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THE **BEARD** OF THE **MUSLIM MAN** IN LIGHT OF THE QUR'AN, THE SUNNAH AND THE EARLY SCHOLARS

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(May Allāh forgive him and his parents)

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Introduction

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه ومن اتبع
هداه، أما بعد

The growing of the beard is from the affairs of the innate nature of man (i.e. it is from his Fitrah) upon which Allah has created him. It is from the Sunnah of the Prophets (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon them) and from their guidance. Allah has distinguished men from women with the beard and He has beautified the man with it. In the past, the beard was a sign of manhood, distinction from femininity and a sign of adulthood in males. Unfortunately, in our times, the beard is no longer seen (even by many Muslims) as a sign of manhood, masculinity or religious duty. Indeed, in many circles masculinity itself is portrayed as a threat. This short article aims to discuss the

place of the beard in the life of a Muslim and the Sharee'ah rulings concerning it.

There are many today who say that the beard is not obligatory claiming that in the past it was only optional and "traditional", and Islam did not obligate it upon the believing men. They say that Islam leaves the affair to the tastes of the people and according to the environment and society around them. So, what is the beard and what does Islam say about it?

The Beard in the Language of the Sunnah

Linguistically, the beard refers to the hair that grows on the cheeks and the chin. It is referred to as al-lihyah (singular) and al-lihā or al-luhā (plural). Al-lahyi is a reference to the jaw bone which is called al-lahiyain (in dual form) because they are the two bones that hold the teeth of humans and animals — and it is the skin that covers the entire jaw bone upon which the beard grows.¹

In religious terminology², the beard is the hair that grows on the two cheeks³ comprising the hair that extends from the ears to the cheeks

¹ *Lisān al-Arab* (15/243), *Mukhtār as-Sihāh* (p. 248), *Al-Misbāh Al-Muneer* (2551).

² *Al-Hāshiyah* of Ibn ‘Ābideen 1/68 (Cairo, 1272AH)

³ Arabic: *Al-Khadhayn*.

(the sideburns)⁴, from the cheekbones down⁵ to the chin⁶. The temples and forehead are not considered to be the place of the beard. What is above the upper protrusion of cheekbone is not considered the beard as that is the area of the temple, and thus, a part of the head, not the face. It is stated in the hadeeth of Ar-Rubaya' (may Allah be pleased with her) that, **“The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) would wipe his head, his temples and ears once [during wudu].”**⁷ And it is not reported from anyone that he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) would wash his head along with his face.⁸

⁴ Al-'Idhār.

⁵ Al-'Ārid.

⁶ Ad-Daqan.

⁷ Abu Dawood (129), Tirmidhi (34) declared hasan by Al-Albāni.

⁸ *Hāshiyah Ibn Ābideen* (1/68), *Al-Mughni* of Ibn Qudāmah (1/115), *Sharhul-Muntahā* of Al-Bahooti Al-Hanbali (1/25).

There is a region of hair at the sides of the mouth and moustache (as-sibāl) where the moustache joins the beard. About this, the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) stated, **“Trim your sibāl (the hair that forms a part of your moustache at the sides of the mouth) and grow your beards [long] and differ from the people of Book.”**⁹

⁹ Ahmad (5/265). Al-Haythami said in Al-Majma’ (5/131): It was reported by Ahmad and At-Tabarāni and the narrators of Ahmad are all the narrators of the Saheeh except Al-Qāsim and he is reliable and speech concerning him does not harm this narration’s authenticity.

A Summary of the Limits of the Beard

Shaikh Ibn Bāz (رحمه الله) was asked about the Shar'eeh definition and limits of the beard. He replied, **“The scholars hold that the beard is the hair which grows on the cheeks and the chin – that is the beard. As for that which grows on the throat, that is not referred to as a beard (al-lihyah). Likewise, whatever is above the bone adjacent to the ear, this is considered as part of the head (i.e. the temple region) and is not from the beard. The beard is that which grows on the two cheeks below that bone that is adjacent to the ears, and that which grows on the chin, and the hair which grows beneath the bottom lip which is called al-‘anfaqah (which is the small tuft of hair in the middle under the lower lip), this too is from the beard.”** He was asked

about the permissibility of removing the hair that grows under the beard in the region of the throat. So, he responded, **“The hair that grows on the throat (al-halq), then that is not considered to be the beard.”**¹⁰

¹⁰ Slightly abridged from
binbaz.org.sa/fatwas/14556.

The Growing of the Beard:

The growing of the beard is a Sharee'ah requirement by the consensus (ittifāq) of the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah due to the ahādeeth that have been reported concerning it such as:

عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ خَالِفُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ، وَقْفُوا اللَّحَى، وَأَحْفُوا الشَّوَارِبَ وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ إِذَا حَجَّ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ قَبِضَ عَلَى لِحْيَتِهِ، فَمَا فَضَلَ أَخَذَهُ

Nāfi' narrated from Ibn 'Umar from Allah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that he said: **“Be different from the pagans; grow your beards [long] and trim down the moustaches.”** When Ibn 'Umar would perform Hajj or 'Umrah, he would take hold of his beard and cut whatever remained beyond a fistful.¹¹

¹¹ Bukhāri, 5892.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ، قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جُرُوا
الشَّوَارِبَ وَأَرْخُوا اللَّحَى خَالِفُوا الْمَجُوسَ

Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) stated that Allah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **“Trim down the moustaches and grow the beards long and differ from the Magians (Fire Worshippers).”**¹²

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الزُّبَيْرِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَشْرٌ مِنْ الْفِطْرَةِ قَصُّ الشَّارِبِ وَإِعْفَاءُ اللَّحْيَةِ
وَالسَّوَالِكِ وَاسْتِنْسَاقُ الْمَاءِ وَقَصُّ الْأَظْفَارِ وَعَسَلُ الْبَرَاجِمِ
وَتَنْتُفُ الْإِبْطِ وَحَلْقُ الْعَانَةِ وَانْتِقَاصُ الْمَاءِ قَالَ زَكْرِيَاءُ قَالَ
مُضْعَبٌ وَنَسِيْتُ الْعَاشِرَةَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ الْمَضْمَضَةَ زَادَ فُتَيْبُهُ
قَالَ وَكَيْعُ انْتِقَاصِ الْمَاءِ يَعْني الْإِسْتِنْجَاءَ

Abdullāh ibn Az-Zubayr (رضي الله عنهما) narrated from 'A'ishah (رضي الله عنها) that she stated that Allah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

¹² Muslim, 260.

“There are ten acts that are from the instilled innate nature of man (al-fitrah): to trim the moustache, to let the beard grow, to use the siwāk (cleaning the teeth), sniffing water into the nose [and expelling it to clean the nasal area], clipping the nails [of the hands and feet], washing the knuckles and other joints in the fingers, plucking (or removing) the hair of the armpits, shaving the pubic hair and washing the private parts with water (istinjā).” One of the narrators called Mus’ab said: “I have forgotten the tenth except that it may have been to rinse the mouth.”¹³

Zaid ibn Arqam narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَأْخُذْ مِنْ شَارِبِهِ فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا

¹³ Muslim 261, Abu Dawood 53, declared hasan by Al-Albāni.

“Whoever does not take from his moustache (i.e. trim it), then he is not from us.”¹⁴ And Allah (the Most High) said:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

“And whatever the Messenger gives you (i.e. commands you with), then take it and whatever he prohibits you from, then keep away from it.” Furthermore, it is the Sunnah of the Prophets and Messengers to grow the beard. The Prophet Hāroon said to his brothers Mūsā (peace of Allah be upon them both):

قَالَ يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ
فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

¹⁴ Tirmidhi 2761, An-Nasā'ī 5047 (saheeh).

“O son of my mother! Seize me not by my beard, nor by my head...” (20:94)

Abu Hurayrah said that a Magian came to the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who had shaved his beard and grown his moustache. So, the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to him: **“Woe to you! Who commanded you with this?”** The Magian said: **“The Chosroes (Persian emperor) commanded me with it.”** So, Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **“As for my Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, he has commanded me to grow my beard and trim my moustache.”** In a narration, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to the Magians: **“But we differ from your way, we trim this**

(the moustache) and we grow this (the beard).”¹⁵

The obligation of growing the beard is for all times and all places regardless of the conduct, fashion and religious observances of the unbelievers for the following reasons:

1. Growing the beard and trimming the moustache is from the *Fitrah* (innate nature).
2. It is from the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Prophets who came before him (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon them all).
3. To grow the beard and shorten the moustache is a direct command from Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). To disobey a command is a sin that leads to Allah’s punishment.

¹⁵ Declared hasan (good) by Al-Albāni in *Takhreej Fiqhus-Seerah*, p. 359.

4. The specific manner of the Muslim in growing the beard and trimming the moustache differs from the fashions and religious practices of the Jews, Christians, Hindus, Magians, Sikhs, Buddhists, etc. This makes the Muslim distinct and unique in his religious adherence.

5. Growing the beard distinguishes the man from the woman, and shaving it makes him resemble the woman. Allah (the Most High) and His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) cursed the man who resembles the woman and the woman who resembles the man.

6. The long, abundant beard and the trimmed moustache distinguishes a man with nobility, manliness and masculinity making him clearly different to a woman and he is made handsome in her eyes.

7. Growing the beard is from the outward acts of imān (faith), is a cause for its increase

because Ahlus-Sunnah believe that obedience to Allah and righteous deeds increase imān.

8. Shaving the beard or trimming it beyond what is allowable is a sinful deed that decreases imān. Ahlus-Sunnah believe that disobedience to Allah decreases imān.

Ibn Hajr (died 852H, رحمه الله) said: The intent of the saying of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم): **“Be different from the pagans”** refers to the Magians because they used to trim down their beards, and some of them would shave it altogether. The majority of the scholars held that the term, **“Let the beard grow”** means: **“Let it grow thick (or abundant)”** or to let it flow. It has been narrated from Ibn Daqeeq Al-‘Eid (رحمه الله) that he said: The explanation of the term “letting the beard grow” to mean “with abundance and plentifully” establishes the reason that brought about the ruling because

the actual meaning of “letting it grow” is to leave it alone. And to leave off meddling with the beard would necessitate that it grows abundantly. And Ibn ‘Ābideen from the Hanafis stated: **“To let the beard grow is to leave it alone until it becomes thick and abundant.”**¹⁶

¹⁶ *Fathul-Bāri* 10/351, *Hāshiyah Ibn ‘Ābideen* 2/205.

The Sin of Shaving or Trimming the Beard

Shaikh Al-Albāni (رحمه الله) responded to a writer who claimed that Islam does not care how a person looks outwardly, so whether a person grows his beard or not is unimportant. So, the Shaikh (رحمه الله) refuted that by saying: **“This assertion is absolutely false; and its falsehood is not doubted by any just person who is free from following his desires, in accordance to adhering to the authentic narrations.”** Then he (رحمه الله) went on to mention several narrations wherein Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) spoke of the outward appearances and those forbidden appearances that earn the anger and punishment of Allah. Here are some examples:

1. Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنهما) who narrated:

لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمُتَشَبِّهِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
بِالنِّسَاءِ، وَالْمُتَشَبِّهَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ بِالرِّجَالِ

“Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) cursed the men who resemble women and he cursed the women who resemble men.”¹⁷

2. Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنهما) said that Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **“Allah has cursed the woman who affixes hair extensions and the woman who has hair extensions done. And He cursed the one who tattoos and the one who gets herself tattooed.”¹⁸**

¹⁷ Bukhāri, 5885.

¹⁸ Bukhāri, 5937.

3. Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr (رضي الله عنهما) said: Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) saw me wearing two garments dyed in saffron. So, he said:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ مِنْ ثِيَابِ الْكُفَّارِ فَلَا تَلْبَسْهَا

“These are the garments of the unbelievers, so do not wear them.”¹⁹

4. Abdullah Ibn ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “Whoever settles in the lands of the non-Muslims, then he celebrates their festivals of Nayrūz and Mahrajān (of the Persians), **and he imitates them and then he**

¹⁹ Muslim, 2077. See Tamām Al-Minnah of Al-Albāni, 1/78.

dies whilst in that state, he will be gathered with them on the Day of Resurrection.”²⁰

These ahādeeth and many more prove that altering the outward appearance beyond what is allowed is a sin that earns the curse and punishment of Allah. From the affairs of the fitrah (innate nature) with which men are created is to grow the beard and to trim the moustache as I have mentioned in the hadeeth of the fitrah reported by Muslim. And this is something that Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) commanded with. Therefore, to shave the beard is forbidden.

As for trimming the beard, then there are guidelines present in the understanding of the

²⁰ *Sunan Al-Kubrā* of Al-Bayhaqī, 9/234, Ibn Taymiyyah stated that its chain of narration is authentic in *Iqtidā As-Sirāt Al-Mustaqīm*, 1/457.

Companions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and trimming is not open to one's whims and self-adjudication by gathering examples from the sayings [and mistakes] of the scholars and using them as a proof – especially if those opinions take one beyond the actions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions. Allah has commanded the Muslims to follow the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to obey him and to keep away from what he has forbidden; and to follow the path of the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) and their understanding. And whoever's saying or understanding differs from this foundation, then it is not accepted regardless of their station.

How Serious is the Issue of Shaving and Trimming?

Shaikh Ibn Bāz (رحمه الله) said: **“No doubt shaving the beard is greater in sin [than trimming it] because it involves removing the beard altogether and it is an exaggerated act of evil, and imitation of women.”** That is because removing the facial hair resembles the women which is a major sin. Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) **“Cursed the men who resemble women and he cursed the women who resemble men.”**²¹

There is a hadeeth collected by At-Tirmidhi (no. 2762) wherein it is said: **“The Prophet would take from the width and length of his beard.”** This hadeeth is fabricated (mawdoo’)

²¹ Bukhāri, 5885.

as stated by the scholars of hadeeth²² because there is a narrator in the chain called ‘Umar ibn Hāroon Al-Balkhi who was accused of lying. So, this hadeeth cannot be used as a proof for cutting the beard unrestrictedly from its length or its width. To act upon this fabricated narration opposes the authentic Sunnah. Furthermore, to act upon it knowingly just because it agrees with one’s desires is an added calamity that combines opposition to the Sunnah with following one’s inclination to imitate the unbelievers.

Shaikh Ibn Bāz (رحمه الله) continued: **“As for shortening the beard and reducing it, then there is no doubt it is an evil and it opposes**

²² عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ هَارُونَ، عَنْ أُسَامَةَ بْنِ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ شُعَيْبٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَأْخُذُ مِنْ لِحْيَتِهِ مِنْ عَرْضِهَا وَطُولِهَا (Tirmidhi 2762; See Ad-Da’eefah of Al-Albāni, 288)

the authentic narrations. However, it is lesser [in evil] than shaving it all. As for the one who does that, then he is a sinner and not an unbeliever. He is not a kāfir even if he believes it is permissible if that is based on his erroneous understanding and blind-following of some scholars. And it is obligatory to advise him and warn him from this evil act. That is because there is some differing among the scholars as to whether it should be left to flow or whether it can be shortened [by cutting whatever extends beyond a fistful]. As for shaving it all, then I do not know of any scholar who permitted that. However, we do not declare the one who holds it permissible (halāl) to shave the beard to be an unbeliever if that is due to his ignorance and his blind-following of others.

This is different from those prohibitions that are known in the Religion by necessity due to

the clear proofs. So, if one was to declare those prohibitions (i.e. what Allah has decreed as harām) to be permissible (halāl) then that would be major kufr – that is if he was living among the Muslims [and therefore had no excuse of claiming ignorance]. But if he lived among the non-Muslims or in a distant desolate place far away from the Scholars [so he does not know halāl from harām], then this person should be shown the proofs, and then if he persists in claiming that the prohibitions (i.e. the harām matters) are permissible (halāl) then he has disbelieved. Examples of this are: fornication, drinking alcoholic drinks, eating pork and so on. That is because these are prohibitions known in the religion by necessity and the evidences of prohibition are clear in

the Qur'an and Sunnah.”²³ However, the Muslim who commits these sins knowing them to be unlawful (harām), and without claiming they are halāl (permissible) then he is a sinner and not an unbeliever because he has not challenged the Revelation but instead has fallen into a state of weakness in faith (īmān). But to declare what is clearly harām in the Qur'an and Sunnah to be halāl is an act of unbelief that exits one from the Religion. The Muslim who fornicates, drinks alcohol or partakes in the evil act of homosexuality is not considered an unbeliever (kāfir) unless he claims that these acts are permissible (halāl). That is because the sinner recognises the authority of Allah and believes in the Revelation without challenging it and seeks

²³ See *Wujoob I'fā il-Lihyah wa Tahreem Halqihā wa Taqseerihā* of Shaikh ibn Bāz (رحمه الله) and his *Majmoo' Al-Fatāwā*, 3/373.

forgiveness for his sins and repents by feeling remorse and giving-up the sinful act.

Narrations Indicating the Length and Abundance of the Beard

An-Nawawi (رحمه الله) stated in his explanation of Saheeh Muslim (3/194): **As for the saying of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم): “I’fā’ul-lihyah”²⁴ then it means to let it grow and that is the meaning of “Awfū”²⁵ as occurs in another narration. It was the habit of the Persians to trim the beard so the Sharee’ah forbade it, until it there came five different narrations: “A’afū”²⁶, “Awfū”, “Arkhū”²⁷, “Arjū” and “Waffirū”²⁸ and the meaning of all of these words is to leave the beard to grow**

²⁴ وَأَعْفَاءُ اللَّحْيَةِ (Muslim 216)

²⁵ خَالِفُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَحْفُوا الشَّوَارِبَ وَأَوْفُوا اللَّحْيَ (Muslim 259)

²⁶ أَحْفُوا الشَّوَارِبَ وَأَعْفُوا اللَّحْيَ (Muslim 259)

²⁷ جَزُّوا الشَّوَارِبَ وَأَرْحُوا اللَّحْيَ خَالِفُوا الْمَجُوسَ (Muslim 260)

²⁸ خَالِفُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ، وَقَزُّوا اللَّحْيَ، وَأَحْفُوا الشَّوَارِبَ (Bukhāri 5892)

as it is. That is what is apparent from the narrations that encompass all these different words.” Ash-Shawkāni (رحمه الله) said similar to this in Naylul-Awtār (1/131).

The Imām Abu Muhammad ibn Hazm (رحمه الله) stated: **“The scholars are agreed that trimming the moustache and growing the beard are obligations (*fard*).”** And he said: **“The scholars are agreed that to shave off the beard is a mutilation and not allowed.”**²⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) stated: **“It is forbidden to shave the beard due to the authentic narrations [that command with leaving it to grow] – and no one [from the scholars] permitted its shaving.”**

²⁹ Marātib al-Ijmā’ (157).

The Permissibility of Taking from the Beard After a Fistful

There were a group of scholars who allowed the beard to be shortened with limitations based upon the understanding and actions of a group of the Sahābah and those who came after them. They understood that the beard is to be thick and plentiful and not excessively long. Bukhāri and Muslim reported that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) had a **“thick beard.”** Muslim reported that he had, **“plentiful beard hair.”** And similar is reported from the Sahābah in the descriptions of their beards. It is not reported from a single one of the Salaf that any of them shaved off their beard. As for its length, then it reported from a group of the Sahābah such as Ibn ‘Umar and Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنهم) that they would cut what extended beyond a fistful of its length: **“When**

Ibn ‘Umar would perform Hajj or ‘Umrah, he would take hold of his beard and cut whatever remained beyond a fistful.”³⁰ Then the scholars differed as to whether this was done only at Hajj and ‘Umrah or outside of it as well. However, that does not alter that fact that it is permissible to cut after a fistful. Ibn Abdul-Barr (رحمه الله) stated: **“If it was not permissible to trim the beard, then it would not be permissible during Hajj [either].”³¹**

There were some scholars who still held it impermissible to cut what remained after a fistful. The reason for the differing is due to the fact that Ibn ‘Umar is one who narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **“Grow the beard.”** Yet it is Ibn ‘Umar himself who cut the beard.

³⁰ Bukhāri, 5892.

³¹ Al-Istidhkār, 4/317.

So, those scholars who held it impermissible to cut from from the beard said: **“The importance is given to the narration of the narrator and not to his view.”** And those who allowed cutting said: **“The narrator is the one most acquainted with the intent of what he narrated.”** So, they said that Ibn ‘Umar did not oppose what he narrated from Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) rather, his action explains what is meant by “letting it grow”, i.e. let it grow to the length of a fistful.

The Majority of the Scholars Allowed Taking from the Beard what Remains after a Fistful

From the scholars who held it permissible to cut from the beard what remains after taking hold of it included: Mālik ibn Anas, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, ‘Atā, Ibn Abdul-Barr, Ibn Taymiyyah and others.

Mālik (رحمه الله) said: **“I hold that it is permitted to take from the beard – it was reported from Ibn ‘Umar and Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنهما) that they would take from the beard what remains after a fistful.”**³²

³² Abul-Waleed Al-Bāji in *Al-Muntaqā Sharh Muwatta*, 4/367.

Ibn Hāni said: I asked Abu Abdullah (Ahmad ibn Hanbal) regarding a man who takes from the sides of his face. He said: “He can take from his beard that which extends beyond a fistful.” So, I said: What about the hadeeth of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم): “Trim the moustache and let the beard grow.” He (Imām Ahmad) said: “He can take from its length [as stated above] and from below his throat.” And I saw Abu Abdullah taking from the sides of his face and from under his throat.³³

Al-Khallāl said: Harb informed me that Ahmad was asked about taking from the beard. So, he replied: “Ibn ‘Umar would take from it what exceeded a fistful.” So, it was as if this was his view. I said: “Then what is letting it grow”? He said: “That which has been narrated from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).” Harb said: “It was

³³ See *Al-Masā'il* of Ibn Hāni (2/151).

as if that was his understanding of letting it grow.”³⁴

Ibn Battāl³⁵ said that ‘Atā said: “There is no harm in taking from the beard a small amount from its length and width if it gets too much.”

This should be understood with the meaning that the small amount to be cut is only that which extends beyond a fistful. That is because it is not allowed to go beyond the texts reported from Allah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم). It is reported from the Prophet that he allowed the beard to grow and Ibn ‘Umar’s understanding was that one may cut after a fistful. It is not reported from him or Abu Hurayrah that they shortened anymore than that. As for cutting below the throat, then that

³⁴ *Al-Wuqoof wa-Tarajjul*, p129.

³⁵ *Sharhul-Bukhāri* (9/147).

was allowed because it is not considered, by definition, to be part of the beard. Ibn Mājah reports (no. 4) that Abu Ja'far said: **“Whenever Ibn 'Umar heard a Hadith from the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم), he would not do more than what it stated, and he would not do less.”**

Shaykhul-Islam said in *Sharhul-'Umdah* (1/236): **“As for growing the beard, then that is to leave it alone. If one was to take that which extends beyond a fistful then it is not disliked. And there is textual proof that allows that as has preceded from Ibn 'Umar. It is also allowed to take from that which protrudes [abnormally], and Allah knows best.”**

As for the small number of people that allowed the taking of the beard such that one makes it shorter than a fist-length, then that opinion is

not supported by any proofs from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) or his Companions. Those who use “differing of opinion” as a proof have no basis for their stance. Rather, difference of opinion is not a proof for any person to persist in following his own desires. Al-Hāfidh Ibn Abdul-Barr stated: **“Difference of opinion is not a proof with any of the people of knowledge from the jurists of the Ummah, except for the one who has no insight and no knowledge with him, and has no proof for his saying.”**³⁶ Also Al-Khattābee (rahimahullāh) stated: **“And differing is not a proof – rather the explanation of the Sunnah is a proof upon those who differ with each other, from the earlier people and the later people.”**³⁷

³⁶ *Jāmi’ Bayān al-’Ilm wa Fadhlihi*, 2/229.

³⁷ *A’lām-ul-Hadeeth*, 3/2092.

Summary of the Discussion

1. The growing of the beard is a religious obligation in Islam.
2. It is prohibited to shave the beard and none from the Sahābah and the early scholars/jurists permitted shaving the beard.
3. To take from the beard and to shorten it such that it is no longer plentiful and abundant is also harām because it opposes the command of the Prophet to grow the beard in all the various wordings of the ahādeeth. However, one may cut what remains after taking a fistful such that it does not contradict the beard from still remaining plentiful and abundant.
4. The sin is of levels with respect to the beard – so, the sin of shaving is greater than the sin of trimming it shorter than a fistful.
5. The issue of leaving the beard to grow or trimming the beard after taking a fistful whilst

it still remains plentiful and abundant is a point of [legitimate] differing among the scholars of the past and present, and both positions are supported by proofs.

6. As for those Sahābah and early scholars who allowed trimming of the beard, then they allowed it after a fistful and **we know of no one** from the Sahābah who permitted shortening it beyond that.

7. The legitimate differing is based upon the understanding of the meaning of letting the beard grow, so the scholars differed regarding which principle of the two is to be given preference over the other: **“The importance is given to the narration of the narrator and not to his view.”** And those who allowed cutting said: **“The narrator is the one most acquainted with the intent of what he narrated.”**

Advising the one who Shaves and Shortens

Whoever shortens the beard less than a fistful, trims it down or shaves it then he is advised to fear Allah and to be dutiful to Him because he has done something reprehensible. And the one shaves it is worse than the one who trims it. As for the man who lets it grow plentifully and abundantly and then trims whatever remains after a fistful, then he is not rebuked at all just the Companions are not rebuked such as Ibn 'Umar and Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنهما).