105280 - Are Men Allowed to Travel Alone in Islam?

the question

Is it true that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade travelling alone?

Summary of answer

It is proven that Prophet Muhammad forbade a man to travel alone in several Hadiths. The prohibition to travel alone applies to the one who travels alone via empty and remote routes. If there is no risk of being lost, and where there are likely to be helpers and companions, there is no wrong with travelling alone.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Can a man travel alone in Islam?

Yes, it is proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade that in several Hadiths, including the following:

Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “If people knew what I know about being alone, no rider would travel at night by himself.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 2998)

Imam Ahmad narrated this Hadith in Al-Musnad (2/91) with some additional material in which it says:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade being alone, for a man to spend the night alone or travel alone .

But this report is regarded as odd (i.e., inauthentic), and it is superseded by the report of Al-Bukhari for two reasons:

1. The report of Al-Bukhari was narrated by nine of the companions of `Asim ibn Muhammad ibn Zayd ibn `Abdullah ibn `Umar from his father from Ibn `Umar, all of whom mention travelling only and not spending the night. Only one of the students of `Asim ibn Muhammad, namely `Abd Al-Wahid ibn Wasil, mentioned the prohibition on spending the night alone. Although he was trustworthy, the report narrated by many trustworthy narrators supersedes his report.
2. This is indicated by a similar report from Ahmad, although the narrator does not mention the specific wording of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), unlike the report of the majority.

Hence the editors of Musnad Ahmad (9/467), and Shaykh Muqbil Al-Wadi`i in Ahadith Mu`allah (249), ruled that the report of `Abd Al-Wahid is odd, unlike Shaykh Al-Albani who ruled that it is authentic, as stated in As-Silsilah As-Sahihah (60).

The prohibition on spending the night alone was narrated in a Mursal report from `Ata', as was narrated by Abu Dawud in Kitab Al-Marasil (380) and Ibn Abu Shaybah in Al-Musannaf (7/726).

Al-Tabarani narrated in Al-Awsat (2079) via Muhammad ibn Al-Qasim Al-Asadi from Zuhayr ibn Mu`awiyah from Abu Az-Zubayr from Jabir that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If people knew what I know about being alone, no rider would travel at night by himself and no man would sleep in a house by himself."

But this report is to be rejected because of Muhammad ibn Al-Qasim Al-Asadi, because he was accused of lying.

The prohibition on spending the night alone was also narrated in some authentic reports. It was narrated that `Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said: No man should travel alone or sleep in a house on his own." (Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in As-Silsilah As-Sahihah, 1/130).

Imam Ahmad was asked about a man spending the night alone. He said: “I prefer him to avoid that.” (Al-Adab Ash-Shar`iyyah (1/428)

- It was narrated from `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`Aas that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The (lone) rider is a devil, two riders are two devils and three are a travelling party.” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, 1674; he said it is a sound Hadith). It was also classified as sound by Ibn Hajar in Fath Al-Bari (6/53) and by Al-Albani in As-Silsilah As-Sahihah (62).

These Hadiths indicate that it is disliked to be alone in situations where a man fears for himself because of weakness, severe exhaustion or hardship, or when he fears that the Shaytan may tempt him and mislead him. The benefit of being with righteous companions is not limited to help and support, rather the most important thing is that it helps him to remain steadfast and pious, for the shaytaan is further away from two.

Al-Hafidh Ibn Hajar said in Fat-h Al-Bari (6/53):

“Ibn Khuzaymah reported it under the heading; “the prohibition on two travelling and that less than three are sinners,” because what is meant by “devil” is a sinner. At-Tabari said: This is a rebuke aimed at disciplining and guiding because of the fear of loneliness for one, but it is not prohibited. The one who travels alone in the wilderness and the one who stays alone in a house has no guarantee that he will not feel lonely, especially if he had bad thoughts and is weak in faith.

In fact people differ with regard to that and the prohibition concerning that is a measure of protection, but if there is need for that, it should be fine. It was said, commenting on the words “the (lone) rider is a devil” that his travelling alone is suggested to him by the shaytaan, or he is likened to the shaytaan in his actions. And it was said that it is disliked because if the person who is travelling alone dies on the journey, there will be no one who can take care of him; similarly, if two are travelling and both or one die, there will be no one to help, unlike three, because in most cases that fear will not be present.”

When can man travel alone in Islam?

The apparent meaning of the Hadith is that the prohibition applies to the one who travels alone via empty and remote routes. As for well-travelled routes, and those in which there is no risk of being lost, and where there are likely to be helpers and companions, there is no report that it is makruh or prohibited.

The same applies to travelling nowadays on planes, ships and buses, because those who are in them are all regarded as travelling companions, so the one who travels by these means is not alone in the sense that is forbidden.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin said in Fatawa Nur `ala Al-Darb (mutafarraqat/Al-adab):

“This points to the warning against travelling alone, but that applies to journeys where the route is not travelled by many. As for journeys where the route is travelled by many, and it is as if one is in the middle of a village, such as the route from Al-Qaseem to Riyadh, or Riyadh to Dammam and other such routes where there are many travellers, and the road to the Hijaz during the Hajj season, this is not in fact regarded as being alone, because many people travel by these routes. So a person may be alone in his car but he is not alone on the journey, rather there are people around him, behind him and in front of him at every moment.”

Shaykh Al-Albani said in his commentary on this Hadith in As-Sahihah (62):

“Perhaps the Hadith refers to travelling in the deserts or wilderness where the traveller rarely sees anyone. It does not include travel nowadays on paved and well-travelled roads. And Allah knows best.”

For more details, please see the following answers: 122630 , 4523 , 34380 , and 47029 .

And Allah knows best.