

## 256227 - Evidence for the prescription of udhiyah, and whether it is obligatory or recommended

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### the question

I read the fatwa on your site, which says that udhiyah is Sunnah, but there is no strong evidence on your website to support this view. Could you please present some evidence that udhiyah is Sunnah and not obligatory? What about the hadith “Whoever can afford it but does not offer a sacrifice, let him not come near our prayer-place.” [Ibn Maajah, hadith no. 3123]?

### Summary of answer

Conclusion: there is a considerable difference of opinion among the scholars, but the view that it is recommended is what seems more likely to be correct in our view.

For those who can afford it and want to be prudent and not omit to offer the udhiyah, this is more on the safe side and more certain of doing what is expected of one, as we quoted above from Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him).

If anyone wishes to know more, let him see: Ahkaam al-Udhiyah wa’dh-Dhakaah by Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen, and al-Mufassal fi Ahkaam al-Udhiyah by Husaam ad-Deen ‘Affaanah, as he discusses the issue in a very straightforward style.

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And Allah knows best.

## Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Concerning this issue there is a well-known difference of opinion among the scholars (may Allah have mercy on them). Most of the scholars are of the view that udhiyah is Sunnah, and is not obligatory.

The Hanafis and Imam Ahmad, according to one report, which is also the view favoured by Ibn Taymiyah, are of the view that it is obligatory for one who can afford it.

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The majority of scholars are of the view that udhiyah is a confirmed Sunnah and is not obligatory.

That was narrated from Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Bilaal and Abu Mas'ood al-Badri (may Allah be pleased with them). It was also the view of Suwayd ibn Ghafalah, Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyab, 'Alqamah, al-Aswad, 'Ata', ash-Shaafa'i, Ishaq, Abu Thawr, and Ibn al-Mundhir. Rabee'ah, Maalik, ath-Thawri, al-Awzaa'i, al-Layth, and Abu Haneefah said: It is obligatory, because of the report narrated by Abu Hurayrah, according to which the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever can afford it but does not offer a sacrifice, let him not come near our prayer-place." And it was narrated from Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "O people, each household, each year, must offer a sacrifice (udhiyah) and an 'ateerah [a sacrifice that was offered during Rajab in the pre-Islamic period]."

There is also the report narrated by ad-Daaraqutni, with his isnaad from Ibn 'Abbaas, that the

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Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There are three things that are obligatory for me, but for you they are optional." According to another report, they are: "Witr, the sacrifice (udhiyah) and the two (Sunnah) rak'ahs of Fajr."

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever wants to offer the udhiyah, when the first ten days of Dhu'l-Hijjah begin, let him not remove anything of his hair or skin." Narrated by Muslim. Offering the udhiyah is connected to wanting to do it, but that which is obligatory cannot be connected to wanting to do it.

End quote from al-Mughni (11/95).

Secondly:

Each group of scholars quoted several things as evidence for its view, but the evidence is not free of some reservations concerning its isnaads, or some dispute concerning its interpretation. We will limit our discussion to the most significant of the marfoo' hadiths.

With regard to the first hadith quoted by those who say that it is obligatory:

It is the hadith of Abu Hurayrah, according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever can afford it but does not offer a sacrifice, let him not come near our prayer-place." [Ibn Maajah, hadith no. 3123]

Some of the leading scholars of hadith did not accept that it is marfoo' (attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), and they judged it to be the words of Abu Hurayrah, not the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Al-Bayhaqi said in his Sunan (9/260): I heard that Abu 'Eesa at-Tirmidhi said: With regard to the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah, it may be soundly attributed to him, but it is mawqoof (that is, it is the words of the Sahaabi and cannot be attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah

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be upon him)). It was narrated by Ja'far ibn Rabee'ah and others from 'Abd ar-Rahmaan al-A'raj from Abu Hurayrah as a mawqoof report. End quote.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said: It was narrated by Ibn Maajah and Ahmad, and its men are thiqaat, but there is a difference of opinion as to whether it is marfoo' or mawqoof. The view that it is mawqoof is more likely to be correct. This was stated by at-Tahhaawi and others. Moreover, it does not clearly state that (offering the udhiyah) is obligatory. End quote from Fath al-Baari 912/98).

The view that it is mawqoof was deemed more likely to be correct by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 'Abd al-Haqq in al-Ahkaam al-Wusta (4/127), al-Mundhiri in at-Targheeb wa't-Tarheeb, Ibn 'Abd al-Haadi in at-Tanqeeh (2/498). See: Haashiyat Muhaqqiqi Sunan Ibn Maajah (4/303).

The second hadith is the hadith of Abu Ramlah from Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym, in a marfoo' report: "O people, each household, each year, must offer a sacrifice (udhiyah) and an 'ateerah." Narrated by Abu Dawood (2788), at-Tirmidhi (1596), Ibn Maajah (3125).

The 'ateerah was a sacrifice that they used to offer during Rajab [before Islam]. It was also known as ar-Rajabiyah.

A number of scholars classed this report as da'eef (weak), because Abu Ramlah, whose name was 'Aamir, is unknown.

Al-Khattaabi said: This hadith is da'eef, and Abu Ramlah is unknown.

End quote from Ma'aalim as-Sunan (2/226).

Az-Zayla'i said: 'Abd al-Haqq said: Its isnaad is da'eef. Ibn al-Qattaan said: The problem with it is the fact that Abu Ramlah, whose name was 'Aamir, is unknown; he is only known for this report, which was reported from him by Ibn 'Awn.

End quote from Nasab ar-Raayah (4/112).

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With regard to those who say that it is recommended, they quoted as evidence a number of marfoo' hadiths, the most important of which are the two hadiths that were quoted by Ibn Qudaamah (may Allah have mercy on him).

The first hadith is the hadith of Ibn 'Abbaas, according to which the Messenger of Allah (sa) (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There are three things that are obligatory for me, but for you they are optional: Witr, the sacrifice (udhiyah) and Duha prayer." Narrated by Ahmad (2050) and al-Bayhaqi (2/467).

This hadith was classed as da'eef by a number of earlier and later leading scholars of hadith. Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The reason for its being classed as da'eef is that it was narrated by Abu Janaab al-Kalbi, from 'Ikrimah. But Abu Janaab is da'eef and mudallis [i.e., he engaged in tadlees, which is when a narrator narrates a hadith that he did not hear directly from his shaykh, without mentioning the name of the third party from whom he did hear it, using wording that may or may not give the impression that he heard it directly], and he narrated by saying 'an (from) [this is weaker than saying "So and so told me" and the like, especially on the part of one who is mudallis]. The leading scholars such as Ahmad, al-Bayhaqi, Ibn as-Salaah, Ibn al-Jawzi, an-Nawawi and others deemed this hadith to be da'eef.

End quote from al-Talkhees al-Habeer (2/45). See also (2/258).

The second hadith is the hadith of Umm Salamah, according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "When the ten (days of Dhu'l-Hijjah) begin, and one of you wants to offer a sacrifice (udhiyah), he should not remove anything from his hair or nails." Narrated by Muslim (1977).

Imam ash-Shaafa'i said: This indicates that the udhiyah is not obligatory, because the Prophet

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(blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “and [he] wants”, so he connected it to his wanting to do it. If it were obligatory, he would have said: let him not remove anything from his hair until he offers the udhiyah.

End quote from al-Majmoo' (8/386).

But this deduction is subject to further discussion, because making something dependent upon wanting to do it does not prove that it is not obligatory.

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

In my view, making it dependent upon wanting to do it does not rule out its being obligatory, if evidence to that effect is proven. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said concerning the miqaats: “They are for them and for anyone other than their people who comes to them, wanting to perform Hajj and 'Umrah.” This does not mean that Hajj and 'Umrah are not obligatory, based on other evidence. ... The udhiyah is not obligatory for one who cannot afford it, so he does not want or intend to do it. So in this regard it is valid to divide people into those who want or intend to do it and those who do not, based on whether they can afford it or not.

End quote from Ahkaam al-Udhiyah wa'dh-Dhakaah (p. 47).

Conclusion: there are some reservations about the hadiths which say that the udhiyah is obligatory, although some of the scholars classed some of these hadiths as hasan. The same applies to the hadiths which state that it is recommended; in fact, in terms of their isnaads, they are more weak.

Hence Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said, at the end of his lengthy essay Ahkaam al-Udhiyah wa'dh-Dhakaah: These are the opinions of the scholars and the evidence that they give. We have quoted them in order to highlight the status and importance of the udhiyah in Islam. The evidence for each view is almost equal in strength, and the prudent

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approach dictates that one should not neglect to do it if one can afford it, because of what it involves of venerating and remembering Allah, and discharging one's obligation with certainty. End quote.

Thirdly:

There are two things that support the view that the udhiyah is not obligatory:

1.

The principle that things are not obligatory unless proven otherwise: so long as there is no sound proof of it being obligatory, then the basic principle is that it is not obligatory.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz said: The ruling on the udhiyah is that it is Sunnah if one can afford it, but it is not obligatory, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to sacrifice two rams that were white speckled with black, and during his lifetime and after his death (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), the Sahaabah also used to offer the udhiyah, as the Muslims continued to do after their time, and there is no report in the shar'i evidence to suggest that the udhiyah is obligatory. The view that it is obligatory is a weak view.

End quote from Majmoo' Fataawa Ibn Baaz (18/36)

2.

The saheeh reports that were narrated from the Sahaabah.

It was narrated in saheeh reports from Abu Bakr, 'Umar and others that they did not offer the udhiyah, because they did not want the people to think that it was obligatory.

Al-Bayhaqi narrated in Ma'rifat as-Sunan wa'l-Athaar (14/16, 18893) from Abu Sareehah who said: I lived during the time of Abu Bakr and 'Umar; they were neighbours of mine, and they did not

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offer the udhiyah.

Al-Bayhaqi said, after quoting this: It was narrated to us in the books of as-Sunan, from the hadith of Sufyaan ibn Sa'eed ath-Thawri, from his father, and the hadith of Mutarrif and Ismaa'eel, from ash-Sha'bi, and in some of their reports it says: That was because they did not want to be taken as an example [and think that the udhiyah was obligatory].

See also: as-Sunan al-Kubra (9/444).

An-Nawawi said in al-Majmoo' (8/383): With regard to the report which speaks about Abu Bakr and 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with them), it was narrated by al-Bayhaqi and others with a hasan isnaad. End quote.

Al-Haythami said: It was narrated by at-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer and its men are the men of as-Saheeh. End quote from Majmoo' az-Zawaa'id (4/18). It was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Irwa' (4/354).

Al-Bayhaqi (9/445) narrated with his isnaad from Abu Mas'ood al-Ansaari (that he said): I refrain from offering the udhiyah even though I can afford it, for fear that my neighbour may think that it is a must for me. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Irwa'.