

170723 - Can We Say that a Person Has Wronged His Lord?

the question

Is it permissible to say that a person wronged his Lord?

Summary of answer

What is commonly said by some people, that it is possible for a person to wrong his Lord and to wrong himself and to wrong others is not correct. Rather the correct thing is to say that the person did wrong with regard to his relationship with his Lord.

Detailed answer

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Types of Zulm (wrongdoing) in Islam

Wrong others

Wrongdoing (zulm) is something that a person may do to other people or other creatures, by impugning their honour or harming them physically, or transgressing against their wealth unlawfully.

Wronging oneself

The word wrongdoing (zulm) refers to what a person may do of heedlessness or falling short with regard to his duties towards Allah, may He be glorified and exalted.

In the case of this type of wrongdoing, it cannot be said that the person wronged his Lord; rather in reality he has wronged himself, because Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is not harmed by the disobedience of His slaves and He does not benefit from their obedience.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, said of the Children of Israel (interpretation of the meaning):

{and they wronged Us not – but they were [only] wronging themselves.} [al-Baqarah 2:57]

Ibn Jarir at-Tabari said:

“What is meant by the words {and they wronged Us not} is that their actions and their disobedience to Us did not cause any harm to Us or undermine Us. Rather their actions caused harm to them and undermined them... For our Lord, may He glorified, is not harmed by the sin of a sinner, His stores are not depleted by the wrongdoing of a wrongdoer, He does not benefit from the obedience of one who is obedient, His dominion is not increased by the justice of one who is just; rather the wrongdoer only wrongs himself, the sinner only undermines himself, the obedient one only benefits himself, and the just one only helps himself.” (*Tafsir at-Tabari*, 1/711)

Moreover, wrongdoing and oppression (zulm) only affects those who are helpless, weak or easy to pick on, and Allah is far above such things.

Hence Ibn 'Abbas said concerning the words {and they wronged Us not}: “[What is meant is:] We are too mighty to be wronged.” (*Tafsir Ibn Abi Hatim*, 1/116)

Al-Alusi said: “It is not possible for anyone to wrong Allah, may He be exalted, at all.” (*Ruh al-Ma'ani*, 1/265)

Ibn al-Qayyim said: “No person can wrong his Lord; rather he wrongs himself. And his Lord does not wrong him; rather he is the one who wrongs himself.” (*al-Jawab al-Kafi*, p. 71)

Is it OK to say that a person has wronged his Lord?

Hence what is commonly said by some people, that it is possible for a person to wrong his Lord and to wrong himself and to wrong others is not correct. Rather the correct thing is to say that the person did wrong with regard to his relationship with his Lord.

Types of sins

In the hadith it says:

“Sins are of three types: a sin of which Allah will not forgive any part, a sin that Allah does not care about, and a sin of which He will not overlook any part.

As for the sin of which Allah will not forgive any part, it is associating others with Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills} [an-Nisa 4:48]

As for the sin which Allah does not care about, it is when a person wrongs himself by falling short regarding his relationship with his Lord.

As for the sin of which Allah will not overlook any part, it is the wrongs that people do to one another and scores that will inevitably be settled.” (Narrated by al-Hakim in *al-Mustadrak ‘ala as-Sahihayn*, 4/619). There is some weakness in its isnad, but it has corroborating evidence in the hadith of Anas that was narrated by Abu Dawud at-Tayalisi (3/579). It was classed as hasan by Shaykh al-Albani in *as-Silsilah as-Sahihah* (1927).

Categories of zulm according to some scholars

Some of the scholars mentioned only two categories of wrongdoing.

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali said of wrongdoing (zulm): It is of two types:

The first type is wronging oneself, the worst of which is shirk (associating others with Allah), as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Indeed, association [with Him] is great injustice (zulm).} [Luqman 31:13]

The one who associates others with Him has regarded a created being as being of the same status as the Creator, and has worshipped that created being and shown devotion to it, thus putting things in the wrong place. The most frequently mentioned warnings to wrongdoers in the Quran refer to those who associate others with Allah, as He, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And the disbelievers – they are the wrongdoers.} [al-Baqarah 2:254]

Then after that come other sins, of various types, [major](#) and [minor](#) .

The second type of wrongdoing is wronging others. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said in his khutbah during the Farewell Pilgrimage: “Indeed your blood, your wealth and your honour are sacred to you, as sacred as this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this land of yours.” (*Jami’ al-‘Ulum wa’l-Hikam*, 2/36)

In conclusion, what a person does of shirk, disbelief (kufr), sins and major sins is wronging himself, or it may be said that the person has done wrong with regard to his relationship with Allah. What is meant by that is sins that have nothing to do with the rights of other people; rather they are transgressions against the rights of Allah, may He be exalted. It cannot be said that the person wronged his Lord, because this phrase is likely to be misunderstood, and Allah is too great and mighty to be wronged by any of His slaves.

And Allah knows best.