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## Prayer beads are a bida'

Translated by Abbas Abu Yahya

Article taken and slightly adapted from: [followingthesunnah.wordpress.com](http://followingthesunnah.wordpress.com)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### A scholarly research by Shaykh al-Albaanee that prayer beads are a bida'

A summary of the research by the Muhaddith,

Shaykh, Allamaa' Muhammad Nasiruddeen al-Albaanee

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)<sup>1</sup> said in 'Silsilah ad-Da'eefah'<sup>2</sup>:

83 – 'What a blessed reminder are prayer beads and indeed the best place to prostrate on is the earth and on that which the earth produces.' **Mawdoo (Fabricated)**

Narrated by ad-Daylamee in 'Musnad al-Firdaws' (4/98); he said that Abdoos bin Abdullaah informed us that Aboo Abdullaah al-Hussain bin Funjoowayah a-Thaqafee informed us that 'Alee bin Muhammad bin Nassrooweeyah narrated to us that **Muhammad bin Haroon bin Isa bin Mansoor al-Hashamee** narrated to us that Muhammad bin 'Alee bin Hamzah al-'Alawee narrated to me that Abdul Samad bin Musa narrated to me that Zainab bint Sulayman bin 'Alee narrated to me that Umm al-Hasan bint Ja'far bin al-Hasan on the authority of her father on the authority of her grandfather on the authority of 'Alee *marfoo'* [ascribed to the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم)<sup>3</sup>].

#### [Research of the Isnaad]<sup>4</sup>

Suyootee mentioned it in his book 'al-Manha fee as-Subha' (2/141) and Shawkaneey conveyed it from him in 'Nail-Awtaar' (2/166-167) and they remained quiet about this narration!

I say (Albaanee): This chain has darkness upon darkness; the majority of the narrators are *Majhool* (unknown) and some of them have been blamed:

I did not find anyone who wrote a biography for Umm al-Hasan bint Jafar bin al-Hasan.

Al-Khateeb<sup>5</sup> wrote a biography for Zainab bint Sulayman bin 'Alee in his 'Tareekh' (14/334) and he said: 'She was of the best of women.'

Al-Khateeb wrote a biography for Abdul Samad bin Moosa, he is al-Hashmee, (14/41) but he did not mention anything about him either praising or criticising him. However, Dhahabee conveyed in 'al-Meezan' on the authority of al-Khateeb that he said regarding him: 'Indeed they regarded him as weak (da'eef).'

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<sup>1</sup> (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

<sup>2</sup> Taken from: 'Silsilah Ahadeeth ad-Daeefah' 1/83

<sup>3</sup> (صلى الله عليه وسلم) May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him

<sup>4</sup> Headings were added for clarity (T.N.)

<sup>5</sup> Aboo Bakr Ahmad ibn 'Alee ibn Thabit ibn Ahmad ibn Mahdee al-Shaafi'ee, [(b 392 AH- d 463 AH) (b 1002 – d 1071 CE)] was a scholar who was better known as Al-Khateeb al-Baghdadee.

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Perhaps that was in some of al-Khateeb's other books, then I corrected that and said: Rather that is in another hadeeth which will be mentioned with no. 2898.

Then Dhahabee said: 'He narrates rejected narrations on the authority of his grandfather Muhammad bin Ibraaheem al-Imaam'

I say (Albaanee): Perhaps he is the point of objection in this hadeeth.

As for Muhammad bin 'Alee bin Hamza al-'Alawee then al-Khateeb also wrote a biography for him (3/63) and said: 'Ibn Abee Haatim said: I heard from him and he is Sadooq (truthful) who died in the year 286.'

Muhammad bin Haroon, he is Muhammad bin Haroon bin al-Abbas bin Abee Ja'far al-Mansoor, and al-Khateeb also mentioned him (3/356) saying: 'He was from the people who had intelligence, had excellence and was a lecturer. He held the post of an Imaam of the masjid al-Madeenah in Baghdad for 50 years and he died in the year 308.'

As for Abdullaah bin al-Hussain bin Funjoowayah at-Thaqafee then he is Thiqaaah (trustworthy), his biography is in 'Siyaar alaam an-Nubala' (17/383) and 'Shadhrat ad-Dhaab' (3/200).

Likewise with Abdoos bin Abdullaah, his biography is in 'Siyaar alaam an-Nubala' (19/98) and in 'Lisaan al-Meezan' (4/95).

### [The Explanation]

From what has preceded it becomes clear to you that the Isnaad (chain) is da'eef (weak), so it cannot be used as evidence.

Now, in my opinion, this hadeeth is baatil (false) due to its meaning for the following reasons:

Firstly: that prayer beads are a bida' which were not present at the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and were innovated after the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)<sup>6</sup>, so how could it make sense that the Messenger (عليه السلام)<sup>7</sup> would encourage his Companions in a matter they did not know?!

The evidence for this is what Ibn Waddah al-Qurtubee mentioned in 'al-Bida' wal-Nahee anhaa' (p.12) on the authority of Saltt bin Bahraam who said: 'Ibn Mas'ood (رضي الله عنه) passed by a woman who had a Tasbeeh (prayer beads) and would count upon them, so he broke it and threw it away. Then he passed by a man who was counting upon pebbles, so he kicked him with his leg. Then he said: You have preceded the Prophet! You have carried out an oppressive bida'! You have preceded the Companions of Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in knowledge!'

The chain up to Saltt is Saheeh, he is thiqaaah (trustworthy) from the *Atbaa' at-Tabi'een* (followers of the successors of the Companions), so its chain is broken.

Then it was narrated on the authority of Abaan bin Abee 'Ayaash who said: I asked al-Hasan about a nathaam (a thread with pearls etc. arranged upon it) made from pearls and date stones etc, is tasbeeh counted upon it?

<sup>6</sup> What supports that is the statement of the scholars of language: 'Indeed the words: *'as-Subha'* (Prayer beads) is a newly created word, it was unknown to the Arabs.'

<sup>7</sup> (عليه السلام) (alaihissalaam) Peace be upon him

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So he said: None of the women of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) or the female emigrants did this.

However, its chain is very weak.

Secondly: that prayer beads oppose the guidance of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم): Abdullaah bin 'Amr said: 'I saw the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) counting the tasbeeh with his right hand.'

Narrated by Aboo Daawood (1/235), Tirmidhee (4/255) who graded it hasan, Ibn Hibbaan (2334), Hakim (1/547), Baihaqee (2/253) and its chain is saheeh just as Dhahabee said. I researched it in 'Saheeh Aboo Daawood' (1346).

### [The Command of the Messenger]

Then prayer beads oppose the command of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), when he said to some women:

**'You should make tasbeeh<sup>8</sup>, tahleel<sup>9</sup>, taqdees<sup>10</sup> and do not be negligent and forget Tawheed (and in a narration: mercy), and count them on your fingertips since they will be questioned and will respond.'**

This hadeeth is hasan, narrated by Aboo Daawood and other than him, Hakim and Dhahabee authenticated it and an-Nawawee and al-Asqalanee graded it as hasan as is mentioned in 'AmAlee al-Adhkaar' (1/84) and it has supporting evidence on the authority of 'Aaishah, the Mother of The Believers (رضى الله عنها)<sup>11</sup> which is Mawqoof.<sup>12 13</sup>

This is why a group of scholars have made the hadeeth **'What a blessed reminder are prayer beads.....'** da'eef; as is mentioned by Shaykh Muhammad Khaleel al-Qawoojee in 'Shawaariq al-Anwaar al-Jaleela' (1/113).

[Here the Shaykh (رحمة الله) mentions technical information related to the Isnaad of the hadeeth]

### [He continues:]

It may be said: Some of the ahadeeth mention performing tasbeeh with pebbles and the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) approved of it, therefore there is no difference between this and tasbeeh using prayer beads, as Shawkaneer (رحمة الله) said.

I say (Albaanee): Perhaps this would be acceptable if the ahadeeth regarding this were authentic, however this is not the case. Most of what is narrated regarding this are two ahadeeth which Suyootee (رحمة الله) brings in his booklet as we indicated, so it is necessary to mention them and explain their mistakes:

Firstly on the authority of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas (رضي الله عنه)<sup>14</sup> that he and the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) entered upon a woman while she was counting tasbeeh on date stones or pebbles in front

<sup>8</sup> To say 'SubhanAllaah (T.N.)

<sup>9</sup> To say 'La illaha ill Allaah' (T.N.)

<sup>10</sup> 'To say 'SubhanAllaah al-MAleekul Quddoos; or Suboooh Quddoos Rabb al-malaikatu war-Ruhu; and it is possible that Taqdees means to say Allaahu Akbar'. (Mishkat al-Masabih (2/9) –Checked by Shaykh Albaanee) (T.N.)

<sup>11</sup> (رضى الله عنها) (rad iyallaahu `anhaa) May Allaah be pleased with her

<sup>12</sup> the Isnaad only goes back to the Companion

<sup>13</sup> see 'Saheeh Aboo Daawood' (1345)

<sup>14</sup> (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah be pleased with him

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of her and the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: 'Shall I inform you of that which is easier upon you than this or better?'

He said: 'Subhaanallaah equivalent to the number of what Allaah created in the heavens....' the hadeeth.

Narrated by Aboo Daawood (1/235), Tirmidhee (4/277-278), Ibn Hibbaan 92330 – in his book 'Zawaid', Doorqee in 'Musnad Sa'ad' (130/1), Mukhalas in 'al-Fawaid' (9/17/2), and Hakim (1/547-548)<sup>15</sup> by way of 'Amroo bin al-Haarith that Sa'eed bin Abee Halaal narrated to him on the authority of Khuzaimah on the authority of 'Aaishah bint Sa'ad bin Abee Waqqas on the authority of her father.

Tirmidhee said: 'Hadeeth hasan.'

Hakim said: 'Saheeh al-Isnaad.'

Dhahabee agreed with him, however he was mistaken because this Khuzaimah is *Majhool* (unknown) even Dhahabee himself said in 'al-Meezan': 'Khuzaimah is unknown and so is Sa'eed bin Abee Halaal.'

Haafidh<sup>16</sup> said likewise in 'Taqreeb': 'Indeed he is unknown.'

Even with Sa'eed bin Abee Halaal being thiqaaah, as-Saajee mentioned on the authority of Ahmad that he became confused and Yahya also described him as confused as in 'al-Fasal' by Ibn Hazm (2/95). Perhaps what supports this argument is his narrating this hadeeth, because some of the trustworthy narrators who narrated from Sa'eed do not mention Khuzaimah in their chain, so the chain becomes broken. This is why Haafidh al-Mizee did not mention 'Aaishah bint Sa'ad amongst the shuyookh (those who were narrated from) of Ibn Abee Halaal, so this Isnaad is not without the defects of *Jahaala* (a narrator being unknown) or *Inqitaa'* (a break in the chain), so how can this hadeeth be Saheeh or hasan?!

Some of those who authored works claiming Prayer Beads are from the Sunnah were ignorant of this information or they pretended to be ignorant of it such as those of the present day who follow their desires and blindly follow their Shaykh Abdullaah al-Ghamaaree who likewise pretended to be ignorant of this truth. He mentioned this hadeeth in his 'Kanz' (103) so that he could make the Prayer Beads permissible for his *Mureeds* (loyal followers) consequently making it permissible for them to wear them around their necks just as some of the *Mushayikh* (Shaykhs) of the Soofee orders wear them.

See the refutation against him in the introduction to volume three of this 'Silsilah' (p.37) and you will see the strangest of the strange.

The second hadeeth is on the authority of Safeeyah who said:

'The Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) entered upon me while I had 4,000 date stones in front of me and I would count tasbeeh upon them.

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<sup>15</sup> Suyooti attributed it in 'al-Manha' to Nisa'ee and Ibn Maajah and Shawkaneer followed him in that, however there is some speculation about this due to two points:

a- That Ibn Maajah did not relate this narration at all.

b- That Nisa'ee narrated it in 'al-Yawm wa Layla' as is mentioned in 'at-Thufah' (3/325), so it was necessary to quAleefy it and I did not see this in the printed version.

<sup>16</sup> Haafidh Ibn Hajr al-Asqalanee (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ) who wrote the famous explanation of Saheeh al Bukhaaree called Fath ul-Baree, also has a book of the names and status of narrators of hadeeth called Taqreeb al-Tahdeeb.

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He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: 'O daughter of Huyaiya what is this?!'

She answered: 'I am counting tasbeeh upon them.'

He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: 'I have said more tasbeeh than this while I have been standing here near you.'

She requested: 'Teach me O Messenger of Allaah!'

He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: 'Say Subhaanallaah equivalent to the number of what Allaah created of things....'

Narrated by Tirmidhee (4/274), Aboo Bakr ash-Shafi'ee in 'al-Fawaaid' (73/255/1), Haakim (1/547) by way of Hashim bin Sa'eed on the authority of Kanana Maula (the freed slave of) Safeeyah, from her.

Tirmidhee regarded it as weak by saying: 'This hadeeth is ghareeb (strange), we do not know it except from this route of the hadeeth of Hashim bin Sa'eed al-Koofee and his Isnaad is not well-known. Also, there is a hadeeth on this issue on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas (رضي الله عنه).'

As for Hakim then he said: 'Saheeh al-Isnaad' and Dhahabee<sup>17</sup> agreed with him and this is strange coming from him, since he mentioned this Hashim bin Sa'eed in 'al-Meezan' and said: 'Ibn Ma'een said: He is nothing. Ibn 'Adee said: Whatever he narrated cannot have supporting narrations.'

This is why Haafidh said in 'Taqreeb': 'He is weak'.

This Kanana's condition is unknown; no-one other than Ibn Hibbaan regarded him as trustworthy.

Then I amended this and said: However a group of narrators have narrated from Kanana and from them were Zuhayr and Hudayj, the two sons of Muwayyeeyah, Mohammad bin Talha bin Musrif and Sa'adaan bin Basheer al-Juhane; all these four are trustworthy and also included along with them is Yazeed bin Mughliss al-Bahillee, whom a group regarded as trustworthy while others regarded him as weak. So the one from whom the likes of these narrate is included in the group of those who are regarded as 'Sadooq'; just as I recently researched in a uniquely detailed piece of study 'Tamaam al-Mina' (p.204-206), so do not be deceived by some of the ignorant ones, like Saqqaf and other than him; therefore the defect in this hadeeth is only Hishaam.

What indicates that these two hadeeth are weak is that this story is mentioned on the authority of Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) without mentioning pebbles and its wording is as follows:

Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) said: On the authority of Juwayreeyah that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) left her early when he went to pray the morning prayer, while she was in her place of prayer, then he returned after he had prayed *Duha* prayer and she was still sitting.

So he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to her: Are you still in the same state that I left you in?

She answered: Yes.

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

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<sup>17</sup> Suyootee followed him in this in 'al-Manha' & Shawkanee was deceived by it.

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'I have already said four statements after you, three times, and if they were weighed against what you have said today then they would outweigh what you have said. They are: Subhanallaahi wa bihamdihee, 'adad Khalqihi, wa ridha nafsihi, wazeenat 'arshihee, wa Midaad kAleemaatihi.

(Allaah is free from imperfection and praise is for him; to the amount of his creation, the pleasure of His own Self, the beautification of His 'Arsh and the extent of His words.)

Narrated by Muslim (8/83-84) and Tirmidhee (4/274) and he authenticated it. Also narrated by Nisa'ee in 'Amal al-Yawm wa Layla' (161-165), Ibn Maajah (91/23), Ahmad (6/325 & 429-430).

So this authentic hadeeth indicates two matters:

The first is that the person in the story is Juwayreeyah (رضى الله عنها)<sup>18</sup> and not Safeeyah (رضى الله عنها) as was mentioned previously in the second hadeeth!

The second matter is that the mention of pebbles in the story is rejected. What supports this is that Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood (رضى الله عنه) rebuked those whom he saw counting tasbeeh upon pebbles.

This has been mentioned on the authority of Ibn Mas'ood (رضى الله عنه) via many chains, one of which has already preceded. If the use of pebbles for counting tasbeeh was that which the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) had relayed then it would not have been hidden from Ibn Mas'ood (رضى الله عنه), insha'llaah.

Indeed this rebuke was adopted by some of those who graduated from the school of Ibn Mas'ood (رضى الله عنه), including none other than Ibraaheem bin Yazeed Nakhai (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ), the scholar from Koofa, who used to prohibit his daughter from helping women braid thread together for prayer beads which they would use for tasbeeh<sup>19</sup>!

Narrated by Ibn Abee Shaybah in 'al-Musannaf' (2/89/2) with a good chain.

### [The amount of dhikr]

If the dhikr were a lot, a person might perhaps say: It is not possible to enumerate exactly the amount counted upon fingers as is the way mentioned in the Sunnah.

The reply is: indeed this matter of contempt came from another bida', which is the act of performing the dhikr (remembrance) of Allaah much more than the limited amount – which Allaah the Most-Wise did not legislate. So this bida' necessitated another bida' which is the prayer beads since, as far as I know, the most that has been mentioned in the authentic Sunnah is indeed one hundred and it is possible for the one used to doing so to count this easily on one's fingers.

As for the hadeeth:

'Whoever says one hundred times a day: 'Laa ilaaha illAllaah wahdahu la shareeka lahu.....' the hadeeth.

So the intent is: one hundred in the morning and one hundred in the evening; as is clearly mentioned in some of the authentic narrations and they have been explained in 'Saheehah' (2762).

<sup>18</sup> (رضى الله عنها) (rad iyallaahu `anhaa) May Allaah be pleased with her

<sup>19</sup> In this and what has preceded is a clear refutation of Shaykh al-Habashee in his claim that no-one has preceded me in rejecting prayer beads.

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As for what Ibn Abee Shaybah (2/391) narrated on the authority of Weeqa on the authority of Sa'eed bin Jubayr who said: Umar bin al-Khattab (رضي الله عنه) saw a man counting tasbeeh with prayer beads he had, Umar (رضي الله عنه) said: What would be better than this would be for him to say: 'Subhaanallaah .....

This is rejected due to the following reasons: the disconnection between him and Sa'eed as well as Weeqa being weak and he is Ibn Eyaas who is *layin* in hadeeth (he is not discarded, he is upright in himself but his hadeeth are not precise).

If there was only one resultant evil from the prayer beads which is that they have, or have nearly, annihilated the Sunnah of counting on fingers – which they agree is better – then this would have been sufficient evil since it is indeed rare that I see an old person count the tasbeeh on his fingertips!

Indeed the people have also diversified innovating with this bida', so you see some of those who ascribe themselves to one of the Soofee orders wearing prayer beads around their necks!<sup>20</sup>

Some of the people use prayer beads while they are talking to you or while they are listening to you talk! The last thing my eyes fell upon a few days ago was a man going along some streets, busy with people, on an ordinary bicycle and in one of his hands were prayer beads!!

They make a pretence to the people of not neglecting the remembrance of Allaah, even for the blink of an eye! Many of these bida' become the cause of the loss of an obligation. It has happened to me – and to others – many a time that I have given my Salaams to one of them and they have replied with just a signal, without saying as-Salaam! The evils of these bida' are innumerable. How excellent was the saying of the poet:

Every good is in the following of the Salaf \* and every evil is in the innovations of the Khalaf<sup>21</sup>

### A Summary of what the Shaykh (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ) mentioned:

- A- that prayer beads are a bida' which were not present at the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and were innovated after the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)<sup>22</sup>, so how could it make sense that the Messenger (عليه السلام) would encourage his Companions in a matter they did not know?!
- B- That prayer beads oppose the guidance of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم): Abdullaah bin 'Amr said: 'I saw the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) counting the tasbeeh with his right hand.'
- C- Then prayer beads oppose the command of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), when he said to some women: **'You should make tasbeeh, tahleel, taqdees and do not be negligent and forget Tawheed (and in a narration: mercy), and count them on your fingertips since they will be questioned and will respond.'**
- D- Ibraheem bin Yazeed Nakhai, the scholar from Koofa, used to prohibit his daughter from helping women braid thread together for prayer beads which they would use for tasbeeh!

<sup>20</sup> Shaykh Abdullaah al-Ghamaree, the Shaykh of the Darqaweeyah order and other orders, encourage them saying: 'There is nothing wrong with wearing prayer beads around the neck as it is the same as a writer placing his pen on his ear!' How amazing it is when a *Faqih* makes a good analogy because this is the most baseless analogy on the face of this earth as it is built upon fabricated ahadeeth.

<sup>21</sup> The transliteration of which is: 'Kullu khairin fee ittiba' man Salaf \* wa Kullu Sharrin fee lbtida' man Khalla' (T.N.)

<sup>22</sup> What supports that is the statement of the scholars of language: 'Indeed the words: *'as-Subha'* (Prayer beads) is a newly created word, it was unknown to the Arabs.'

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- E- As far as I know, the most that has been mentioned in the authentic Sunnah is indeed one hundred and it is possible for the one used to doing so to count this easily on one's fingers.
- F- If there was only one resultant evil from the prayer beads which is that they have, or have nearly, annihilated the Sunnah of counting on fingers – which they agree is better – then this would have been sufficient evil since it is indeed rare that I see an old person count the tasbeeh on his fingertips!
- G- How excellent was the saying of the poet: Every good is in the following of the Salaf \* and every evil is in the innovations of the Khalaf

All Praise belongs to Allaah, may His peace and blessings be upon our final Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions and all those who follow his guidance.