

21917 - Eating from a table

the question

What should a muslim do who wants to follow the sunnah, but the people you are visiting are not following the sunnah, for example they are eating from a dining table. Do I have the right to sit on the floor or should I follow the housefolk?

Detailed answer

It was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) never ate at a table. In Saheeh al-Bukhaari (6450) it was narrated that Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) never ate at a table (khiwaan) until he died and he never ate soft bread until he died."

It says in 'Awn al-Ma'bood: "The khiwaan is a table made of wood with legs on each side; eating from such a table is the habit of those who live a life of luxury, so that they do not have to bend over and tilt their heads when eating."

There is no doubt that it is permissible to eat at a khiwaan or at a high table, and to eat soft bread. But the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) refrained from those things out of humility and as a sign of his giving up the pleasures of this world.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said: "The fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) refrained from eating at tables and eating soft bread meant that he was giving up the pleasures of this world in return for the pleasures of the abiding world (of the Hereafter)."

This does not justify denouncing those who do things like that. If a person visits people and finds them eating at a table, there is nothing wrong with him eating with them at the table. They would find it very strange indeed if he were to go away and sit on the floor on his own; he should not make them do that, rather he should accept their invitation and eat with them. If he explains to them what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, and reminds them of asceticism (zuhd), that is very good. And Allaah knows best.