

## Why is the udhiyah/qurbani of one sheep not sufficient for the obligation of an entire family?

*In the recent past, there has been an article circulating electronically which has spread confusion regarding the **Hanafi** position on the slaughter of one animal per eligible person during Eidul Adha.*

*This brief article seeks to clarify the matter and to remove the confusion from the minds of the Hanafi followers.*

### **There are three parts to this response:**

1. Explanation of the Hanafi view on this topic.
2. Quoting the proofs for the Hanafi standpoint on this matter.
3. Explanations of the Hadiths that apparently allow one sheep/goat for an entire family.

### **The Hanafi standpoint**

The Hanafi text, Tanwirul Absar states:

'It is binding on every mature muslim who is not a slave and who owns the nisab to slaughter one sheep or one seventh of a big animal [cattle or camel]'

(Raddul Muhtar, vol.6 pg.313-15)

This basically means that to slaughter a sheep/ goat/ or one seventh of a cattle or camel is only **binding (wajib)** on:

- a) A mature, sane muslim,
- b) Who owns the nisab amount as his access assets
- c) And is not a traveler or a slave.

Therefore, if any muslim does not possess the nisab amount, or is immature or insane, or is on journey, he will be absolved of this responsibility.

**If one upon whom the slaughter was binding, feeds an individual who is absolved of this duty, it will be perfectly halal (lawful) for him/her to partake of it.**

From the statement above it is also clear that one goat will only absolve one individual from those on whom this is binding. Similarly, one seventh of a cow/cattle or camel will also only absolve one individual.

**However, this individual may share the meat with others.**

The next section deals with the proofs for this particular verdict.

## Proofs for the Hanafi position

### 1. Individual instructions

There are several authentic narrations in which Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) issued an explicit command to an **individual** to slaughter a goat or sheep.

Sayyiduna Jundub (radiyallahu 'anhu) reports that Nabi (salallahu 'alayhi wasallam) said: 'Whoever slaughtered before the salah, should slaughter another in place of that one. Whoever hasn't yet slaughtered should now slaughter [after the salah] while taking Allah's name.'

(Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 985. Also see: Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 968 & 984)

The **command** in this Hadith is explicitly clear [thereby purporting obligation- wujub], and is evidently directed to the individual, not a household.

In none of these [or other] narrations did he (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) ever say: 'do it [slaughter one sheep/goat only] and the obligation will fall of all your family members.'

Neither did he (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) say:

'Whichever **household** has already slaughtered, should repeat, or which **household** have not yet slaughtered should do so now [after the salah].'

Rather his address was to each [eligible] **individual**.

Hence, it is clearly understood that as far as the obligation is concerned, it is directed separately to each eligible individual. The following narration evidently supports this:

### 2. The obligation is on every single person who can afford it

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) is reported to have said:

'Whoever can afford to slaughter in this day but fails do so should not even come to our Eid salah.'

(Sunan Ibn Majah, hadith: 3123, Mustadrak Hakim, vol.2 pg.389. Also see I'laus Sunan, vol.17 pg.212-217. *Although some experts deem this more correctly attributed to the Sahabi, in this case, that does not make much of a difference. See I'laus Sunan for details.*)

### 3. A sheep/goat cannot supersede animals that are bigger and better

It is undisputed that a camel or cow is better than the sheep or goat.

(Sharh Mukhtasar Tahawi, vol.7 pg. 327)

Furthermore, it is authentically recorded that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) allowed up to seven shares in these big animals; cattle and camels.

(Sahih Muslim, hadith: 3172-3175 & Sharh Ma'anil Athar of Imam Tahawi, vol.2 pg. 275)

Hence, if one sheep was allowed for limitless people of one family, why is that not the case when slaughtering cattle or camels?

*[Note: this logical objection is leveled towards the misunderstanding of the opposing view, and not leveled against the Hadith, Allah forbid. The same applies to the other rational arguments in this document. There is indeed a clear difference between objecting on a*

*Hadith, and objecting on someone's personal understanding of the Hadith. The latter is widely practiced among the scholars. See Sharh Ma'anil Athar, vol.1 pg.395 & Adabul ikhtilaf, pg.124]*

#### **4. Seven sheep equal one camel**

Added to this is that in one narration as reported by Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas (radiyallahu 'anhuma), a Sahabi complained of an entire camel being binding on him, but it had fled and escaped.

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) said:

'Buy seven goats/sheep.' [i.e, in place of the one camel.]

(Musnad Ahmad & Sharh Ma'anil Athar of Imam Tahawi, vol.2 pg. 275. Also see I'laus Sunan, vol.17 pg.203)

**Therefore, if seven sheep are needed to match up to one camel [which is sufficient for seven people] then seven sheep will be needed for seven people. Not one sheep for seven individuals, or one sheep for the whole family!**

#### **5. Clear proof for individual responsibility.**

In a Hadith of Sahih Bukhari, a Sahabi (radiyallahu'anhu) who had slaughtered before the Eid salah offered the following excuse:

'I knew that today was a day of slaughter, and I wished that my animal be the first to be slaughtered in my house.'

This shows that there were others in the house who were going to slaughter as well.

Therefore Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) replied:

'**Your** sheep/goat is not counted as the obligatory one....'

The Sahabi was then instructed to slaughter another animal after the Eid salah.

(Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 955, 968 & 976)

If this animal was on behalf of the obligation of the entire household, Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) would've said:

'The sheep/goat of **your household** is not counted as the obligatory one...'

Thus it is clear that in that home, there were others who were going to slaughter separately.

Moreover, in this particular case, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) would've told this Sahabi, that although his slaughter was invalid, he need not to repeat it since there are others in his house who were going to slaughter anyway, and that would absolve him too.

This was not the case. He was instructed to repeat his slaughter, since it was **obligatory on each individual separately.**

*Therefore according to the Hanafi School, in light of the above, one sheep cannot suffice for more than one individual as far as the wajib obligation is concerned.*

*In fact, none of the four schools have allowed one sheep/goat to suffice for the wajib of others...*

## Explanation of the Hadiths that apparently show one goat sufficing for the whole family

For one to fully understand the issue, it is imperative to take note of the following:

### Three types of slaughter

In the era of Nabi (salallahu'alayhi wasallam) –and even up to now- on Eid day, there were [and still are] three types of slaughter:

#### 1. The obligatory slaughter (which is only binding on those who fulfilled the conditions of obligation).

One of the Hadiths that shows obligation is the following:

Sayyiduna Jundub (radiyallahu 'anhu) reports that Rasulullah (salallahu 'alayhi wasallam) said:

'Whoever slaughtered before the salah, should slaughter another in place of that one.

Whoever hasn't yet slaughtered should now slaughter [after the salah] while taking Allah's name.'

(Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 985)

*In many homes, even to this day, **not** every mature individual is eligible for the **binding slaughter**. Therefore, it is common to have one sheep slaughtered in such a home.*

*The illustrious author of the Grand Hanafi book: Al-Hidayah has explained that the Hadith which shows only one sheep being slaughtered for an entire household, could be referring to a situation like this one. i.e, where there was only one person [usually the bread-winner] in that house who was required to slaughter anyway.*

*(Al-Hidayah, vol.4 pg.445)*

*This is perfectly understandable.*

#### 2. A voluntary slaughter to dedicate the reward to others. (isal thawab).

Sayyiduna Jabir (radiyallahu'anhu) reports that after the Eid salah, a ram was brought to Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) which he slaughtered saying:

'Bismillahi Allahu Akbar, O Allah [accept ] this from my behalf and on behalf of those in my ummah who have not slaughtered.'

(Sunan Abi Dawud, hadith: 2803. See other such Hadiths in Fathul Bari, before hadith: 5553 & I'laus Sunan, vol.17 pg.210-211)

*Nowadays too, people slaughter several animals on the name of [i.e, dedicating the reward to] their near and dear ones, who may be alive or even deceased.*

#### 3. Slaughtering only for the meat, without it being obligatory (due to the slaughterer not fulfilling the conditions of obligation).

*In our era too we find people upon whom the slaughter is not binding also joining in and slaughtering either voluntarily or through donations.*

*Hadiths which state that one sheep was sufficient for the entire household, may be understood in this light too.*

Sayyiduna 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir (radiyallahu 'anhu) reports that [on the day of slaughter] Nabi (salallahu'alayhi wasallam) made over to me a batch of animals to be distributed to my tribe. After doing so, there was one left. Nabi (salallahu'alayhi wasallam) told me to slaughter it myself.

(Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 555 & Sahih Muslim, hadith: 5057)

In this instance, they were clearly 'handed out' animals to join in on the occasion. This explicitly shows that some Sahabah would indeed slaughter, although was not an obligation on them, due to them not being able to afford it.

(Refer: Fathul Bari, hadith: 5555)

Similarly, in the Hadith in Sahih Bukhari cited earlier, in which the Sahabi slaughtered before time, Nabi (salallahu'alayhi wasallam) labeled that sheep [which was slaughtered early] as: a sheep **for meat**, and not the obligatory one.

(Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 983 & 5560)

This illustrates that there was **also** a practice of slaughtering on that day **only for the meat**, and not for the obligation [since these individuals didn't meet the conditions for obligation. Although in this case the Sahabi intended different].

This provides us with more answers to the Hadiths that state that some Sahabah (radiyallahu'anhum) would slaughter only one for their family, or that Nabi (salallahu'alayhi wasallam) had slaughtered just one for his family and one for the entire Ummah. **These were clearly not the obligatory slaughter.**

### **Further explanations from high ranking Scholars**

In addition to the above clarifications, cited below are the explanations given by the senior 'Ulama of the Hanafi madhab (and others) on this issue:

#### **Imam Muhammad (rahimahullah) Demise: 189 A.H.**

Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan (rahimahullah), a direct student of Imam Abu Hanifah (rahimahullah) and the third most senior scholar in the Hanafi Madhab writes:

**[This applies when] 'A man who is in need [i.e, one on whom it is not binding] slaughters an animal to feed himself and his family.**

**This will not suffice for more than one in terms of the obligatory slaughter. In that case, one sheep/goat will only absolve one individual. This is the view of Imam Abu Hanifah and all our Scholars.'**

(Muwatta Imam Muhammad, vol.2 pg.624)

### **Imam Tahawi (rahimahullah) Demise: 329 A.H.**

- Imam Tahawi (rahimahullah) writes that all those narrations which apparently show one small animal sufficing for an entire household are actually **abrogated**. Hence they no more apply as a general rule to the ummah.

(Sharh Ma'anil Athar, vol.2 pg.277)

- Imam Tahawi also explains that some of these narrations were actually '**special case**' scenarios.

(Sharh Ma'anil Athar, vol.2 pg.278)

*There are more examples of such 'special case' scenarios for udhiyah/qurbani in Sahih Bukhari as well, hadith: 983 & 984. Therefore this argument of Imam Tahawi (rahimahullah) is very logical and quite possible.*

- He also argues that if one sheep was sufficient for an entire family, irrespective of their number, then the same should apply to big animals like, cattle and camels!

(Sharh Ma'anil Athar, vol.2 pg.277-278)

*But that is not the case according to any of the scholars.*

### **Imam Tabari (rahimahullah) Demise: 310 A.H.**

Imam Ibn Jarir Tabari (rahimahullah) – a mujtahid himself- explains:

'Some weak-minded individuals have asserted that it is permissible for a group of people to share in the **obligatory** udhiyah/qurbani of **one sheep!** If this was really the case, then none in the entire ummah would need to slaughter ever, since Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) [slaughtered on everyone's behalf when he] said: 'this is on behalf of the whole ummah.'

Imam Tabari adds further: '...there would have been no meaning to the Hadith in which Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasalam) [warned those who despite being eligible, failed to slaughter and] by saying: 'Whoever can afford to slaughter in this day but fails do so should not even come to our Eid salah.'

(Sunan Ibn Majah, hadith: 3123, Mustadrak Hakim, vol.2 pg.389. Also see I'laus Sunan, vol.17 pg.212-217. For Tabari's quote, refer to: I'laus Sunan, vol.17 pg.210)

*i.e, If one sheep could suffice for many, why the need to warn those who didn't slaughter?!*

### **Imam Abu Bakr Jassas (rahimahullah) Demise: 370 A.H.**

Imam Abu Bakr Jassas (rahimahullah) after mentioning some of the above interpretations of Imam Tahawi, adds:

'[Those narrations which mention one sheep for a whole family] refer to **voluntary slaughter**. One is allowed to dedicate the reward for others, with his voluntary slaughter.'

(Sharh Mukhtasar Tahawi, vol.7 pg.328)

### **'Allamah Kasani (rahimahullah) Demise: 587 A.H.**

'Allamah Kasani (rahimahullah) writes:

[The Hadith which mentions Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) slaughtering on behalf of his family or the entire ummah] means that he dedicated the reward to them, **not that this was to absolve them of their obligatory slaughter.**

(Bai'us Sanai', vol.5 pg.70)

### **Imam Abul Hasan Al-Marghinani (rahimahullah) Demise: 593 A.H.**

The author of Al-Hidayah, Imam Abul Hasan Al-Marghinani (rahimahullah) explains such Hadiths to be referring to the one **'bread-winner'** in the home upon whom the udhiyah/qurbani was binding (wajib). He would slaughter one goat/sheep and the rest of the household would benefit therefrom.

(Al-Hidayah, vol.4 pg.445)

### **Moulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (rahimahullah) Demise: 1323 A.H.**

Moulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (rahimahullah) –an extremely well versed personality in the fields of Fiqh and Hadith- explained that the Sahabah (radiyallahu 'anhum) were **generally poor**. Hence, usually only one person per family was duty bound to slaughter. He would then share the meat with the rest of the family. Therefore the narrations state: one person would slaughter for the whole family, i.e, for the whole family to share its meat, not the obligation.

(Al-Kawkabud Durri, vol.4 pg.365)

### **Shaykh Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani (rahimahullah) Demise: 1394 A.H.**

The acclaimed author of I'laus Sunan, Shaykh Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani (rahimahullah) explains that no person is required to slaughter on behalf of his subordinates. [Unlike in the case of Sadaqatul Fitr, where the father is required to pay for his young children as well.] Therefore, the Sahabah would only slaughter one, and not more since that was not binding.

He states that the narrations which mention that the people began to slaughter more than one out of pride actually mean that they began to slaughter on behalf of their children too [whom they were not required to do for].

(I'laus Sunan, vol.17 pg.211)

### **Some people argue that: why is there no mention of the wives of Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi waslalam) slaughtering?**

*For this argument to hold weight, one needs to first establish whether the wives of Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) were actually required to slaughter in the first place!*

*Poverty was the norm in their homes. They hardly ever possessed anything in excess of their needs. Nay! On many occasions they didn't even have what would sufficient for their needs, let alone have surplus...*

Despite this, there are a few examples of more than one member in a home of a Sahabi slaughtering.

## Examples of more than one sheep/goat being slaughtered in the homes of the Sahabah (radiyallahu ‘anhum)

1. In the Hadith of Sahih Bukhari, a Sahabi (radiyallahu’anhū) who had slaughtered before the Eid salah offered the following excuse:

‘I knew that today was a day of slaughter, and I wished that my animal be the first to be slaughtered in my house.’

This shows that there were others in the house who were going to slaughter as well.

(Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 955)

2. Sayyiduna Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari (radiyallahu’anhū) would instruct his daughters to slaughter their own animal themselves.

(Cited by Imam Bukhari without its chain (*ta’liqan*). Hafiz Ibn Hajar after sourcing its chain declared it authentic (*sahih*). Fathul Bari, before hadith: 5559)

3. In a narration of Mustadrak Hakim, recorded with more than one chain, Nabi (sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallama) told Sayyidah Fatimah (radiyallahu ‘anha):

‘O Fatimah, come and see your udhiyah animal being slaughtered.’

(Mustadrak Hakim, vol.4 pg.222. Also see Targhib, hadith: 1622, 1623)

## Ten concluding remarks:

In light of the above facts, we understand:

1. Only one sheep/goat may suffice for one individual as far as the obligatory sacrifice is concerned.
2. It is impossible for a sheep to be worth more shares than a cow or camel.
3. The argument of the opposition actually suggests that there can be more shares in a sheep than a bigger animal, like a cow or camel!
4. In none of the narrations does it state that the sacrifice that Nabi (sallallahu’alayhi wasallam) offered on behalf of others was the binding sacrifice. Rather, these are understood to be the optional sacrifice.
5. Those narrations, which outwardly state that one sheep was slaughtered for the entire family, mean that this was done to **feed** them and not to suffice their obligation.
6. Many Sahabah (radiyallahu ‘anhum) were destitute, and therefore it would be common for the obligation of udhiyah/qurbani to be on just one individual in the family. He would then share this meat with the rest of the household.
7. It is possible that some of the poor households among the Sahabah were given one sheep/goat each as a kind gesture, so that they may join in on the occasion, and not feel deprived because of their circumstance. In these cases, it would’ve been one sheep/goat per household.



8. It is also possible that Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) had given '**special permission**' to some households to slaughter just one for the whole house. Such special permission is usually restricted to the individual whom it was granted to.
9. If one sheep sufficed for the whole family's **obligation**, then why isn't one sheep sufficient for the whole Ummah's **obligation**. [as the Hadith also states that Nabi (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) slaughtered one sheep for the whole Ummah as well.]
10. None of the Scholars state that an entire household can be absolved of the **wajib** udhuyah/qurbani with just one sheep/goat. Those who do allow it, are referring to the sunnah slaughter. This is not the Hanafi view.

*As stated at the beginning, this article is to prove the Hanafi standpoint on this issue, so as to reassure its followers.*

*There are indeed further legitimate views of other madhabs on this issue, which their followers are encouraged to abide by.*

*May Allah Ta'ala guide us all.*

**And Allah Ta'ala Knows best,**

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