

Shortening beard under instructions from those in authority

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Question: Some administrative authorities have issued a law obliging employees to shorten the beard. So, should the ruler be obeyed in such a case? And may Allaah reward you.

Answer: All praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon whom Allaah sent as a mercy to the Worlds, upon his Family, his Companions and his Brothers till the Day of Resurrection.

Know that the Sunnah observed by the predecessors among the Prophet's Companions and others, is to let the beard grow except that which exceeds the handful of it, it is cut off. Aboo Dawood and others reported on the authority of Marwaan Ibn Saalim who said: "I saw Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنهما holding his beard with his hand and cutting what exceeded the handful of it"¹, this was also reported from the hadeeth of Abee Hurayrah رضي الله عنه². Furthermore, Ibn 'Abbaas رضي الله عنهما said in the interpretation of the verse:

ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ

[Then let them complete their Tafath (their prescribed duties)]³

The "Tafath" means: shaving the head, the moustache and the armpit, cutting nails, cutting off what exceeds the handful of the beard, throwing pebbles and standing in 'Arafaat⁴ and Muzdalifa^{5,6}. This was judged recommendable by Maalik, Ahmad and others. Ibn Al-Qaasim reported from Maalik who said: "There is no harm to cut off that which grows in an odd way from the beard", upon this it was said to Maalik: "And what if it (the beard) becomes very long?" he said: "I see that its length should be reduced and cut off". And it was reported from 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar and Abee Hurayrah رضي الله عنهما that they used to cut off that which exceeds the handful of the beard⁷. In addition, Al-Baa'jee Al-Maalikee said: "Indeed, that was recommended by Maalik رحمه الله because shortening the moustache and cutting off what exceeds the handful of the beard does not alter the beauty of the creation; unlike shaving

¹ Reported by Aboo Dawood (2357). This hadeeth is judged well (Hassan) by Al-Albaanee in "Al-Irwa'" (4/39).

² Reported by Ibn Abee Shaybah in "Al-Musannaf" (25481). See: "As-Silsilah Ad-Dha'eefa" by Al-Albaanee (5/376).

³ Soorah al-Hajj [22:29]

⁴ 'Arafaat: a famous place of pilgrimage on the southeast of Makkah about twenty-five kilometres from it.

⁵ Muzdalifa: a place between 'Arafaat and Mina where the pilgrims while returning from 'Arafaat, have to stop and stay for the whole night or greater part of it (the night), between the ninth and tenth of Dhu Al-Hijjah and to perform Maghrib (evening) and 'Ishaa' (late-evening) prayers there.

⁶ Reported by At-Tabaree in his "Tafseer" (9/134), and by Ibn Abee Shaybah in "Al-Musannaf" (15673), from the way of 'Ataa'. The hadeeth is judged authentic by Al-Albaanee in "As-Silsilah Ad-Dha'eefa" (5/376).

⁷ See: "Al-Muntaqaa" by Al-Baa'jee (7/266).

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them (i.e. the beard and the moustache) which is similar to shaving the woman's hair, so it is forbidden to shave them [at all] or to change them in a way that leads to an alteration or a deformity of the creation. However, the hair that grows in an odd way and exceeds the limits of the beauty, then cutting it off is permissible"⁸. Therefore, if only that which exceeds the handful of the beard is cut off, then we have already stated that this practice was known among the righteous predecessors and it is incumbent to obey those whom Allaah سبحانه وتعالى has commanded to be obeyed in Al-Ma'roof (right and good action). Nevertheless, cutting off more than that which exceeds the handful of the beard is in contradiction with the commandments of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ, relating to abstaining from shaving the beard and letting it grow, that denote the obligation in his saying صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ : "...and let the beard grow"⁹, and "...and keep the beard"¹⁰. It is well-known that the obedience of the ruler should be in what Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ and His Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ have commanded, and it is not permissible to make a decision in advance before Allaah and His Messenger, according to the verse in which Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ said

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدُمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

[O you who believe! Make not (a decision) in advance before Allaah and His Messenger, and fear Allaah. Verily, Allaah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing]¹¹

Forasmuch as "None should be obeyed in the disobedience of Allaah"¹², and "Verily, the obedience is in Al-Ma'roof (right and good action)"¹³, as it is confirmed in the two authentic compilations of hadeeth (i.e., Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim) according to the saying of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

The perfect knowledge belongs to Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ; and our last prayer is all the praises and thanks are to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds, and prayers of Allaah are to Muhammad and his Family, Companions and Brothers until the Day of Resurrection.

Algiers on: Sha'baan the 17th, 1429 H Corresponding to: February the 15th, 2008 G

⁸ See: "Al-Muntaqaa" by Al-Baajee (7/266).

⁹ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (5893) and by Muslim (259), from the hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنهما.

¹⁰ Reported by Muslim (260), from the hadeeth of Abee Hurayrah رضي الله عنه.

¹¹ Soorah al-Hujaraat [49:1]

¹² Reported by At-Tabaree in "Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabeer" (18/170), from the hadeeth of 'Imraan Ibn Husayn Al-Khuzaa'ee رضي الله عنه. The hadeeth is judged authentic by Al-Albaanee in "Saheeh al-Jaami'" (7520).

¹³ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (7145) and by Muslim (1840), from the hadeeth of 'Alee Ibn Abee Taalib رضي الله عنه.