

YAQEEN INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

# 40 HADITHS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

## LECTURE NOTES

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## Chapter 20: Before the Sweat Dries: Prophetic guidance on work conditions and employee treatment

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries.”

[Sunan Ibn Majah]

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَعْطُوا الْأَجِيرَ أَجْرَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَجِفَّ عَرَقُهُ

[سنن ابن ماجه]

### Introduction

- This chapter is about the relationship between the employer and the employee.
- There's a famous hadith from the Prophet (ﷺ) where he said, “Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries.”
  - The command to give wages before his sweat dries is a metaphor. As soon as the work is finished, even if someone doesn't sweat, they should be paid. It is a form of excellence to pay someone before they finish the job. It becomes an injustice if you don't pay them after they complete the job.
- “It is haram to delay and postpone when someone is able to pay their laborer.”
- In a hadith narrated by Bukhari, the Prophet (s) said, “the withholding of a payment by a person who is wealthy (capable) is a form of oppression.”
  - It may be that someone can't pay a full payment so they work out a deal with their employee, and that's okay. But this hadith is more focused on employers withholding payment as a form of greed.

### Failing to Pay Employees

- In a hadith narrated by Abu Dawood, the Prophet (ﷺ) said that the one who delays in payment even though he is able to pay, there are two things that become lawful. One is his reputation. It's not backbiting to say about that person that they wrong their employees because it's a means of warning to others. It should only be kept to

what needs to be said to protect others. It's not haram to speak of his reputation and punishment becomes allowed for that person. Punishment means that scholars say this person can be detained. This was revolutionary because at this time there was selective justice where poor people were punished but those who were wealthy weren't.

- There's a chapter about the sin of one who fails to pay their employees. The Prophet (ﷺ), "Allah has said that I will be an opponent to three types of people on the day of judgment. The first is someone who makes a covenant in my name but proves to be treacherous. The second who sells a free man and keeps their price. The third is someone who employees a laborer and takes their labor but doesn't pay them."
- Don't take a person's silence as approval to delay paying them.
- In another hadith the Prophet (s) said, "Whoever employees someone to work for him he must specify the wages in advance." Even in a verbal or simple contract you must be specific about pay so there's no room for disappointment. Don't make assumptions. Specify before the work starts.

### Labor Ethics Go Beyond Just Payment

- The Prophet (ﷺ) says about the Muaith (someone who has a covenant, the protected people, the nonmuslim people who lived in the muslim world), "Whoever wrongs a muaith, infringes on his rights, burdens him with more than he can bear, or takes something from his against his will-I will prosecuting him on the day of judgment."
- The prophet (s) will stand against someone from his ummah for harming someone who doesn't believe in Islam.
- It's haram to burden your employees beyond what they can handle.
- "You servants are your brothers. Allah has placed them under your hand. He who has someone under their hand should feed them with the same food he eats, clothe them with the same clothes he wears, and do not burden them beyond their capacity. And if you do, you need to help them."

- Anas said, "I served the prophet (s) for ten years. Never did he say uff to me. Nor did he criticize something I did. He never said why did you do that, or ask why didn't you do that."
- A concept of a pension for the elderly was first found in the Islamic system. Umar (R) said, "What kind of a people let a man go helpless in his old age after getting service from him in his youth."

### Arrogance and Pride of the Employer

- This teaches us to not be overly critical with employees.
- Often a person who is in a position of power will come home and speak to their spouses the same way, as employees. When you're constantly be given power you may start to see yourself as being superior to others.
- The Prophet (s) said, "A person cannot have pride if they do these three things: a person eats with their servant (or employees), a person who rides a donkey through the marketplace (not a camel or horse, a modest transport), and a person who tied their own sheep and milks their own sheep."
- A person has to go out of their way to remove pride from their hearts.
- Allah says, "do not deprive people of their due and do not spread corruption on earth."
  - 26:183 - وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ
- Rarely would you find that someone who withholds wages doesn't also spread corruption.

### Conclusion

- The last hadith is narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar. There were three men who came from a different nation and went into a cave and a boulder blocked them in the cave. They said to each let's make dua with a deed and maybe it'll cause Allah to move the boulder. The first two made dua and the boulder moved. The last person made dua and of him The Prophet (s) said, "Oh Allah I employed many laborers and I gave each one of them their wages on time. But there was a man who I didn't get to pay

because he disappeared. So I invested that wages for him. From that small investment Allah blessed me with all sorts of property. When the man showed up and said Oh Abdullah pay me what you owe me. And I said, you see all this, this is all yours. He said are you making fun of me? And I said I invested it for you so take it. It's all yours. Oh Allah if I did that only seeking your pleasure then remove this difficulty for us." And because of that the boulder moved.

- If this happened to you, what's owed is what you agreed to in the first place. This act was excellence