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Venerating other than Allah

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Fatwa no. 2294

Q: What is the ruling on welcoming an approaching person by standing up and kissing them?

A: Firstly: With regard to standing up for an approaching person, Ibn Taymiyyah gave a detailed reply in this regard based on Shar`y (Islamic legal) evidence. It may be proper to cite these pieces of evidence here as they are of much benefit. He (may Allah be merciful to him) said: "It was not the habit of the Salaf (righteous predecessors) at the time of the Prophet and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs to stand up whenever they saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) approaching them, unlike what many people do. Anas ibn Malik said: "No one was dearer to them i.e. the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet), than the Prophet (peace be upon him); yet; if they saw him, they would not stand up for him, as they knew that he disliked it. But they might have stood up to welcome a person coming from travel." It is reported

that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stood up to welcome `Ikrimah. Similarly, He said to the Ansar (Helpers, inhabitants of Madinah who supported the Prophet) when Sa`d ibn Mu`adh came: 'Stand up for your master.' Sa`d was coming to judge the Jews of Banu Qurayzah, for they affirmed their agreement to accept his judgment. Hence, people should follow the Salaf's traditions during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), as they are the best generations. Undoubtedly, the best speech is Allah's speech

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and the best guidance is that of Muhammad (peace be upon him). No one should abandon the path of the best of creation and the best generation for any other path. Leaders should not accept the tradition of standing up for them by their peers when approaching them. As for standing up to welcome a person coming from travel, it is desirable. Similarly, in case that it is a customary act to welcome a person by standing up out of respect for them lest they should feel ignored or disrespected due to unawareness of the Sunnah, it is better to stand up for them because this spreads peace and removes hatred and grudge. As for a person who knows that the habits of people are based on the Sunnah, there will be no harm if such practice is abandoned. Indeed, this standing is different from that mentioned in the Saying of the Prophet (Peace be upon him): (Let him who likes people to stand up before him prepare his place in Hell.) This means that they stand up for him while he is sitting, not while he is approaching them. There is a difference between standing up for someone who is approaching and standing up for someone who is sitting. If you stand up for an approaching person, this implies that you are equal to him unlike when you stand up for someone

who is sitting. It is reported in Sahih Muslim: (When the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed prayer while he was sitting during his illness and his Sahabah were standing, he (peace be upon him) ordered them to sit down and said to them: 'Do not glorify me as the non-Arabs do with each other'.) He forbade them to stand in Salah while he was sitting, so they might not be acting like the non-Arabs who used to stand up for the great people among them while they were sitting. The gist of all this is to stick to the habits and morals of the Salaf and strive as hard as one can to stick to their practices.

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In case that someone is not aware of this and people fear that abandoning this act of respect with him or her may result in harm, then it is better to go with the lesser harm than the greater one just as the better of two good deeds prevails. That is the end of the speech of Ibn Taymiyyah. What he mentioned is well explained through the story mentioned in the Two Sahih (authentic) Books of Hadith (i.e. Al-Bukhari and Muslim) about Ka`b ibn Malik when Allah accepted his Tawbah (repentance to Allah) and the Tawbah of his two companions (may Allah be pleased with them all). When Ka`b entered the Masjid (mosque), Talhah ibn `Ubaydullah stood up for him and rushed to greet and congratulate him on Tawbah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not object to this, which indicates the permissibility of standing up to meet an approaching person to greet them. It is also authentically reported that the Prophet: (Whenever he (peace be upon him) went to his daughter Fatimah she would stand up for him and take his hand and make him sit in her place, and whenever she went to him, he would stand up for her and take her hand and make her sit in his place) (Declared as Hadith Hasan 'a Hadith whose Sanad 'chain of narrators' contains a narrator with weak exactitude, but is free from eccentricity or blemish' by Al-Tirmidhy).

Secondly: As for kissing a visitor, there is a Prophetic narration that supports its permissibility. (Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated: 'Zayd ibn Harithah came to Al-Madinah while Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) was in my room. When he knocked on the door, Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) stood up for him while `Uryan (wearing nothing but Izar garment worn below the waist) with his garment trailing in the ground. By Allah I have never seen him `Uryan before nor after that, then he embraced and kissed him'.)

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(Related by Al-Tirmidhy who declared it as Hadith Hasan). This Hadith indicates that it is permissible to kiss a visitor. Similarly, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: (The Prophet (peace be upon him) kissed Al-Hasan ibn `Aly, then Al-Aqra` ibn Habis said: I have ten children, but I have never kissed any of them, whereupon Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: Whoever lacks mercy i.e. in treating others, is deprived of mercy i.e. of Allah.) (Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). This Hadith indicates the permissibility of kissing as a means to showing mercy towards children. But kissing a person when meeting in regular meetings is not permissible for narrations are related in support of this. It is sufficient to shake hands with them, for the narration related on the authority of Qatadah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: (I asked Anas: 'Was it the custom of the Sahabah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to shake hands with one another?' He said, 'Yes.')

(Related by Al-Bukhari). Likewise, Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: (When the people of Yemen came, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, 'The people of Yemen came and they were the first to introduce handshake.')

(Related by Abu Dawud with an authentic Sanad). Similarly, Al-Bara' (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: (Whenever two Muslims meet and shake hands, their sins will be forgiven before they leave

each other.) (Related by

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Abu Dawud , Ahmad, and Al-Tirmidhy who declared it as a Sahih Hadith 'a Hadith that has been transmitted by people known for their uprightness and exactitude; free from eccentricity and blemish'). Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: (A man asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, when a man meets his brother or friend, should he bow to him? He (peace be upon him) said, 'No.' The man further asked, 'Should he embrace and kiss him?' The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) replied, 'No.' The man asked again, 'Should he hold his hand and shake hands?' The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) replied, 'Yes.'") (Related by Al-Tirmidhy who declared it as a Hasan Hadith) [Though its Sanad is weak, for Hanzhalah Al-Sadusy is one of its narrators and he is weak according to Hadith scholars, Al-Tirmidhy might have regarded it as Hasan due to the other similar Hadiths related in this regard that support it]. Ahmad, Al-Nasa'y, Al-Tirmidhy, and others have reported with an authentic Sanad on the authority of Safwan ibn `Assal: (Two Jewish men asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the nine clear signs. When he answered them, they kissed his hands and feet and said: 'We testify that you are a Prophet' ...) (Declared as Hadith Sahih by Al-Tirmidhy). Al-Tabarany also reported in a good Sanad that Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: (The Prophet's Sahabah used to shake hands when they met each other and used to embrace each other when returning from travel.) (This account is mentioned by the polymath Ibn Muflih in his book: 'Al-Adab Al-Shar`iyyah 'Islamic Legal etiquette').

May Allah grant us success. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions.

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