

FORTY HADĪTH IN CLARIFICATION OF THE MADHHAB OF THE SALAF—THAT IS THE MADHHAB OF AHLUL-HADĪTH

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4. Whoever Turns Away from the Sunnah of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is not from his True Followers

Anas Ibn Mālik (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said:

جَاءَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَهْطٍ إِلَى بُيُوتِ أَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَلَمَّا أُخْبِرُوا كَانَتْهُمْ تَقَالُوبُهَا فَقَالُوا وَأَيْنَ نَحْنُ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ. قَالَ أَحَدُهُمْ أَمَا أَنَا فَإِنِّي أُصَلِّي اللَّيْلَ أَبَدًا. وَقَالَ آخَرُ أَنَا أَصُومُ الدَّهْرَ وَلَا أَفْطِرُ. وَقَالَ آخَرُ أَنَا أَعْتَرِلُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَا أَتَزَوَّجُ أَبَدًا. فَجَاءَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ أَنْتُمْ الَّذِينَ قُلْتُمْ كَذَا وَكَذَا أَمَا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَخْشَاكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَأَنْفَاكُمْ لَهُ لِكَيْتِي أَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

“Three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asking about the worship of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). When they were told about it, they thought it to be not much. So, they said: ‘**Where are we compared to the Messenger of Allah—his previous and later sins have been forgiven.**’ Then, one of them said: ‘**As for me, I will pray through the night continually.**’ Another said: ‘**I will fast continually and I will not cease fasting.**’ And another one said: ‘**I will stay away from women and never get married.**’

When Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) came to them, he said: ‘**You are the ones who said such-and-such?! As for me, then by Allah! I am the most fearful of Allah among you and the most dutiful to Him. Nevertheless, I**

fast sometimes and sometimes, I refrain from fasting. I pray [a part of the night] and I sleep [a part of it], and I marry women. So, whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.”²⁴

In a narration:

أَنَّ نَفَرًا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَأَلُوا أَزْوَاجَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ عَمَلِهِ فِي السِّرِّ فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لَا أَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لَا آكُلُ اللَّحْمَ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لَا أَنَامُ عَلَى فِرَاشٍ . فَحَمِدَ اللَّهُ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ . فَقَالَ مَا بَالُ أَقْوَامٍ قَالُوا كَذَا وَكَذَا لِكَيْتِي أُصَلِّي وَأَنَامُ وَأَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

“A small group of the Companions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) asked the wives of the Prophet about his actions in private. So, one of them said: ‘**I will not marry women.**’ Another said: ‘**I will not eat meat.**’ Another said: ‘**I will not sleep on a bed.**’ When the Prophet heard of that, he praised Allah and extolled Him and said: ‘**What is wrong with a people who say these things whereas I pray at night and I sleep, I fast sometimes and sometimes I do not, and I get married to women. So, whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.**’”²⁵

Explanation:

Al-Hāfidh Ibn Hajr (d. 852 H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) stated: “The intent of the term Sunnah is a *Tareeqah* (Path) and not that which is other than obligations (*farā'id*). And to turn away from something is to disincline and avoid a thing for something else. Therefore, the intent [of the *hadeeth*] is: ‘Whoever abandons my Path and takes another Path is not from me.’”²⁶

²⁴ Al-Bukhārī no. 5063.

²⁵ Muslim no. 1401.

²⁶ *Fathul-Bārī*, 9/105.

It is not permissible to reject any part of the Sunnah, regardless of whether it is an obligation, a pillar, or from the branches of the religion, or a recommended action—and that is regardless of the times we are living in—the Sunnah is not to be rejected.

The Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is Revelation, and it supersedes everything the people regard as important such as their tribal customs, nationalism, race, party allegiance, and group identity. If any practice of the people contradicts the Sunnah, it is cast to one side and rejected.

Indeed, to attain the love of Allah (the Most High) and His forgiveness, we must follow the Sunnah and not turn away from it for the speech (or example) of any person, just as Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ

“Say, if you truly love Allah then follow me, then Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.” (Āli ‘Imrān 3:31).

There is no example more worthy of being followed than that of Allah’s Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ
 اللَّهُ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have a fine example to follow for whosoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day—and remembers Allah much.” (Al-Ahzāb: 21)

So, following the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is a must in every affair of life whether in marriage, divorce, welcoming a new-born baby into the world, celebrations, dress-code of a man or the *hijāb* of the woman just as Allah stated:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمُ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ۗ

“Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it.” (Al-Hashr 59:7)

Imām Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 179 H رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ) said:

السُّنَّةُ سَفِينَةُ نُوحٍ مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَّى وَمَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا غَرِقَ

“The Sunnah is the Ark of Nooh. Whoever boarded it was saved, and whoever stayed behind was drowned.”²⁷

There are affairs from the Sunnah that are obligatory and others that are recommended (optional yet rewardable)—all of them are to be accepted as Revelation from Allah, and we believe that all of it is from Allah so long as it is authentically reported from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). It is, therefore, important to follow that which is authentic from the narrations (*ahādēeth*) and leave off that with is inauthentic.

As for the one who leaves off practising aspects of the Sunnah that are obligated by the Shari‘ah due to his lack of steadfastness and weakness in practice, while accepting and honouring the Sunnah, then such a person is from *Ahlus-Sunnah* albeit weak in *īmān* and sinful.

Furthermore, if a person wishes to understand the Sunnah and practice it as it was intended by Allah, then he should follow the path of the Companions, just as ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ood (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said:

“Whoever wishes to follow an example, then let him follow the example of the Companions of Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) for indeed they had the most pious of the hearts of this Ummah, they were the most grounded of the Ummah in knowledge, and the least burdensome. They were the foremost in guidance and the best of the Ummah in manners. They were the people chosen by Allah to accompany His Prophet and to establish His religion. So,

²⁷ *Tāreekh Baghdād* of al-Khateeb al-Baghdādī, 7/336, *Dhammul-Kalām* of al-Harawī, no. 885 4/124, *Majmoo‘ al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 4/57, and others.

recognise their virtues, follow their footsteps and take their narrations because they were upon steadfast guidance (*al-hadyul-mustaqeem*).²⁸

²⁸ Reported by Ibn ‘Abdil-Barr in *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 2/97.