

# Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalūsī on Contagion



Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalūsī (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (d. 456H) explains the categories and reasons for which there is an excuse for not praying in congregation in the mosque. He said:<sup>1</sup>

مَسْأَلَةٌ: وَمِنَ الْعُذْرِ لِلرِّجَالِ فِي التَّخَلُّفِ عَنِ الْجَمَاعَةِ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ  
الْمَرَضُ، وَالْخَوْفُ، وَالْمَطَرُ، وَالْبَرْدُ، وَخَوْفُ ضَيَاعِ الْمَالِ، وَحُضُورُ  
الْأَكْلِ، وَخَوْفُ ضَيَاعِ الْمَرِيضِ، أَوِ الْمَيِّتِ، وَتَطْوِيلُ الْإِمَامِ حَتَّى  
يَضُرَّ بِمَنْ خَلْفَهُ، وَأَكْلُ الثُّومِ، أَوِ الْبَصْلِ، أَوِ الْكَرَاثِ مَا دَامَتِ الرَّائِحَةُ  
بَاقِيَةً، وَيُمنَعُ أَكْلُوهَا مِنْ حُضُورِ الْمَسْجِدِ، وَيُؤْمَرُ بِإِخْرَاجِهِمْ مِنْهَا وَلَا  
بُدَّ، وَلَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُمنَعَ مِنَ الْمَسَاجِدِ أَحَدٌ غَيْرُ هَؤُلَاءِ، لَا مَجْذُومٌ، وَلَا  
أَبْخَرُ، وَلَا ذُو عَاهَةٍ، وَلَا أَمْرَأَةٌ بِصَغِيرٍ مَعَهَا.

**Issue:** And from [what constitutes] an excuse for men to remain behind from the congregational prayer in the mosque is: Illness, fear, rain, cold, fear of ruin of [one's] wealth/possessions, when food is served, fear of harm for the sick or the deceased [who needs to be buried], the imām prolonging the prayer which causes harm to those behind him.

<sup>1</sup> Al-Muḥallā (Dār Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 1437H) 4/463 onwards.

And eating garlic, onions and leeks so long as the odour remains. Those eating them should be prevented from attending the mosque and they are to be expelled from it without fail.

It is not permissible to prevent anyone from the mosque except these [who eat garlic, onions and leeks]. Neither a leper, nor one with halitosis (bad breath from other causes) nor one with an illness, nor a woman who has a young child with her [should be prevented]...

He provides some evidences for those who are prevented from the mosque and then says:

ولا يُخْرَجُ غَيْرُ هَؤُلَاءِ، لَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى لَوْ أَرَادَ مَنَعَ أَحَدٍ غَيْرِهِمْ مِنَ الْمَسَاجِدِ لَبَيَّنَ ذَلِكَ: ﴿وَمَا كَانَ رِئْكَ نَسِيًّا﴾<sup>(١)</sup>.

فَإِنْ ذَكَرَ ذَاكِرٌ حَدِيثَ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ: «لَا عَذْوَى وَلَا طَيْرَةَ، وَفَرٌّ مِنَ الْمَجْذُومِ فِرَارَكَ مِنَ الْأَسَدِ»<sup>(٢)</sup> فَإِنَّ مَعْنَاهُ كَقَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: ﴿اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ﴾<sup>(٣)</sup>، أَي: فَرٌّ مِنَ الْمَجْذُومِ فِرَارَكَ مِنَ الْأَسَدِ، (فَإِنَّ مَعْنَاهُ)<sup>(٤)</sup> لَا عَذْوَى أَي: إِنَّهُ لَا يُغْدِيكَ، وَلَا يَنْفَعُكَ فِرَارُكَ مِمَّا قُدِّرَ عَلَيْكَ. وَلَوْ لَمْ يَكُن مَعْنَاهُ هَذَا لَكَانَ آخِرُ الْحَدِيثِ يَنْقُضُ أَوَّلَهُ، وَهَذَا مُحَالٌ.

وَأَيْضًا: فَلَوْ كَانَ عَلَى مَعْنَى الْفِرَارِ لَكَانَ الْأَمْرُ بِهِ عُمُومًا، فَوَجِبَ أَنْ تَفَرَّ مِنْهُ أَمْرَأَتُهُ وَوَلَدُهُ وَكُلُّ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَمُوتَ جُوعًا وَجَهْدًا، وَلَوْ جِبَ أَنْ تُفَقَّرَ الْأَرْقَةُ أَمَامَهُ، كَمَا يُفَعَّلُ بِالْأَسَدِ، وَهَذَا بَاطِلٌ بَيِّقِينَ، وَمَا يَشْكُ أَحَدٌ أَنَّهُ قَدْ كَانَ فِي عَضْرِهِ الطَّلَعُ مَجْذُومُونَ فَمَا فَرَّ عَنْهُمْ أَحَدٌ. فَصَحَّ أَنَّ مُرَادَهُ ﷺ مَا ذَكَرْنَاهُ.

And none but these should be expelled [from the mosque] because had Allāh desired the prevention of anyone besides them from the mosques He would have explained that: **“And your Lord was never forgetful.”** (19:64).

And if anyone should mention the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah from the Prophet (ﷺ): *“There is no contagion, no omen [in the flight of birds] and flee from the leper as you would flee from the lion.”*<sup>2</sup> Then its meaning is like the saying of Allāh the Exalted: **“Do whatever you will”** (41:40), meaning, [go ahead], flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion, (for its meaning) is that there is no contagion, he will not pass [his leprosy] to you, and your fleeing from what has been decreed for you will not benefit you.

And had this not been its meaning, then the last part of the ḥadīth would contradict the first part of it, and this is impossible.

Also, if it had been upon the meaning of fleeing, then its command would be general. Thus, it would be obligatory upon his wife, his son and everyone to flee from him until he dies of hunger and exertion. And it would be obligatory that the pathways are cleared in front of him as is done with the lion [when it roams]. And this is futile, with certainty.

No one doubts that there were lepers in his (ﷺ) era and no one fled from them.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is validated that his (ﷺ) intent is what we mentioned.

## NOTES

1. Ibn Ḥazm was preceded and succeeded by many scholars—from the era of the Salaf and right until this day of ours—in the

<sup>2</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī (no. 5757 and Muslim (no. 2220).

<sup>3</sup> On the contrary they mixed, lived and ate with them. Refer to the article “Imām Aḥmad on Contagion” <http://cv2020.s3.amazonaws.com/imam-ahmad-contagion.pdf>.

negation of contagion and treating the notion of contagion as something that competes with and undermines belief in al-Qadar and reliance upon Allāh the Exalted, from them Imām Ibn Khuzaymah (رحمته الله) and Shaykh Ṣaliḥ al-Luḥaydān (رحمته الله).

**2.** It is not possible for there to be any contradiction between the texts, and for this reason, numerous approaches were taken to explain the ḥadīths on the subject of contagion in which there appears to be incoherence, from them:

—**a)** The view of abrogation, that one set of ḥadīths abrogated the other, and this is a disproven claim.

—**b)** The view that the contagion being negated is the one in which it is believed that it occurs outside Allāh’s will and power, and not the occurrence of contagion itself as such.

However the Pagan Arabs were not deniers of al-Qadar, they affirmed that good and evil occurs by way of it, and they used al-Qadar as an argument for their shirk, their alteration of religion and their miserliness in giving charity to those in need as is mentioned in the Qur’ān.

In this view, mixing is treated as a potential cause, subject to Allāh’s will. However, the room is left open for errors and exaggeration to be made in causation and contagion to be wrongly presumed.

—**c)** The view that contagion is negated in general with the exception of what has been specified such as leprosy and scabies.

—**d)** The view that contagion is negated in principle, altogether, and that these directives regarding the leper, sick camels and the likes are simply to close doors and avenues that lead people to believe in the notion of contagion, harbour omens and find fault with al-Qadar.

Also, that one is naturally averse to sickness, and being near the sick person entails unnecessary mental struggle and anxiety. So a person avoids the sick from the angle of avoiding this type of harm, not because of any notion of contagion.

—e) And another view that can be combined with some of the other views is that the statement of negation is for those with certainty and reliance and the directive to avoid the leper is for those who are weak and may become victim to their imaginations and presumptions.

**3.** As for leprosy, while it has been presumed to be contagious through ordinary routine contact, this has been disproven through hundreds of years of experience and this matter is accepted today.

Al-Qurṭubī stated in al-Mufhim:

“He [صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ] prohibited from passing the sick by the healthy out of fear that what the people of jāhiliyyah fell into might occur, of believing in [contagion], or out of fear that the souls might be disturbed or that the [people’s] imaginations might be affected. So this is similar to his (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) command of fleeing from the leper. For we, even though we believe that leprosy is not contagious, we still find aversion in our souls and a dislike of that. To the extent that if a person was to force himself to be near to him [the leper] and to sit alongside him, his soul will feel pain and perhaps [his soul] may be harmed by that, and become ill.”<sup>4</sup>

**4.** According to the CDC:<sup>5</sup>

“Leprosy was once feared as a highly contagious and devastating disease, but now we know it doesn’t spread easily and

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Mufhim (Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1417) 5/624.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to the following page on the CDC website:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/leprosy/index.html>.

treatment is very effective... *It is not known exactly how Hansen's disease [leprosy] spreads between people. Scientists currently think it may happen...*"

These statements indicate that there is no scientific proof for these claims, only mere conjectures. It has been established through extensive experience in all parts of the world that leprosy is not contagious in the ordinary and common sense of the word, which is routine, normal contact. As for **inoculation**, then leprosy can arise in a person through it, but inoculation is not contagion, it is a separate category.

The CDC continues:

*"Scientists currently think it may happen* when a person with Hansen's disease coughs or sneezes, and a healthy person breathes in the droplets containing the bacteria."

This statement has zero evidence because "thinking" that something happens in a certain way does not constitute actual scientific evidence. The same applies to influenza and other illnesses for which similar claims are made. Further, this is undermined by what is stated next:

"Prolonged, close contact with someone with untreated leprosy over many months is needed to catch the disease. **You cannot get leprosy from a casual contact with a person who has Hansen's disease like:** Shaking hands or hugging, sitting next to each other on the bus, sitting together at a meal. **Hansen's disease is also not passed on from a mother to her unborn baby during pregnancy and it is also not spread through sexual contact...** Overall, the risk of getting Hansen's disease for any adult around the world is very low. **That's because more than 95% of all people have natural immunity to the disease.**"

This is clear admission that bacteria cannot be the primary cause of this disease and that the vast majority of the world's population already have this bacteria and never get leprosy.

There must be more that is going on and other factors must be involved which give a more complete picture than the one presented by the *one-dimensional, one-germ, one-cause, one-illness* “germ theory” model of disease.

In reality, leprosy is a disease of toxicity and unhealthy living conditions, coupled with nutritional deficiency in some aspect or another, it is not caused by bacteria. Unfortunately, modern medicine is poisoned by the flawed, inaccurate germ theory of disease which does not account for, at least not in clinical practice, the multifactorial nature of disease. Bacteria come to the scene of disease and multiply where there are morbid tissues or linings. They play a role in recycling and cleaning up in the body, serving as housekeepers and janitors. They are not the root cause of disease, but appear on the scene of disease.

**Leprosy disappeared from nations as soon as there were improvements in sanitation, diet, better housing and open spaces, clean water supply and so on, which shows that, like many other alleged contagious diseases, it is one of malnutrition and toxicity and further, that the presence of any microbes is consequential, not causal.**

5. The above facts support the view of those scholars from the Salaf and beyond who say that the Prophetic command to “*Flee from the leper...*” is from the angle of preservation of creed, to prevent people from being prone to believing in contagion upon

the way of the pagans and disbelievers, and not because of fear of disease upon the principle of contagion.<sup>6</sup>

Otherwise, we risk making the Prophetic Sunnah to clash with what are empirically proven realities, such as leprosy not being contagious at all in the ordinary sense of the word. By extension, the same applies to other illnesses presumed to be “contagious” by ordinary contact and which are not in the reality of the affair.

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<sup>6</sup> It is established throughout history that people have lived with lepers for decades, ate food with them, washed their clothes, and attended to their illness, without succumbing to the disease at all.