

Letter 30

Thul-Hijjah 22, 1329

I. Arabs Regard it General

1) We refer their argument that the hadith lacks a general application to Arabs who are very well familiar with their language and grammar. You are the Arabs' authority whose view is invincible and undisputed. Do you see your nation doubting the generality of this status hadith? I do not think so. You are above that. Persons of your prestige do not doubt the generality of the additive gender and its inclusion of all implications.

If you, for example, say: "I have granted you my judicial power," will your power be restricted to a few matters rather than others? Or will your statement be general and inclusive of all implications? Allah be Praised! You do not see it other than general, and its meaning as inclusive! If the Muslims' ruler says to one of his subjects: "I have appointed you my own vicegerent over people," or "granted you my own status, or position, over them, or granted you my own wealth," will it come to mind anything other than the general meaning of such a statement? Or will the speaker wish to select some matters rather than others? If he said to one of his ministers: "You may enjoy during my lifetime the same position 'Umar enjoyed during the lifetime of Abu Bakr, but you are not my friend," would this statement be seen, according to common rules, as implying a few situations rather than all?

I do not see you saying accepting anything other than its general application, and I do not doubt at all that you interpret the statement of the holy Prophet: "Your status to me is like that of Aaron to Moses" except as indicative of generality of application, following the guidelines of its similar texts in the Arabic language and its norms of speech, especially when he excluded Prophethood, thus making its generality inclusive of everything else quite clear. You are surrounded by Arabs; so, ask them if you wish.

II. Disproving Claim of Restriction

2) As regarding the debater's statement claiming that this hadith is restricted to its context, this claim is

rejected on two grounds:

First, the hadith itself is generalizing, as you know. The assumption "If we presume that it is specific" does not exclude it from its general meaning, because whoever makes an assumption does not confine his assumption to only one single possibility. Say, if one person in the state of *najasa* (impurification) touches Surat al-Kursi [verse of the Throne] for example, and you tell him: "Nobody in the state of *najasa* should touch the holy Qur'an," will your statement be confined to Surat al-Kursi only, or will it be general regarding the entire text of the holy Qur'an?

I cannot imagine that anyone will understand that it is restricted to Surat al-Kursi in particular. If a physician sees his patient eating dates and forbids him from eating anything sweet, will the prohibition be taken to imply only dates, or will it be general to include everything sweet? I do not consider the one who claims its meaning to be restricted as one adhering to the common concepts of the basics of language; rather, he will then be distant from its grammar, far from commonsense, a foreigner to our world. So is the one who claims that the status hadith is applied specifically to the Battle of Tabuk alone; there is no difference between both cases.

Second, this hadith was not articulated by the Prophet (S) upon leaving 'Ali (as) as his representative in Medina during the Battle of Tabuk; otherwise, the debater will have had the right to claim its restricted application. Our *sahih* books are sequential through the Imams among the Prophet's purified progeny (as) proving that it was said on other occasions to which the researcher may refer. Sunni *sunan* bear witness to this fact, as researchers know. We say that the wording of this hadith testifies to the fact that the claim that it was said only during the Battle of Tabuk is groundless, as is already obvious.

III. Disproving its Non-Binding Application

3) Their claim that the specified generalization cannot be binding over the rest is an obvious mistake and a serious error. Nobody would say so except one who approaches matters like someone riding a blind animal in a dark night. We seek refuge with Allah against ignorance, and we thank Him for our sound health.

Specifying the general does not exclude it from being applied as a testimony against the rest as long as the specified matter is not general, especially if it is related to this hadith. If a master tells his servant: "Be generous to everyone who is visiting me today save Zayd." If the servant surrounds only Zayd with generosity, he will not only be disobeying his master and become liable for his error, according to the judgment of all the wise, he will also deserve to be punished a punishment commensurate with his mistake.

No wise man would listen to his excuse if he produces one; nay, even his excuse will seem to them to be even worse than his guilt. This is so only because of its obvious general implication, having been specified, regarding the rest, as is obvious.

You very well know that Muslims have always been accustomed to use as proof the specified generalizations without any exception. The ancestors among the companions and the tabi'in, as well as those who followed the latter, and so on till today, especially the Imams among the progeny of the Prophet (S) and all other Imams among the Muslims, do just that. This is a matter which does not need raising any doubts.

Suffices you for proof what the four Imams and other Mujtahids have said in their chapters on being aware of the branches of legislative rules as proofs of their explanations. The wheel of knowledge has been spinning on acting upon generally accepted facts. There is nothing general that does not have room for a specification. If these generalities are dropped, the door of knowledge will be shaken. We seek refuge with Allah, and peace be with you.

Sincerely,

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