

Obligation to respond to one who sneezes

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: Is saying: “May Allaah have mercy upon you,” to the one who sneezes and returning the Salaam a communal obligation (Fard al-Kifaayah) or an individual obligation upon all those who hear it?

Shaykh Muqbil ibn Haadee al-Waadi’ee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)¹: As for returning the Salaam then one person suffices for the group, as is affirmed from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)². As for saying: “May Allaah have mercy upon you,” for the one who sneezes, it is obligatory upon all who hear him to say: “May Allaah have mercy upon you” to him. For the Prophet, (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ)³, said:

إِذَا عَطَسَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَحَمْدُ اللَّهِ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ مَنْ سَمِعَهُ أَنْ يَشْمِتَهُ

“If one of you sneezes and praises Allaah then it is upon everyone who hears him to say: ‘may Allaah have mercy upon you.’”⁴

Or (he said something) with this meaning.

¹ (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

² (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

³ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa ‘alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him and his family

⁴ There is a report narrated by al-Bukhaaree (6223) from Aboo Hurairah (رضي الله عنه), from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) who said: “Allaah likes the act of sneezing and dislikes the act of yawning, so if any one of you sneezes and praises Allaah (says ‘al-hamdu Lillaah’), it is a duty on every Muslim who hears him to say to him, ‘Yarhamuk Allaah (may Allaah have mercy on you).’”