



One of the greatest privileges and favours which ‘Ali (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) enjoyed from Allah Ta‘ala was that he was raised in the care of none other than Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). The circumstances which led to him entering the care of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) are as follows:

Before Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was blessed with prophethood, there was a period during which the Quraish and other people of Makkah Mukarramah suffered a severe drought. In this difficult period, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) noticed that his uncle, Abu Taalib, had many dependents, and due to the drought, it was difficult for him to provide for them all. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) thus went to his other uncle, ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu), who was very wealthy, and said, “O ‘Abbaas, my uncle! Your brother, Abu Taalib, has many dependents, and as you can see, people have been afflicted by the drought. Let us approach him and offer to lessen his burden by each of us taking one of his dependents into our care.”

‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) agreed and they proceeded to Abu Taalib. When they came to him, they said, “We wish to lighten your burden of providing for your dependents until the drought subsides.” Abu Taalib replied, “Leave ‘Aqeel with me. You may then take any of my other children into your care.”

As a result, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) took ‘Ali (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) into his care, while ‘Abbaas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) took Ja’far (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) into his care. ‘Ali (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) was thus blessed to remain in the care of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) until Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) was blessed with prophethood. ‘Ali (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) then accepted Islam when he was only ten years of age.

(Seerah Ibnu Hishaam vol. 1, pg. 246)

Lessons:

1. The Ummah of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is like one body. If our brothers and sisters are in difficulty, we should all be affected and should wish to assist them. To stand by idly, completely unaffected by the plight of those around us, is not the spirit of a believer. Hence, when Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) noticed that his uncle, Abu Taalib, was in difficulty, he thought of a plan through which he could ease his burden and lighten his load. In a similar manner, each and every one of us, within our means and capacity, is able to assist others in some way.

Be it helping a struggling family to pay their rent or assisting with medical bills, the reward is extremely great and also secures the heartfelt du'aas of people which will help us in this world and the next.

2. One of the most rewarding avenues of charity is the avenue of assisting one's family members who are in need. At times, we will be shocked to learn that some of our own relatives are struggling to make ends meet, while others cannot even afford basic necessities such as health care, etc.

The hadeeth mentions that the person who spends charity on his family members gains double the reward, as he is rewarded for his action of charity as well as his action of joining family ties. (Sunan Tirmizi #658)

Hence, when assisting others, we should start off by helping and caring for our own relatives who require assistance.

However, when assisting our relatives and family members, we should try to maintain their honour and respect and should avoid embarrassing them. In this regard, it is not necessary for us to inform them that we are giving them zakaat or sadaqah. Instead, we can assist them in the guise of a gift.