152672 - What is the way to count adhkar on one’s fingers?

the question

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

1.The Sunnah – both the words and actions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – describes the way to count tasbih on one’s fingers;

Words:

It was narrated that Yusayrah bint Yasir (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to us: “You should recite phrases glorifying Allah, proclaiming His oneness and praising Him, and count them on your fingertips, for they will be questioned and made to speak; do not become heedless lest you forget about the Mercy (of Allah).”

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 3583; Abu Dawud, 1501. Classed as sound (hasan) by al-Albani in *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*.

Actions:

It was narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr, from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who said: “There are two deeds that a Muslim does not do regularly but he will enter Paradise. They are easy but those who do them are few; saying *Subhan-Allah* (Glory be to Allah) ten times after every prayer, and saying *Al-hamdu Lillah* (Praise be to Allah) ten times, and saying Allahu akbar ten times. That makes one hundred and fifty on the tongue and one thousand and five hundred in the Balance. And I saw the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be

upon him) counting them on his hand.

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 3410; Abu Dawud, 5065; and Ibn Majah, 926.

2.In some reports it says that tasbih should be counted on the right hand.

Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

According to a report narrated by Abu Dawud, “let him count the tasbih on his right hand.” Its isnad is authentic (sahih) in my view; an-Nawawi classed it as sound (hasan) in *Al-Adhkar*.

Al-Kalim at-Tayyib, 112.

There was a difference of opinion among the scholars concerning that. On this website we think that it is better to count tasbih on the right hand, but the one who counts his tasbih on his left hand is not sinning, and should not be denounced for that.

3.The phrase “And I saw the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) counting them on his hand” may be understood in three ways:

a. Counting with the entire finger, bending it down towards the palm then extending it. Those who hold this view regard the word “fingertips” in the other hadith as referring to the fingers.

b.Counting with the fingertips. The hadith which mentions this has been quoted above, and the scholars differed concerning its meaning. Some of them said that it is similar to the view above, and others said that it is to be understood according to the apparent meaning, and that counting should be done by the fingertips, and on each finger there is one fingertip.

c.Counting with the joints of the fingers.

The hadith was interpreted in these three ways.

Shams ad-Din al-`Azimabadi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The phrase “counting them on his hand” means: on his fingers or fingertips or the joints of his

fingers.

`Awn al-Ma`bud, 13/273.

What appears to be the case is that what is meant by fingertips in the hadith is the fingers; this comes under the heading of mentioning a part of a thing to mean the entire thing, and it is unlikely that tasbih is to be counted with the fingertips only, because it is difficult for the person who is reciting tasbih to count in this manner, as each finger has only one fingertip, which is part of the finger, where the top of the finger meets the nail. Some of the scholars interpreted fingertips as referring to the joints of each finger – there are three joints on every finger except the thumb, which has two joints. But this is far-fetched and is not supported by linguistic usage, Islamic teachings or custom.

Abul-Hasan al-Mubarakfuri (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What appears to be the case is that what is meant by the fingertips is the fingers; this comes under the heading of mentioning part of a thing to mean the entire thing. This is the opposite of what is mentioned in the verse in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death} [al-Baqarah 2:19], where the phrase is used for emphasis.

Mar`at al-Mafatih Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih, 7/478.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “and count them on your fingertips, for they will be questioned and made to speak” – what is meant by fingertips is the fingers.

Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb (tape no. 230).

4.There is no proof in the religious text to suggest that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used a particular method to count tasbih on his fingers. What appears to be the case is that the matter is broad in scope.

In *Al-Mawsu`at al-Fiqhiyyah* (21/258) it says:

Ibn `Allan said: It may be that what is meant is counting on the actual fingertips, or counting on the entire fingers.

He said:

Counting on the joints means placing the thumb on a joint with each phrase of dhikr; counting on the fingers means bending the finger down towards the palm then extending it.

In *Sharh al-Mishkat* it says: Counting in this instance may be done in whatever manner people are used to. End quote.

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Sunnah is to count with the fingers, with the five fingers, bending each finger down towards the palm then extending it until you have completed thirty-three. Counting on the right hand is best, but if someone counts using both hands, there is nothing wrong with that.

Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb (tape no. 739).

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for the Sunnah, the way to count is with the entire finger, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “count them on your fingertips,” and that way of counting was known to the Arabs; they did not count with the fingertips only; rather they counted with the entire fingers. So for example one would say “*Subhan-Allah wal-hamdu Lillahi wa Allahu akbar*” without pointing to the finger joints.

Liqa’ al-Bab al-Maftuh, 168/question no. 10.

And Allah knows best.