

# Kissing the thumbs when hearing the blessed name Muhammad (peace be upon him).

## Introduction.

Muslims are ordered not only to respect the personality of the beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), but anything that is closely related to him. Based on this principle, one of the practices of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'at* is to kiss the thumbs and place them on the eyes upon hearing the name Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

This paper will show that this practice can be traced back to the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and his Companions and therefore it is not forbidden. Some of the Ahādīth will be highlighted that support this practice, as well as the opinions of revered scholars on the issue.

## Respecting the Prophet's name.

In essence, the purpose behind kissing the thumbs is to show utmost respect to the Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) name. From the Qur'ān and Sunna, it is clear that this practice holds many benefits and immense blessings.

- In the Holy Qur'ān, Allāh states:

و كانوا من قبل يستفتحون علي الذين كفروا

‘And the Jews before this used to seek victory over the polytheists’ (2: 89)

Before the physical appearance of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), the Jews would perform a certain ritual before going into battle with the polytheists. They would open up the Torah to the page where Muhammad's name and his imminent appearance were mentioned. The Rabbi would place his hands on the Prophet's name and then make this Du'a:

اللهم انا نسألك بحق نبيك الذي وعدتنا ان تبعثه في اخر الزمان أن تنصرنا اليوم علي  
عدونا

O Allāh! We ask you in the name of your Prophet whom You have promised to send at the end of time that you help us today over our enemies.'

As a result of respecting the name of the Prophet and using him as a Wasīla in the Du'a, they would gain victory over their enemies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ziā al-Qur'ān*, Pīr Muhammad Karam Shāh 1: 74, *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī* 2: 20.

- In *Hilya al-Awliyā* by Abū Nu’aym, there is a report from Wahb ibn Munabba that states:

‘There was a man from Banī Isrā’īl who had spent two hundred years disobeying Allāh. When he died, people threw his body onto a rubbish tip. Allāh commanded Mūsā (peace be upon him) to recover his body and perform his funeral prayer. Mūsā pleaded: ‘O my Lord! Banī Isrā’īl all bear witness to his disobedience.’ Allāh replied: ‘That is true, but he also had a good habit. Whenever he opened the Torah and saw the name Muhammad he would kiss it and put it on his eyes. I have rewarded him for that by forgiving his sins and marrying him to seventy hūrs.’<sup>2</sup>

What this proves is that respecting the name of the Prophet leads to victory and forgiveness from Allāh.

- In countless Ahādīth, we are instructed to send salutations upon hearing the Prophet’s blessed name. Again, the purpose is to show utmost respect to his name. Short-handling *صلى الله عليه وسلم* to *ص* or *صلعم* in Arabic, and SAW and PBUH in English is forbidden, because it leads to disrespect. Allāma Tahtāwī writes in *Hāshiyā Durr Mukhtār*:

‘It is disliked to shorten *صلى الله عليه وسلم* and *رضي الله عنه*. Instead it should be written in its entirety.’<sup>3</sup>

## The Ahādīth on kissing the thumbs.

- Al-Dehlmī reports in *al-Firdaws* that when Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) heard the Prophet’s name in Azān, he kissed his thumbs and wiped them on his eyes. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

‘Whoever does the same as my beloved has done (i.e. Abū Bakr), then my intercession has become permissible for him.’<sup>4</sup>

- It is reported in *Musnad al-Firdaws*, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said:

‘Whoever kisses the nails of his thumbs when he hears *أشهد أن محمد رسول الله* in the Azān, then I will be his leader and the one who enters him into Paradise.’<sup>5</sup>

- Shaykh Ismā’īl Haqqī writes in *Rūh al-Bayān*, the renowned commentary of the Holy Qur’ān:

<sup>2</sup> Cited in ‘*The issue of kissing the thumbs*’ (Urdu, pp. 12-13). Moulana Muhammad Shafi Okarvi. Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> p. 36 (vol. V). *Tafhim al-Masa’il*. Prof. Mufti Munib al-Rahman. Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 440-1. *Al-Maqāsīd al-Hasana*. Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902). Also cited in *Tashīh al-Aqā’id* (pp. 88-89), Muhammad Abd al-Hāmid Budāyūnī, Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in *Tashīh al-Aqā’id* (p. 89), Muhammad Abd al-Hāmid Budāyūnī.

‘In paradise, Ādam (peace be upon him) longed to meet Muhammad so Allāh sent a revelation to him saying: ‘You cannot because he will appear from your descendants at the end of time.’ Ādam persisted and so Allāh put the Nūr of Muhammad in the index finger of Ādam’s right hand. That Nūr glorified Allāh – and that is why this finger is called Sabāba in Arabic (from the word Tasbīh, to glorify). Allāh then showed, like as in a mirror, the beauty of his beloved in Ādam’s two thumbnails and Ādam kissed his thumbnails and wiped them over his eyes. This practice continued in his children. When Jibrīl (peace be upon him) told the Prophet of this, he said: ‘Whoever hears my name in Azān and then kisses his thumbnails and wipes his eyes, then he will never go blind.’<sup>6</sup>

● In his book *Qūt al-Qulūb*, Shaykh Imām Abū Tālib Muhammad ibn Alī al-Makkī narrates from Ibn Uyayna that:

‘On the tenth day of Muharram, the Prophet entered the mosque to offer Jumu’a prayer and sat next to a pillar. (On hearing the Prophet’s name in the Azān), Abū Bakr placed his thumbnails on his eyes and said: ‘The coolness of my eyes with you O Messenger of Allāh!’ After Bilāl concluded the Azān, the Prophet said: ‘O Abū Bakr! Allāh will forgive the old and the new sins, the apparent and the hidden sins of he, who like you, wipes his thumbs over his eyes on hearing my name and saying what you say.’<sup>7</sup>

## The opinions of the scholars on the issue.

1. Al-Shams Muhammad ibn al-Sālih al-Madanī reports in his *Tārīkh* from al-Mujidd that he said:

‘Whoever sends blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) when hearing his name in Azān, gathers his thumbs and forefingers, kisses them and then places them on his eyes, will never suffer from eye disease.’<sup>8</sup>

2. Ibn al-Sālih added: ‘I also heard from al-Faqīh Muhammad ibn al-Zarnadī that upon wiping the eyes, one should say:

صلي الله عليك يا سيدي يا رسول الله  
يا حبيب قلبي و يا نور بصري و يا قرة عيني

Again, the one who does this will not suffer from eye disease.<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Sālih concluded by citing his own experience:

<sup>6</sup> *Ruh al-Bayan*, 4: 649. Cited in ‘*The issue of kissing the thumbs*’ (Urdu, pp. 5-6). Moulana Muhammad Shafi Okarvi. Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan*, 4: 648. Cited in ‘*The issue of kissing the thumbs*’ (Urdu, p. 7). Moulana Muhammad Shafi Okarvi. Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> p. 441. *Al-Maqāsid al-Hasana*. Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902).

<sup>9</sup> p. 441. *Al-Maqāsid al-Hasana*. Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902).

‘And I – for Allāh is praise and thanks – have performed this practice since I heard of it and I have never suffered from eye-illness. I have hope that his blessings will continue and that – Insha Allāh – I will never suffer from eye-loss.’<sup>10</sup>

3. It is written in *Sharh Niqāya*:

ان هذا الفعل من السنة و سنة الخلفاء و أن يقول عند التقبيل اللهم احفظ عيني و نورهما

‘This action is proven as the Sunna and the Sunna of the [rightly-guided] caliphs, and to say upon kissing ‘O Allāh! Protect my eyes and enlighten them.’<sup>11</sup>

4. Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728) said:

‘This is an accustomed practice. Whoever has a pain in his eyes, then I order him to do this.’<sup>12</sup>

5. Ibn Khalkān said:

‘Whoever does this and does so continuously, he will be protected from pains in the eyes so long as he lives.’<sup>13</sup>

6. In *I’āna al-Tālibīn alā Hill Alfāz Fath al-Mu’īn*, which is a famous book on Shafi’ī fiqh, it is written:

‘...then he kisses his thumbs and places them on the eyes [and as result] he will never go blind and will never suffer from eye-illness.’<sup>14</sup>

7. Allāma Shāmī supports the practice in *Radd al-Mukhtār Sharh Durr Mukhtār*.<sup>15</sup>

8. Allāma Tahtāwī mentioned the narration of Abū Bakr in his *Sharh Marāqī al-Falāh* (p.111), after which he states: ‘...And these Ahādīth are acted upon in Fadā’il (virtuous deeds).’

9. Moulāna Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī writes about the kissing of the thumbs in his *Mathnawī*:

The name of Mustafā was in the Injīl  
He is the chief of the Prophet and their source

<sup>10</sup> p. 441. *Al-Maqāsīd al-Hasana*. Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902).

<sup>11</sup> p. 89-90. *Tashīh al-Aqā’id*. Muhammad Abd al-Hāmid Budāyūnī.

<sup>12</sup> p. 90. *Tashīh al-Aqā’id*. Muhammad Abd al-Hāmid Budāyūnī.

<sup>13</sup> p. 90. *Tashīh al-Aqā’id*. Muhammad Abd al-Hāmid Budāyūnī.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in ‘*The issue of kissing the thumbs*’ (Urdu, p. 11). Moulana Muhammad Shafi Okarvi. Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> ‘*The issue of kissing the thumbs*’ (Urdu, p. 10). Moulana Muhammad Shafi Okarvi. Zia al-Qur’ān Publications, Lahore, 2009.

Mentioned is his physical description;  
His face, character, battles, fasts and so too is his eating mentioned.

When reading his name and mention, a group of the Nasāra for reward,  
Would do good by kissing the blessed name; and placing it upon their faces out of  
respect.

10. Moulāna Jamāl ibn Abd Allāh ibn Umar Makkī writes:

‘I was asked whether it is permissible or not to kiss the two thumbs and place them upon the eyes upon hearing the Prophet’s name in the Azān. So I replied with the following words: ‘Yes, kissing of the two thumbs and placing them upon the eyes when his name is mentioned in the Azān is not only permissible, but is Mustahab, as made clear by our shaykhs.’

## **Why is this act only Mustahab? The grading system in Sharī’a.**

As the last quote from Moulāna Jamāl ibn Abd Allāh ibn Umar Makkī indicates, the act of kissing the thumbs is Mustahab, not Fard or Wājib. In Islamic Sharī’a, permitted acts fall under the following grading, starting with the strongest:

- i. Fard.
- ii. Wājib.
- iii. Sunna Mu’akkada.
- iv. Sunna Ghayr Mu’akkada.
- v. Mustahab.
- vi. Mubāh.

This ranking is mainly based on how strong the evidence is for the particular act. For example, giving Zakāh is proven from the highest possible source, the Holy Qur’ān. Therefore it is Fard and the one who denies its obligatory nature is no longer a Muslim. Performing Eid Prayer is Wājib, because it is proven from the authenticated sayings and actions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). The kissing of the thumbs is proven from the Sunna too, but the level of authenticity in the Ahādīth is not strong enough for it to warrant the grading of Wājib or Sunna. Therefore it is declared Mustahab.

In order to prove something as being Mustahab, a Da‘īf (weak) Hadīth is acceptable according to most scholars. The Hadīth Master Ibn al-Salāh writes:

‘According to the scholars of Hadīth, it is permissible to adopt leniency in the Sanad and in the narration of Da‘īf traditions, other than Mawdū (fabricated) traditions, without having to explain its weakness. This is not [however] where the text deals with the attributes of Allāh, or Islamic rulings like the forbidden and permitted things. It is [only] permissible where the text refers to admonition, stories, the superiority of certain actions and in all areas of preaching [al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb]. Amongst the scholars who have reported

leniency with such narrations are ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mahdī and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.’<sup>16</sup>

## Objections on the practice.

Some Muslims vehemently refuse to acknowledge this practice. Sheikh Ehsan Elahi Zaheer wrote:

‘Kissing the thumbs is a Bid’ah that is not proven by any Hadīth. Bareilawis use fictional stories and fabricated Hadīth to prove this Bid’ah.’<sup>17</sup>

After quoting a Hadīth on the matter, he writes:

‘Those narrators that are named in its chain are Majhūl (unknown) and unknown with the Hadīth scholars, meaning this is an invented chain.’<sup>18</sup>

In response to Sheikh Ehsan Elahi Zaheer, we must point to some serious shortcomings in his opinion. Firstly, the Ahādīth on kissing the thumbs are perhaps weak but not fabricated. And as it has been mentioned, using a weak Hadīth is permitted to encourage Muslims to perform good acts.

Secondly, he writes that the chain of reporters contain unknown men (Majhūl) and therefore it is an ‘invented chain.’ Majhūl does not mean it is fabricated, but weak. It is unfortunate to see that these scholars do not possess the most basic knowledge of Ilm al-Hadīth and as a result make blatant mistakes.

Thirdly, he claims that Imām al-Sakhāwī wrote that the Ahādīth on the matter are fabricated (p. 141). This is a lie. Imām al-Sakhāwī did not state this; all he said was the Ahādīth are not Sahīh. We too accept that the Ahādīth on the issue are not Sahīh. But that does not mean it is rejected and fabricated. Sahīh is the term we give to the Hadīth that fulfils the *highest* grade of authentication. By negating the fact that they are not Sahīh, it means it could still be Hasan or even Da’īf.

## Conclusion.

This short analysis has shown that there are many benefits of kissing the thumbs upon hearing the Prophet’s (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) name. On the contrary, there are no reports – even weak ones – that forbid the kissing of the thumbs. Therefore we should practice it, in the hope of drawing closer to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and winning his intercession on the Day of Judgement.

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<sup>16</sup> *Muqaddima Ibn al-Salah*, p. 103. Dār-al-Fikr : Beirut, Lebanon (1986).

<sup>17</sup> p. 140. Zaheer, E.E. (2011) *The Reality of Bareilawi’ism*. Orthodox Press: UK.

<sup>18</sup> p. 141. Zaheer, E.E. (2011) *The Reality of Bareilawi’ism*. Orthodox Press: UK.