

Islamic Law Concerning Ta'widhat (Amulets) And Recitals For Cure (Damm)

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(Dawateislami)

Question

In summary, a hadith found in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī and other works describes how on the Day of Judgement, 70,000 members of the Prophet's nation shall enter Paradise without accountability. It is mentioned these individuals would not have treated themselves with dam nor believed in omens, but instead relied upon their Lord entirely.

In context of this, I have two questions I would like to ask the scholars of Islam:

1) What does Islamic law say regarding amulets (ta'widh) and performing damm (the act of blowing after reciting invocations)?

2) If it is permissible, what does the aforementioned hadith mean? It appears to be declaring amulets to be impermissible.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

In response to the first question: Islamic law allows the usage of amulets and the performance of damm. These must consist of Quranic verses, hadith, or words free from any element of polytheism (*shirk*). Nothing in them must conflict with Islamic law. Amulets are impermissible if they contain something which conflicts even in the slightest with Islamic law, or if what is written within has unknown meaning.

Permissible phrases and words can be used for both amulets and damm. These function as a form of treatment and means of attaining remedy. The lawfulness of this is established by the Quran, sunnah, and statements of Islamic scholars.

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ^١

And We send down in the Quran that which is a cure and mercy for the believers.¹

Commentary on this verse in *Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī*:

قال مالك: لا باس بتعليق الكتب التي فيها اسماء الله تعالى على اعناق المرضى على وجه التبرك بها اذا لم يرد معلقها بذلك مدافعة العين، وعنى بذلك انه لا باس بالتعليق بعد نزول البلاء رجاء الفرج والبر، كالرقى التي وردت السنة بها من العين، واما قبل النزول ففيه باس وهو غريب، وعند ابن المسيب يجوز تعليق العوذة من كتاب الله تعالى في قصبة ونحوها وتوضع عند الجماع وعند الغائط، ولم يقيد بقبل او بعد، ورخص الباقر في العوذة تعلق على الصبيان مطلقاً وكان ابن سيرين لا يرى باساً بالشيء من القرآن يعلقه الانسان كبيراً أو صغيراً مطلقاً وهو الذي عليه الناس قديماً وحديثاً في سائر الامصار

In this extract, Imam Mālik رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ says amulets containing the names of Allah can be suspended from the necks of the unwell as a means of attaining blessing. There is no issue

¹ Al-Quran, 17:82, Translation from Kanz al-Īmān

in this. Yet, *mudāfa‘at al-‘ayn* must not be intended. This maintains the permissibility of wearing amulets to resolve an issue **after** it has occurred, like the *damm* to ward away evil eye transmitted in the sunnah.

What this does entail is the wearing of an amulet **before** any issue or calamity even arrives to be problematic and a source of contention, although this opinion is anomalous.

The Tābi‘ī, Sa‘īd b. Musayyib رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ considers it permissible for an amulet to comprise of verses from the Book of Allah, which can then be enclosed in a case etc., and hung from the neck. He says this should be removed when engaging in sexual intercourse or entering a bathroom. In terms of wearing this before or during a calamity, he places no restriction or condition of this kind.

Imam Bāqir رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ issued permission for children to wear these unrestrictedly. Ibn Sīrīn رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ also found no issue in a person, whether young or old, taking verses of the Quran and wearing them around their neck as an amulet. This is universally agreed upon by people from all eras and lands.²

Some ahadith discussing the permissibility of amulets and performing *damm*

The final Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ noticed signs of evil eye upon a slave girl and said, “Evil eye has afflicted her, so perform *damm* for her.”³

The Companion ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا used to form amulets comprising of prayers and hang them from children’s necks, as evidenced by this hadith in *Tirmidhī*:

ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، قال: اذا فزع احدكم في النوم، فليقل: اعوذ بكلمات التامات من غضبه وعقابه وشر عباده ومن همزات الشيطان وان يحضرون، فانها تضره، فكان عبد الله بن عمر يلقنها من بلغ من ولده ومن لم يبلغ منهم كتبها في صك، ثم علقها في عنقه

The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “When any of you are frightened by your dream, recite, ‘I take refuge in the perfect words of Allah from the displeasure of Allah, from punishment, from the evil of His servants, from Satanic whispers and from devils coming near me.’ Certainly, no harm shall then reach you.”

‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا would teach this prayer to his adolescent children. As for those of his children who had not yet reached puberty, he would write this upon paper and hang it from their necks.”⁴

The Companion Ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا narrates:

ان نفراً من اصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مروا باماء، فيهم لديغ او سليم، فعرض لهم رجل من اهل الماء، فقال: هل فيكم من راق، ان في الماء رجلاً لديغا او سليماً، فانطلق رجل منهم، فقرأ بفاتحة الكتاب على شاة فبزأ، فجاء بالشاء الى اصحابه، فكرهوا ذلك، وقالوا: اخذت على كتاب الله اجراً، حتى قدموا المدينة، فقالوا: يا رسول الله! اخذ على كتاب الله اجراً، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ان احق ما اخذتم عليه اجراً كتاب الله

² *Tafsīr Rūh al-Ma‘ānī, under verse 82, vol. 8, p. 139, published in Beirut*

³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1725, Dār al-Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabi, Beirut*

⁴ *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī, vol. 2, p. 192, published in Karachi*

A group of the Prophet's Companions were once passing by the bank of a river, when they came across an individual bitten by a snake or scorpion. A resident of the area approached and asked, "Do any of you perform damm? One of us was bitten by a snake or scorpion."

One Companion accompanied the resident and they both went to the afflicted individual.

In return for several sheep, he performed damm with Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and the individual regained his health. The Companion then returned to the others with the sheep. The Companions initially expressed their displeasure at this by saying, "You have taken financial remuneration for the Book of Allah."

When the group returned to Madina, they went to the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ and explained how one of them took earnings in return for reciting the Quran. The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ declared, "From everything you take payment for, the Book of Allah is most rightful."⁵

2) **In response to the second question:** The aforementioned proofs establish the permissibility of amulets comprising of permissible words and actions derived from the Quran and sunnah, as well as the validity of damm. What is meant by the hadith included in the question and others of the same kind, which appear to forbid amulets, have been explained by hadith exegetes. Their findings are hereby enclosed.

i) The types of amulets/damm forbidden are those containing words of polytheism, disbelief, or disallowed words. If an amulet contains nothing which conflicts with Islamic law, it is permissible. This is corroborated by a hadith in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, narrated by the Companion 'Awf ibn Mālik Ashja'ī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ:

كنا نرقي في الجاهلية فقلنا: يا رسول الله! كيف ترى في ذلك؟ فقال: اعرضوا علي رقاكم لا بأس بالرقى ما لم يكن فيه شرك

We performed ruqyā during the Days of Jāhiliyya. We asked, "O Messenger of Allah! What do you make of this?" He replied, "Present your damm to me. There is no issue in ruqyā, as long it does not contain polytheism."⁶

ii) Forbiddance applies to damm etc., that contains blasphemous litanies or words whose meanings are unknown. Their meanings may amount to outright disbelief. This is what was specified in this blessed hadith. Imam al-Nawawī رَحِمَهُ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ writes:

المراد بها الرقى التي هي من كلام الكفار والرقى المجهولة والتي بغير العربية وما لا يعرف معناها فهذه مذمومة لا احتمال أن معناها كفر أو قريب منه أو مكروه وأما الرقى بآيات القرآن وبالأذكار المعروفة فلا نهى فيه بل هو سنة

This refers to *damm* etc., comprising of blasphemous litanies, unknown words, not recited in Arabic, and whose meaning is undetermined. This is the subject matter discussed 'in this hadith'. This is because possibility exists of this *damm* containing meanings which amount to disbelief or draw one close to it. As for damm comprising of Quranic verses or invocations whose meanings are known, these are not forbidden, but in fact sunnah."⁷

⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 2, p. 854, published in Karachi

⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1727, *Dār al-Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabi*, Beirut

⁷ *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā al-Muslim*, vol. 14, p. 168, *Dār al-Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabi*, Beirut

iii) The forbiddance declared in this hadith refer to those who consider amulets etc., to be efficacious by themselves, whereas it is Allah who creates effect in anything He wishes. Amulets are a form of means. This forbiddance can also include the things disbelievers ardently believe to cause effect by themselves.

In Imam Nawawī's exegesis of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:

أن النهي لقوم كانوا يعتقدون منفعتها وتأثيرها بطبعها كما كانت الجاهلية تزعمه في أشياء كثيرة

Forbiddance is for those who consider things to harbour efficacy and 'power to' benefit in and of themselves, just as many thought about certain items during the Days of Jāhiliyya.⁸

In *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ*, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, *Fatḥ al-Barī* and other works:

واللفظ للاول: "التمائم) جمع تميمة، والمراد بها التعاويذ التي تحتوى على رقى الجاهلية من اسماء الشياطين والفاظ لا يعرف معناها، قيل: التمام خرزات كانت العرب فى الجاهلية تعلقها على اولادهم يتقون بها العين فى زعمهم، فابطله الاسلام، لانه ينفع ولا يذفع الا الله تعالى

Tamā'im is the plural form of *tamīma*, and this refers to amulets formulated in the Days of Jāhiliyya, which contained Satanic names and undetermined words.

It can also refer to charms, which the people of Arabia would tie around their children's necks, believing them to hold intrinsic power of effect in warding off evil eye. Islam declared this false, as nothing can bring benefit or ward away troubles without Allah causing it to.⁹

iv) Narrations forbidding *damm* refer to those based on Satanic wordings, magic, or an action performed to perpetrate something impermissible, such as causing rift between a married couple etc. Imam Nawawī explains:

قال القاضي وجاء في حديث في غير مسلم سئل عن النشرة فأضافها إلى الشيطان قال والنشرة عروفة مشهورة عند أهل التعزيم وسميت بذلك لأنها تنشر عن صاحبها أي تخلي عنه وقال الحسن هي من السحر قال القاضي وهذا محمول على أنها أشياء خارجة عن كتاب الله تعالى وأذكاره وعن المداواة المعروفة التي هي من جنس المباح

Al-Qādī 'Iyād رَحِمَهُ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ mentions how besides the relative hadith of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, there is a hadith in which the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ was once asked about *nushra* (blasphemous litanies and magic). He declared this to be linked to Satan.

The qādī then mentioned how *nushra* was famously known amongst the Ahl al-Ta'zīm, and it acquired its name from how it separates a wife from her husband.

He also said the forbiddance 'of *damm*' is implemented upon these things (blasphemous litanies and magic), as they are neither the dhikr of Allah nor reputed *mubāḥ* actions.¹⁰

v) Another point to consider: amulets were once disallowed, but permission was later issued for them to be formulated provided they comprise of valid wordings. In other words, narrations detailing forbiddance were abrogated, and narrations issuing permissibility are their abrogators.

The Companion Jābir رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrates,

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ*, vol. 8, p. 255, published in Quetta

¹⁰ *Sharḥ al-Nawawī 'alā al-Muslim*, vol. 14, pp. 168-169, Dār al-Ihyā al-Turāth al-'Arabi, Beirut

نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن الرقى، فجاء آل عمرو بن حزم إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالوا: يا رسول الله إنه كانت عندنا رقية نرقي بها من العقرب، وإنك نهيت عن الرقى، قال: فعرضوها عليه، فقال: «ما أرى بأساً من استطاع منكم أن ينفع أخاه فلينفعه»

The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ 'initially' forbade damm. The family of 'Amr b. Hāzim came to him and said, "We have a damm we recite for (whoever is stung by) a scorpion." They presented it to the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and he replied, "I do not see any issue in this. Whoever from you can benefit his brother should do so."¹¹

In the exegesis of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:

كان نهى أولاً ثم نسخ ذلك وأذن فيها وعلها واستقر الشرح على الإذن

Initially there was prohibition, which was abrogated and turned into permissibility. Islamic law affirmed and maintained this permission.¹²

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

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¹¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1726, *Dār al-Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabi*, Beirut

¹² *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā al-Muslim*, vol. 14, p. 168, *Dār al-Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabi*, Beirut