

Trimming what is in excess of a fistful from the beard

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(Al-Hudaa wan-Noor, 267.)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Questioner: We're aware that there are detailed hadeeths which have been reported concerning letting the beard flow, and what is apparent from them is that they are an order [to do so] and an obligation, and we know the hadeeth of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar [where it is stated], '... that when he would perform Hajj or 'Umrah he would trim some of his beard,' so is this a proof for the permissibility of trimming the beard, whether that be more than a fistful or from either side?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)¹: This issue has no connection as to whether it is obligatory to let the beard flow or not, but rather as to whether it is allowed to trim the beard [in the first place] or not, correct?

Questioner: Yes.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): The narration of Ibn 'Umar, if you are holding on to it [specifically] in connection with him [trimming his beard while] being on Hajj or 'Umrah, then that has an answer [specific to it], but if you are not holding on to that narration regarding that, then there is an answer for that [too], which of the two aspects do you mean?

Questioner: The aspect ... he said, '... when he would perform Hajj or 'Umrah ...'

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): Okay, if this restriction, '... when he would perform Hajj or 'Umrah ...,' is taken away, does the topic [at hand] change in your view?

Questioner: As long as there is no other proof, yes, the topic changes in my view.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): Ya'nee, if it is established that Ibn 'Umar used to trim his beard even when not on Hajj or 'Umrah, ya'nee, the problem is over? I don't think so [i.e., that should be the end of the argument but I don't think that that will be the case with you].

Questioner: The problem wouldn't be over for me, O Shaykh!

¹ (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

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Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): That's what I thought, even though that was what you were talking about.

Questioner: Yes, O Shaykh.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Okay, so, for the sake of benefit, I say: it has been established [both that he trimmed his beard] with the restriction [of him doing so on Hajj or 'Umrah] and generally, i.e., he used to trim his beard when on Hajj or 'Umrah and also when not on Hajj or 'Umrah, what I understand from you is that it is as though you want to say: is it allowed to curtail the general order of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)² to let one's beard flow based upon the unrestricted action of Ibn 'Umar or [in other words] without [restricting it only to] Hajj and 'Umrah, I think that is what your question is, isn't it?

Questioner: Yes, that is my question [now], initially though it was about the restriction [of doing it during Hajj or 'Umrah.]

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Yes, for that reason here is a quick benefit [I will mention to you], it has been reported with the check [that it was done during Hajj or 'Umrah] and it has been reported without that restriction too. So it has been reported from Ibn 'Umar that he would do that during Hajj or 'Umrah and also when not on Hajj or 'Umrah.

And take as another point of benefit that it has been reported from others apart from Ibn 'Umar too, yes, and this is something which in reality has remained hidden from many of the people of knowledge and excellence, and for that reason they forbid practising people from cutting their beards since they want to stop at the general meaning given in the text, **“Trim the moustache and let the beard grow,”** and this is [in fact] the [foundational] principle, i.e., that a Muslim stops at a general or unrestricted text, and does act contrary to it by using a restriction or limit [to its generality] except with a proof.

So now, I hold that the proof is on our side in terms of restricting it, and [through] the action of Ibn 'Umar, and not specifically that he did it during Hajj or 'Umrah, even though this helps us along half the way, since those who say that the order [in the hadeeth] is to be carried out in its generality and unreservedly do not [even] allow one to trim one's beard whether during Hajj or 'Umrah, [is that] clear?

So I say, Ibn 'Umar's action here is a proof, and that is due to the following:

To understand the restriction [given to the general meaning of the hadeeth] by Ibn 'Umar's (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ)³ action we have to bring to mind a reality that is connected to the aforementioned hadeeth, **“Trim the moustache and let the beard grow,”** [and that reality is] that Ibn 'Umar is one of its narrators. And here a fiqh principle comes in to play which the

² (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

³ (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

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people of knowledge point out on numerous occasions when they debate with each other in matters in which they differ, they say, 'The narrator [of a hadeeth] knows more about what he is narrating than others,' and this is a sound statement, taken from some hadeeths, such as his saying (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), **'An eyewitness sees what someone who is absent doesn't,'** and there is another narration [which states], **'Being informed is not like seeing [for yourself].'**

And the reason for this hadeeth is that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) related the story of Moosaa (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his brother Haaron on one hand and the people on the other, that when he went to consult his Lord (تبارك وتعالى)⁴, and left his brother in charge of the Jews and the Children of Israaeel, they made a calf, an image having a lowing sound, so when Moosaa came back and he told him of the news, the vigilant sense of religious honour didn't overcome him until he saw [what had happened], and when he did so he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, 'Being informed is not like seeing [for yourself],' and this is true, self-evident, natural, and well known amongst people practically and through experience.

So when this is the case, Ibn 'Umar, as we all know, lived with the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) for years and he heard this hadeeth from him. So in my opinion if Ibn 'Umar knew by seeing him (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) that he never trimmed his beard at all, it would be impossible that Ibn 'Umar would take a single hair from it, due to it being known that he was the most avid of the Companions in following him (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), even in some issues which other people may reproach him for, and I think this is something you are all aware of.

So if a glorious Companion, part of whose biography I just mentioned now, someone who was the most eager of the Companions in emulating the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) – if he didn't see or hear something from him (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) which at the very least would have opened the way for him to trim it, he never would have done so, is that clear?

If we add to that the fact that some of the Salaf like Aboo Hurairah, Ibraaheem an-Nakha'ee and so on, used to do that too, [they] used to trim their beards, and then add to that those who, I don't say I know ... but those who use the general meaning of the hadeeth, saying, 'No one reported from any one of the Companions that they used to trim their beards,' [in reply] to them we say, 'No, they did, and those who did so are so and so and so and so and so and so,' they now have to prove the opposite to us, and that is, as the Arabs say, nigh on impossible [the Shaykh used an Arabic proverb here: - دون خراط القتاد 'Before one can attain it, he has to strip the tragacanth of its leaves by grasping each branch and drawing his hand down it: i.e., he has to perform what will be extremely difficult if not impossible.']. [And] what is the opposite [which they must prove]? That they never used to trim it, all they have is the absence of knowledge, and the people of knowledge have a very sound statement

⁴ (تبارك وتعالى) (Tabaraka wa Ta'ala) The Blessed and the Most High

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which they make, ‘The absence of the knowledge of something does not necessarily equate to its non-existence.’

So the fact that I, Zayd, Bakr and ‘Amr don’t know any one of the Companions who used to trim his beard doesn’t mean that none of the Companions [actually] did, this is not knowledge this is ignorance, [since] it could [either] be this or that, but one of these two possibilities has [actually] been reported as we just mentioned from Ibn ‘Umar, Aboo Hurairah and others from the Pious Predecessors.

And I recall that Ibraaheem an-Nakha’ee relates, and as we know Ibraaheem was one of the Taabi’een, he related that they used to trim their beards—and this is a very important narration [in this issue].

Based upon this we are able to say that the Prophet’s (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) order to let the beard flow is not unrestricted and all-encompassing, because it has been practically established by those who carry weight in both knowledge and in their following that they did not implement this hadeeth unrestrictedly.

Through this example and others I stated in many pieces of research, and this [point] is, in fact, a very important knowledge based principle, whoever understands it will have comprehended tens of issues which [people’s] minds err in correctly grasping, in terms of whether or not they are allowed in the legislation, so I say: ‘It is not allowed to act upon the general meaning of every general text which was not acted upon in a general manner.’ Is this statement clear or not?

It will not be hidden from all that there are many parts to a general text, so then [a person] wants to use this general text to prove one of those parts, because it is either forbidden or legislated by way of what? [By way of that] text which is general in meaning—so coming to such a conclusion based on a general text is not allowed in many instances when using it to come to that conclusion includes a part which was acted upon or not acted upon, it is in light of this that we should use the general [meaning] as a proof or [conversely] not use the general [meaning] as a proof, which is the case in point at the moment.

And we are able to bring other examples, some of which take place in our lives nowadays, and others which [do not take place in our lives nowadays but which] we give to serve as an example in order to clarify this principle.

An example before us is this general order, **“Trim the moustache and let the beard grow,”** which is used to show that it is not allowed to trim it at all, but through practical examples we were shown that it was, so: we do not take this general ruling because that which opposes it has been established, i.e., trimming [what exceeds a fistful].

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Sometimes you have the total opposite: a general order is used to show the legislative legitimacy of a particular act of worship, an act of worship which has not been relayed to us from the people of worship of old and so [in such a situation] it is not correct to use the generality of the text to come to that conclusion, for if we did we would have agreed with all of the innovations that innovators do, since any innovation on the face of the earth—especially if it is categorised according to what Imaam ash-Shaatibee calls additional /secondary innovations [al-bid'ah al-idaafiyyah]—it is not possible except that this innovation will have a proof from the Book and the Sunnah, yet along with that we [still] say that it is an innovation.

Now I will bring you a practical example and another which I will make up in order to make this principle understood. You all know, since you've performed Hajj and 'Umrah many times, that there are many worshippers, [there] and here too, who we now see placing their right hand on the left after raising their heads from rukoo', [is that] clear? This holding of the hands after rukoo' which some Shaykhs who have their standing in knowledge do, what is their proof? A general text, they in no way at all have a hadeeth [which states] that when the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) would raise his head from rukoo' he would place his right hand over his left in prayer, there is no such hadeeth at all, there is however a general hadeeth, 'When he would stand for prayer, Allaah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) would place his right hand over his left,' [so] they said, '... stand in prayer ...' this includes the first standing, the second, [in fact] any standing which is after the rukoo'—this is where a general text has been used to come to a conclusion, likewise, for example, other hadeeths [general in nature which they use as proofs], that, 'We, the company of prophets, have been commanded with three things ...' one of which was, '... and to place our right arms on our left arms during prayer.' They said: this is unrestricted and so includes the first time one stands and the second time after the rukoo'.

We hold that this conclusion is very weak, why? Because this was either carried out practically by the Salaf, at the head of whom is Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), or it was not. The person who claims that it was done practically is like those who use a general text as a proof: they have to establish that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) put his hand on his chest after raising his head from rukoo'—and no such text exists at all.

Those who do not do that do not need to establish that he didn't do it, why? Because acts of worship are restricted, **'I have not left anything which will bring you closer to Allaah except that I have ordered you with it,'** so if the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) put his hands there in this place it would have been relayed to us just as it was concerning the first place ... if the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to put his hands there in the second place it would have been reported to us just as putting the hands there in the first standing was, so if placing the hands there in the second standing was not transmitted then this is a practical proof which the Muslims carried out [showing] that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) never used to do it.

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So using general proofs to come to conclusions, whether they are sayings of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), which are [obviously] strongest [in establishing proof], or statements of the Companions, which are less [authoritative than the statements of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)], since the statements of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) are more precise and definitive than that of a Companion this is a clear example of what we were explaining, or does anyone have a question or something they are unclear about before we move on to the next example ... yes?

Questioner: Regarding how much is to be trimmed, he limits himself to what is in excess of a fistful?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): Yes, when he holds his beard, whatever is under the fistful, those hairs, it is permissible for him to cut them.

Questioner: From both sides?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): From both sides if they are more than a fistful. Maybe someone has another question too?

Questioner: Others apart from Ibn 'Umar narrated [this hadeeth], they never limited it to a fistful or anything else, so is it allowed for us to trim even more than a fistful or do we restrict ourselves to what Ibn 'Umar did?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): No, we stop at what Ibn 'Umar did, because he has a distinction which is that he is the narrator of the hadeeth.

Questioner: This is a strong principle, Shaykh.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): Yes, I'll give you an example which will make the issue even clearer. Many times on such occasions I say: if a group of people entered a mosque at Dhuhr or 'Asr time, and they wanted to pray the Sunnahs that are prayed before these prayers, that which occurs today and which is correct is that each person will pray the Sunnahs in a spot on their own.

So if someone [now went and] had an idea, upon seeing this group of people entering the mosque and praying on their own [he thinks]: why [is each one praying] alone? 'Come together, Yaa Jamaa'ah, why have we split our prayer up when the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **'Allaah's Hand is over the Jamaa'aah,'** and, **'The congregational prayer is more superior to that of a person praying on his own ...'** to the end of the hadeeth, '... and he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **'A man's prayer with another man is greater in reward than his prayer alone. And a man's prayer with two other men is greater in reward than his prayer with one other man ...'** and so on, '... Come and let's pray together as a Jamaa'aah,'—would you say this Jamaa'aah is legislated or not? All of you in unison will say, 'No, it isn't.' Okay, is

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there a [textual] prohibition against this prayer? There isn't, there isn't a prohibition, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) didn't say, 'Do not pray the Sunnahs in Jamaa'aah.'

But I will say, I will say in my own particular way: the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did prohibit it. But the common folk don't share in understanding this prohibition, in fact, not all of the elite [i.e., scholars etc.] share in understanding it, only some to the exclusion of others.

And it is from here that the discord concerning good and bad bid'ahs came about, because those who say that there is [such a thing as] a good bid'ah understood the [following] statement of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), '**Every innovation is misguidance, and all misguidance is in the Fire,**' to mean that it is restricted: i.e., [they incorrectly understood that the statement is not general but restricted and means] that not every bid'ah is misguidance.

Ya'nee, this is one of the strangest areas of discord that has arisen in the Ummah. So we are [from] those whom Allaah has helped, through His Grace and Mercy, to understand this most great principle which the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) laid down in general gatherings, in his sermons on Fridays and elsewhere, saying, '**And every innovation is misguidance, and all misguidance is in the Fire,**' we have understood this to be unrestricted and all-encompassing.

When a person comes to us with the example I just gave to you now, 'Come and let's pray [the Sunnah prayers] together in congregation,' this goes with [i.e., deceives] the people of innovation, 'Why, Yaa akhee, do you criticise us? Allaah said, '**... ask [Allaah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allaah to grant him] peace,**' don't they disapprove of us like that?

So this example which I gave to you just now deceives those people who did now ground themselves on this great principle, '**And every innovation is misguidance, and all misguidance is in the Fire,**' as for us then the issue is not dubious to us, and all praise is due to Allaah, [for] we say that praying Sunnahs in congregation is an innovation.

Okay, going back to our previous question [about praying the Sunnahs before an obligatory prayer in Jamaa'aah], is there a prohibition concerning it? There isn't, there isn't a prohibition concerning it as they understand or as they want, but his statement (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is enough for us, '**And every innovation is misguidance, and all misguidance is in the Fire,**' and the hadeeths in this regard are well-known.

Thus, in the same way in which we reproved this [praying of the Sunnahs in] Jamaa'aah, the proofs for which were [those] general [hadeeths], [in the same way] we say: this act of worship, if, in fact, it was an act of worship, the Salaf would have preceded us in it, just as we were saying that if placing the hands [on the chest] in the second standing were legislated and if the general proofs which they use included [placing the hands on the chest

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in] this place [then the Salaf would have preceded us in it], so when they didn't our answer and stance is just like our statement concerning praying the Sunnahs in congregation, i.e., if that were included in the general proofs, they would have carried that out, clear?

Thus, '... **let the beard grow ...**,' this is a general text—but was implementation of this general text carried out? The answer is no. Why? Because we have textual evidence from the Salaf while [at the same time] not having that which opposes them. So the deduction that cutting what is in excess of a fistful is permissible stands correct for us through the proof of the narrator of the hadeeth, Ibn 'Umar and whoever from the Salaf followed him in that.

And [all] praise is [due] to Allaah, Lord of the worlds.