

129182 - Ruling on sitting with the knees drawn up (ihtiba')

the question

I read a hadith in the book Riyadh as-Saaliheen that has to do with the prohibition on sitting with the knees drawn up when the khateeb is delivering the khutbah from the minbar on Friday. I hope that you could help me by shedding more light on this topic.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

The hadith concerning that was narrated by Imam Ahmad (24/393) and at-Tirmidhi (514) from Mu'aadh ibn Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), according to whom the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade sitting with the knees drawn up on Friday when the imam is delivering the khutbah. At-Tirmidhi said: This is a hasan hadith.

The manner of sitting referred to here is sitting on one's backside, with the thighs and legs drawn up to the stomach, wrapping one's arms around the legs.

See al-Mu'jam al-Waseet (1/154, 2/729).

The scholars differed concerning this hadith. Some of them classed it as hasan, such as Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi, and the commentators on Musnad al-Imam Ahmad.

Others classed it as da'eef, such as an-Nawawi in al-Majmoo' (4/592), Ibn al-'Arabi in 'Aaridat al-Ahwadhi (1/469) and Ibn Muflih in al-Furoo' (2/127)

An-Nawawi said in al-Majmoo', after stating that at-Tirmidhi had classed this hadith as hasan: But its isnaad includes two da'eef (weak) narrators, so we cannot accept its classification as hasan. End quote.

The two da'eef narrators to whom an-Nawawi referred are Sahl ibn Mu'aadh and 'Abd ar-Raheem ibn Maymoon.

With regard to Sahl ibn Mu'aadh, Ibn Ma'een said concerning him: He is da'eef. Ibn Hibbaan said: His hadith is very odd. 'Abd ar-Raheem ibn Maymoon was also classed as da'eef by Ibn Ma'een. Abu Haatim said: His hadith may be written down but may not be quoted as evidence.

See: Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (4/258, 6/308)

It was narrated that some of the Sahaabah did sit in this manner on Friday when the imam was delivering the khutbah, such as Ibn 'Umar and Anas (may Allah be pleased with them). Hence most of the scholars (including the four imams) were of the view that it is not makrooh.

Ibn Qudaamah said in al-Mughni (2/88):

There is nothing wrong with sitting with the knees drawn up when the imam is delivering the khutbah. That was narrated from Ibn 'Umar and a number of other companions of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). This was the view of Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyab, al-Hasan, Ibn Sireen, Maalik, ash-Shaafa'i and ashaab ar-ra'y. Abu Dawood said: I have not heard that anybody regarded it as makrooh except 'Ubaadah ibn Nasiy, because Sahl ibn Mu'aadh narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade sitting with the legs drawn up on a Friday when the imam is delivering the khutbah. Narrated by Abu Dawood.

But we have the report that was narrated by Ya'la ibn Aws, who said: I was present in Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) with Mu'aawiyah. He gathered us together, then I looked and saw that most of those who were in the mosque were companions of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and I saw them sitting with their legs drawn up, whilst the imam was delivering the khutbah. This was done by Ibn 'Umar and Anas, and we do not know of anyone who disagreed with them, thus there was consensus. The isnaad of the hadith is subject to further discussion, as was stated by Ibn al-Mundhir. However it is better not to do that, because of the report, even though it is da'eef, and because it is more conducive to sleep, falling or invalidating one's wudoo'. Therefore it is better not to do it. And Allah knows best. End quote.

An-Nawawi said in al-Majmoo' (4/457):

Sitting with the legs drawn up on Friday for the one who attends the khutbah, whilst the imam is delivering the khutbah:

Ibn al-Mundhir narrated from ash-Shaafa'i that he did not regard it as makrooh. Ibn al-Mundhir narrated that from Ibn 'Umar, Ibn al-Musayyab, al-Hasan al-Basri, 'Ata', Ibn Sireen, Abu'z-Zubayr, Saalim ibn 'Abdullah, Shurayh al-Qaadi, 'Ikrimah ibn Khaalid, Naafi', Maalik, ath-Thawri, al-Awzaa'i, ashaab ar-ra'y, Ahmad, Ishaq and Abu Thawr. He said: Some of the scholars of hadith regarded that as makrooh because of a hadith that was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) concerning that, the isnaad of which is subject to further discussion. End quote.

Some of the scholars mentioned some reasons for it being makrooh to do that whilst the imam is delivering the khutbah.

Al-Bayhaqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is narrated in the hadith of Mu'aadh ibn Anas, that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade sitting with the legs drawn up on Friday, if it is proven, is because this may make one prone to falling asleep and make it likely that wudoo' will be invalidated. If there is no fear of that, then there is nothing wrong with sitting with the legs drawn up. End quote.

Ma'rifat as-Sunan wa'l-Athaar (1814)

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade it – i.e., sitting with the legs drawn up – when the imam is delivering the khutbah on Friday for two reasons: the first is that this posture may make one more prone to falling asleep, which would cause him to miss out on hearing the khutbah.

The second reason is that if he moves, his ‘awrah may be uncovered, because in the past people mostly wore the izaar (waist wrapper) and rida’ (upper garment), and if one moved or fell, the ‘awrah would become uncovered.

But if there is no risk of that, then there is nothing wrong with it, because if the prohibition was for a reason, and that reason no longer applies, then the prohibition also no longer applies. End quote.

Sharh Riyadh as-Saaliheen

To sum up: it is preferable not to sit with the legs drawn up when the imam is delivering the khutbah on Friday, but if a person does sit with his legs drawn up and there is no risk of his ‘awrah becoming uncovered or of him falling asleep, then there is nothing wrong with it in that case.

And Allah knows best.