) made him redo it. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: لا تطف من صلاتك - don't shortchange/cheat your prayer. This time is for God; you need to give it its due.

II. ***Tatfeef* of teachers and students**

- Not giving knowledge (or a scholar) their *haqq*; e.g., of the appropriate manners of a student of knowledge are to arrive to class early, to be prepared, to be enthusiastic, to take notes, and to be attentive. Playing with your phone while someone is trying to teach you is *tatfeef*.

- The Prophet (ﷺ) was sitting with his companions one day and noticed that he was a bit distracted by his ring and wasn't giving them the attention that he normally would. So he threw his ring aside and apologized to them for not giving them his undivided attention (a form of *tatfeef*).
- Not preparing properly when teaching involves shortchanging your students.
- To favor some students over others also involves *tatfeef* because you are not giving some students their full right upon you.

III. *Tatfeef* in the family context

- Preferring one child over another.
- Misdirected anger at your children.
- Arguing with your spouse in front of your children can be *tatfeef* of your children.
- *Tatfeef* with your spouse: you take your full right but give the minimum.

Ibn Abbas (ra) said, "I love that I beautify myself for my wife just like I love that she beautifies herself for me. On the day of Judgment Allah will ask me about the rights that were due upon me and the rights that I gave. I want the rights that I gave to be more than the rights that I took so that Allah (swt) can fill that gap (with *ihsaan*)."

- **ولهن مثل الذي عليهن** and for them is what is upon them - i.e., and for women are the same rights that are due upon them from men. It is Allah (swt) who legislated this equality in fulfillment of rights so when one transgresses then one is doing *tatfeef*.
- **الكفر بالعشير** would be *tatfeef* of the wife in the case where a husband makes a mistake and she says, "You have never done anything for me." This is *tatfeef* in not acknowledging the goodness he has done for her.
- Imam al-Uthaymeen was asked by a woman who said she had a husband who was negligent in his rights to her and wanted to know the permissibility of voluntary fasting without his permission. His answer was that she had the right to do so because the scales tell us that if he rebels then she has the right to rebel as well.
- When someone shortchanges you, you should respond with justice (at the bare minimum) or even *ihsaan*.

In almost every relationship, one party does more than what's required of them and the other takes advantage of that. It is almost impossible to have a perfect balance. Everyone has shortcomings, however, the gap should not be so big that *dhulm* is taking place.

IV. *Tatfeef* in the work context

- Example of an employee who shows *ihsaan* to their employer. They do extra work out of their own good will and the employer pays them well - this isn't considered *tatfeef*. However if the extra exertion is more than they can handle and the work isn't being compensated by the employer, this could be considered *tatfeef*.
- An employee may not be doing *ihsaan* in regards to their occupation but still fulfilling the rights of the job and employer. However once employees fall short of their obligations and are being paid more than they deserve for the work they are doing - this would be *tatfeef* on their part.

V. *Tatfeef* between parents and children

- A man once came to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab (ra), complaining of his son's disobedience to him. 'Umar summoned the boy and spoke of his disobedience to his father and his neglect of his rights. The boy replied: "O Ameer al-Mu'mineen! Doesn't a child have rights over his father?" "Certainly", replied 'Umar. "What are they, Ameer al-Mu'mineen?" "That he should choose a good mother, give him a good name, and teach him the Book (the Quran)." "O Ameer al-Mu'mineen! My father did none of these. My mother was a Magian (fire worshipper). He gave me the name of Jul'a (meaning beetle) and he did not teach me a single word of the Quran." Turning to the father, 'Umar said: "You have come to me to complain about the disobedience of your son. You have failed in your duty to him before he has failed in his duty to you; you have done wrong to him before he wronged you."
- Ingratitude of the child towards the parents. As children grow and become more independent they begin to shortchange their parents.

Al-Ghazali said that the believer has the characteristic of doing things to completion. They aren't satisfied with mediocrity or sloppiness or leaving things

incomplete. Being detail-oriented and wanting to do the job right is the opposite of *tatfeef*.

Modern versions of *tatfeef*:

- Demanding full payment but not doing the job properly.
- In the gold market, they adjust the scales.

VI. ***Tatfeef* in brotherhood**

- Muhammad Ibn Sireen said that it is injustice to your brother that you mention the worst of what you know about him but you don't mention (i.e., hide) his good qualities.
- Imam Shafi said, "I swear that if I did good 99 times out of 100, and I made one mistake, they would count that one against me." If someone is out to get you and they jump on you for one thing you do wrong, that is *tatfeef*.

VII. ***Tatfeef* of the scholars**

- Some people treat the scholars like they can do no wrong; others wait to pounce on them for the slightest mistake.
- Ibn Qayyim said about his teacher Ibn Taymiyyah, "All of the small mistakes of Ibn Taymiyyah don't matter because the Prophet (ﷺ) said that a large body of water never becomes impure." So all of the goodness that he's done has drowned out the small impurities/mistakes. This is how we should treat our scholars. They do so much good, so some small mistakes should not pollute all that *khayr*.

There now seems to be a global culture of *tatfeef*, due to self-worship.

- The more greed and selfishness there is in a society, the more *tatfeef* spreads.
- Selflessness is rare these days.
 - "And they would give preference over themselves even if they were in need" [59:9]
 - Your rights should be secondary to the rights you give to others.
 - Selflessness does not mean accepting oppression and abuse. It means you put others before yourself.
- People end up basing their relationships on how much they have to give and how much they get. Once they have to give more than they get then the person doesn't matter to them.
- *Tatfeef* can be financial, spiritual, emotional, etc.

At the end of the passage Allah says: "Don't these people know that they will be resurrected? On a Mighty Day?" [83:4-5]

The only right Allah will not forfeit on the Day of Judgment is the right that was not his. Allah can forgive anything that you have done that involves you and Him. However He will not forgive on behalf of someone else. So, if you shortchange or cheat others, you may not be forgiven.

Hadith about a person who falls one good deed short of what is required to enter *jannah*. He will ask people for help but not one person will give them even one of their good deeds. They will all be saying, "*Nafsy! Nafsy!*" on that day. Had they given/done just a little more to someone in *dunya*, they wouldn't have ended up in that position.