128914 - Ruling on tasbeeh using the “electronic masbahah” program

the question

In Internet chat rooms the electronic masbahah for tasbeeh has become widespread. The way it is used is simple; it helps one to remember Allah and, to be honest,I like it. These days every time I turn on the computer, I open this program and I sit reciting tasbeeh (“Subhaan Allah – Glory be to Allah”) and tahleel (“La ilaaha ill-Allaah – there is no god but Allah”), and I make myself do it, and I do not close the page until I am done, without anything to distract me or make me forget. I know that tasbeeh (counting on) the hand is better, but I am busy on the Internet, so this is better for me. But I want to ask about the ruling on it, because I heard that they are saying that it comes from the Sufis, and I did not intend to imitate them; I only want to remember Allah. I would like to find out the ruling, may Allah reward you. Please note that I have benefited from it a great deal.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The scholars differed concerning the ruling on the masbahah. Some of them said that it is an innovation (bid‘ah), and others said that that is not the case. This has been discussed previously in the answer to question no. 3009.

What there should be no dispute about is the following:

1. That counting tasbeeh on the fingers is better, because it is what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught us.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Counting tasbeeh on the fingers is Sunnah, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to the women: “Glorify Allah (by saying Subhaan-Allah) and count on your fingers, for

they will be questioned and will speak.” End quote.

Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa, 22/506

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

But better than that [i.e., better than the masbahah] is for a person to count the tasbeeh on his fingers, because they will speak, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught. End quote.

Fataawa ash-Shaykh al-‘Uthaymeen, 13/173

2. Counting tasbeeh openly with the masbahah in order to show off is forbidden

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to adopting that – i.e., counting tasbeeh with the masbahah – unnecessarily or in order to show off to people, such as hanging it around one’s neck or wearing it like a bracelet on the arm, and so on, that is either showing off to people or is likely to be thought to be showing off and imitating those who show off unnecessarily. The former is haraam and the latter is, at the very least, makrooh, because showing off to people in doing private acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, dhikr and reading Qur’an, is one of the gravest of sins.

Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa, 22/506

3. Tasbeeh with the fingers when there is no focus of the heart or tongue on dhikr is invalid tasbeeh, which brings no reward to the one who does it.

Al-Mannaawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for what heedless people used to do, of holding a masbahah which is very ornate and costly, and carrying it without any presence of mind or thought, and talking or listening to people, or talking to them whilst moving its beads through his fingers, when his heart and tongue are distracted by worldly matters, this is blameworthy and is makrooh, and it is one of the worst of

reprehensible deeds.

Fayd al-Qadeer, 4/468

Ibn al-Haaj al-‘Abdari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Some of them hold the masbahah in their hands, so that people can see it, and they move the beads one by one, as if they are counting their dhikr, and in fact they are talking and gossiping with people about what happened to this one and that one. Obviously a person has only one tongue, so his counting on the masbahah in this manner is worthless, because he does not have another tongue so that he could be reciting dhikr with one tongue and talking about whatever he wants to do with the other. So he can only be using the masbahah in this manner for the purpose of showing off and as an innovation.

Al-Madkhal, 3/205

Secondly:

We have looked at the program referred to in the question, and it seems to us that it is less serious than saying tasbeeh using the masbahah; if it is said that the masbahah is permissible, then by the same token this program may also be permissible. That is because some of the objectionable matters that are present in the case of the masbahah are not present in this program, such as showing off to people by using the masbahah, or counting tasbeeh on the hand when the heart and tongue are distracted by worldly matters or talking to people.

However, we should point out a number of things:

1. In the case of adhkaar for which no specific number was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), it is not prescribed to adhere to a particular number in reciting them; rather the Muslim may remember his Lord however he likes, a little or a great deal.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas said:

The basic principle with regard to dhikr and acts of worship is tawqeef (i.e., adhering to what is

mentioned and prescribed in the Qur’aan and Sunnah and not worshipping Allaah in any way except that which has been prescribed on the lips of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)). Based on this, in cases where a certain time, number of times, place or manner has been specified, we must worship Allaah in the way that has been proven in sharee’ah. But when Allaah has prescribed dhikrs, du’aa’ and other kinds of worship in general terms without specifying a particular time, number, place or manner, then it is not permissible for us to set limits with regard to the manner, time or number of times. Rather we should worship Him in general terms as it was narrated.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘Abd ar-Razzaaq ‘Afeefi, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Ghadyaan, SHaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Qa‘ood

Majallat al-Buhooth al-Islamiyyah, 21/53; Fataawa Islamiyyah, 4/178

See also the answers to questions no. 22457 and 21902

2. In the program there is a icon called “The Beautiful Names of Allah”, the author of which relied on a report narrated by at-Tirmidhi to list ninety-nine names of Allah. But this is a da‘eef (weak) report according to the consensus of hadeeth scholars.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 72318

We should also point out that it is not prescribed to remember Allah, may He be exalted, by repeating His name on its own; so it is not prescribed to remember Allah by saying “Ya Allah, Ya Allah, Ya Allah” or “Ya Quddoos, Ya Quddoos, Ya Quddoos (O Most Holy…)” and so on.

Please see also the answers to questions no. 9389 and 91305

And Allah knows best.