



40 Hadiths on Social Justice

SH. OMAR SULEIMAN



Lecture Notes

Chapter 33: Stereotyping and Collective Guilt

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Do not return to unbelief after me by striking the necks of each other. No man is to be punished for the crimes of his father or his brother."

[Sunan an-Nasai]

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا تَرْجِعُوا بَعْدِي كُفْرًا يَضْرِبُ بَعْضُكُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ الرَّجُلُ بِجَرِيرَةِ أَبِيهِ وَلَا بِجَرِيرَةِ أَخِيهِ

[سنن النسائي]

Introduction

- We previously discussed racism and tribalism. Stereotyping and collective guilt is a subtopic of that.
- Not all stereotyping is racism and vice versa. Racism is the most evil form of stereotyping.
- One way a person develops racist tendencies is by taking the worst sample of a group and making that entirely representative of the race. That is how a person justifies their racism and mistreatment of that race.
- The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Do not return to unbelief after me by striking the necks of each other. No man is to be punished for the crimes of his father or his brother."
 - The prophet (saw) connected the worst type of division (killing each other) to the un-Islamic practice of applying collective guilt.
 - Collective guilt cannot even be applied to family.
 - Ikrima, the son of Abu Jahl became Muslim some time after the conquest of Makkah. Despite all the crimes of his father and his crimes before Islam, the prophet (saw) told the Sahabah not to mention Abu Jahl in his presence so it wouldn't hurt his feelings.
- Surah Najm Ayah 38: ولا تزر وازرة وزر أخرى

- “And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another”

Assumptions and Stereotyping

- Story of Genesis:
 - When Allah (swt) gave Adam (as) the position of Khalifah on Earth, the Angels responded, “Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood”
 - They were basing this on their experience with the Jinn, another creation that had free choice. And their projection was overall accurate.
 - Allah (swt) replied by saying “Indeed, I know that which you do not know.”
 - This is interpreted as referring to the existence of righteous offsprings of Adam. There will be people like Nuh, Musa, Isa, and Muhammad (as). Not all people will spread corruption and shed blood.
- Hadith of Muwatta: *من قال هلك الناس فهو أهلكهم*
 - “When you hear a man say, 'The people are ruined,' he himself is the most ruined of them all.”
 - What you see in others is really just a projection of yourself.
- Surah Ali Imran Ayah 113: *لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ*
 - “They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer].”
 - This was revealed in response to some Sahabah generalizing about the people of the book.
 - They are not all the same in their spirituality.
- Surah Ali Imran Ayah 75: *وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدُّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بدينارٍ لَا يُؤَدُّهُ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ سَبِيلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ*

- “And among the People of the Scripture is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth], he will return it to you. And among them is he who, if you entrust him with a [single] silver coin, he will not return it to you unless you are constantly standing over him [demanding it]. That is because they say, "There is no blame upon us concerning the unlearned." And they speak untruth about Allah while they know [it].”
- They are not all the same in their integrity
- We cannot generalize and decontextualize Ayahs like 2:120: “And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion”
 - If this was the case with everyone then what would be the point of Da’wah?
- When we look at the stories of Bani Israeel, we should look at ourselves. Not just criticize them.
 - Hudhayfa (rA) would chastise Muslims that began misreading the Quran and feeling inherently self-righteous, saying, “What excellent brothers for you the Israelites are; if [as you claim] every sweet quality is yours and every sour quality is theirs! By Allah, you will certainly tread their path, footstep by footstep.”
 - Among Bani Israeel there were righteous people and deviants. The Ummah of Muhammad (saw) will also have righteous people and deviants. We should look at ourselves and try not to deviate.
- Hadith of Aisha in Ibn Majah: **إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ فِرْيَةً لِرَجُلٍ هَاجَى رَجُلًا فَهَجَا الْقَبِيلَةَ بِأَسْرِهِا**
 - “Certainly, the great liar among people is a man who insults another man by disparaging the entire tribe.” (Ibn Majah: 3761)
 - Hijaa’ refers to the common combative smear poetry, essentially the media of the time.

Conclusion

- There will always be Muslims here and there that commit acts of terrorism. That shouldn’t be applied to all Muslims.

- Even though Muslims are not more prone to violence than other people, that is the common assumption that is perpetuated.
- People characterize entire groups of people because of some experience they had or because they were fed a toxic notion about that group on a consistent basis.
- Often the language of discrimination is the underpinning of bad policy: Muslims are terrorists, Jews are bloodsuckers, Catholics are disloyal, Mexicans are rapists, Blacks are criminals. Another example is Japanese internment camps.
- Many times, groups that are victims of this channel their frustration by doing the same to other groups. For example, saying Buddhists are terrorists because of the crimes in Rohingya.
- Allah distinguished between the brothers of Yusuf, even though the best of them was the one who said to throw him in a well instead of killing him.
- The Prophet (s) distinguished between his enemies at Badr.
 - He pointed out Umayya ibn Khalaf's hesitation.
 - The Prophet (s) also understood some people were pressured into evil. For example, his uncle Abbas.
- There is shirk in stereotyping: Fitra states that everyone has a natural predisposition to good. If you write people off based of religious identity, you are either saying they never had Fitrah or no longer have it.
 - The point of Da'wah is bring people back to Fitrah after they've been influenced away from it. If you say that entire groups of people are missing that Fitrah then you are claiming a deficiency in the creation of Allah.
- There is hypocrisy in stereotyping: assume the best of ourselves and the worst of others
 - You are heedless of your own mistakes and obsessive over others' mistakes.
- Stereotyping leads to dehumanizing and demonizing. You fail to do good for people because you feel they don't deserve that good.

- We also lose sight of oppressors who create conditions that make people lash out. Oppressors create ghettos and war zones, then say that these people are just killing each other and we have nothing to do with it.
 - Just like we don't want these tools to be used as propaganda against us, we shouldn't buy into the narratives against others.
 - We have to deal with the conditions that lead to bad behavior.
 - Ex. The prophet (saw) said poverty can lead to Kufr.
- War ethics in Islam: the women, elderly, children, monks, trees not to be blamed for the actions of enemy. This was revolutionary in the 7th century.
 - After Uhud, the prophet (saw) saw a dead woman from the opposing side. He was furious and demanded answers.
- Don't demean someone with their lineage or identity
 - Hadith of Abu Dharr and Bilal – we've discussed this before.
 - Hafsa (ra) called Safiyyah (ra) the daughter of a Jew.
 - The prophet (saw) didn't negate that fact. Rather he said: "Indeed, you are the daughter of a Prophet (Moses), your paternal uncle is a Prophet (Aaron), and you are married to a Prophet. So on what basis does she demean you?"