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Ziyarah {Visitation} and the Laws Pertaining to the Graves and Mosques According to the Shi`ah and Wahhabis

Ziyarah according to Sunnis and Shi`ah

As stated earlier, Wahhabis think that *ziyarah*, like *shafa'ah*, is a polytheistic act of seeking intermediation, and renders a person outside the pale of religion. This is while *ziyarah*, according to the Ahl as-Sunnah, has been considered permissible. In this context, as in many other beliefs as well, Wahhabism is at odds with the Ahl as-Sunnah.

By resorting to uncommon and strange statements, against which the Ahl as-Sunnah have also complained, the Wahhabis have endeavored to portray Wahhabism as a school of thought {*madhhab*}. But Muslims, the Ahl as-Sunnah in particular, cannot permit the inclusion of this group in the list of Muslim schools of thought {*madhahib*}.

The views of Ibn al-Qudamah

Ibn al-Qudamah, a leading figure and *faqih* of the Ahl as-Sunnah, while regarding *ziyarah*, like mourning, as consistent with the laws of Islam, elaborates that *ziyarah* is permissible for men while undesirable {*makruh*} for women. In confirming this view, he has cited the following tradition:

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ زُورَاتِ الْقُبُورِ، الْمُتَّخِذَاتِ عَلَيْهِنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ وَالسُّرُجَ.

Allah curses the visitors of the graves, especially women who light candles on the graves and take them as their place of prostration or mosque.

And he adds,

In this tradition, the phrase, “Allah curses...” implies aversion, and this aversion is more intense for women according to their welfare; for, it is possible that by going outside the house and to be present in the public, the rights of the husband might be violated. The reason behind the curse on female visitors {*za'irin*} is because of the fact that the people during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance {*jahiliyyah*} used to visit the graves. After sometime, they would construct statues and images on the grave. Then, these would be treated as idols and they would pay reverence in front of these. So, they were cursed and the visitation of the women was prohibited. 161

In continuation, he writes:

Visiting graves is *mustahabb* for men. Regarding its being *makruh* or impermissible for women, there are two pertinent traditions. According to a tradition, it is *mustahabb* provided that, like men, they read beside the grave *surahs* of *at-Tawhid (al-Ikhlās)* and *Ya Sin*, and *ayat al-Kursi*, but according to another tradition, it is not permissible. In case of its permissibility, man and woman should recite this salutation:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ، إِنَّا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَاحِقُونَ،
نَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ لَنَا وَلَكُمْ الْعَافِيَةَ.

“Peace be upon you, O believers and Muslims who inhabit these graves. We will join you, God willing. We pray Allah for wellbeing for you and us.”²

Ibn al-Qudamah does not regard the *ziyarah* as permissible for women, saying:

وَتُكْرَهُ لِلنِّسَاءِ، لِأَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ قَالَ: لَعَنَ اللَّهُ زَوَّارَاتِ الْقُبُورِ...

Ziyarah for women is *makruh* (dis commended) because the Prophet said, 'Allah curses the women who visit the graves'.

He believed that the Prophet (s) initially prohibited *ziyarah* for women and the phrase, “Allah curses...” bespeaks of this fact. But afterward, he considered the *ziyarah* for women as permissible, saying:

كُنْتُ نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ زِيَارَةِ الْقُبُورِ، فَزُورُوهَا.

I was prohibiting you from visiting to grave in the past, but now you may do so.

Ibn al-Qudamah also says:

وَرَوَى التِّرْمِذِيُّ أَنَّ عَائِشَةَ زَارَتْ قَبْرَ أَخِيهَا.

Tirmidhi narrated that 'a'ishah visited the grave of her brother ('Abd ar-Rahman).

In the end, Ibn al-Qutadah concludes from the set of the decrees on the permissibility and honor (of *ziyarah*) in the quoted *hadiths* that it is loathsome for the women to perform *ziyarah*.³

The view of 'Allamah Majlisi

In this regard, 'Allamah Majlisi expresses thus:

Ziyarah is good and recommended for men... But concerning the *ziyarah* for women, there are two pertinent opinions. One opinion is that *ziyarah* for women is loathsome... and the other opinion is that it is permissible provided that they cover themselves from the sight of strangers {*ghayr mahram*}.⁴

According to the belief of the Shi`ah, visiting the grave of the faithful is part of the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (s) and all Muslims have consensus of opinion that at the time of death of a believer, he would go to his grave and express condolences to the bereaved ones. It is also stated in the Holy Qur'an, thus:

﴿وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَاتَ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَىٰ قَبْرِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ﴾.

And never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand on his graveside. They indeed defied Allah and His Apostle and died as transgressors.⁵

This verse is about the hypocrites {*munafiqun*} and expresses this point: O Prophet! Do not go to the graveside of the hypocrites as you are doing with respect to the graves of the faithful, and do not pray for their souls nor pray over their graves because they defied Allah and His Apostle and they are transgressors. That *ziyarah* is an indisputable principle and the presence of believers at the graveside of one another is unquestionable although there may possibly be differences of opinion among some Muslim schools of thought concerning the secondary features of *ziyarah*.

Visiting the grave as an excellent sunnah

It is thus recorded in history books attributed to the Ahl as-Sunnah: Every year the Prophet (s) would visit the graves of the martyrs {*shuhada'*} of the Battle of Uhud and recite this prayer {*ziyarah*}:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ.

Peace be on you because you were constant, how excellent, is then, the issue of the abode.

It is also recorded that Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, like the Prophet (s), also used to perform *ziyarah*. The daughter of the Prophet of Islam (s), Hadrat Fatimah az-Zahra ('a) would also visit the martyrs of Uhud two days a week. During his visit to the martyrs, especially in the *ziyarah* to Hamzah and Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, the Holy Prophet (s) would recite this verse,

رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ.

Men who fulfill what they have pledged to Allah.⁶

In addition to this, it is thus recorded in the book, *As-Sahih* that Abu Sa'id al-Khudri would extend salutations to the grave of Hamzah... Umm Salamah, one of the honorable wives of the Prophet (s), and individuals such as Abu Hurayrah, Fatimah Khuza'iyah, and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar al-Khattab also used to perform *ziyarah* to this group of martyrs.⁷

It is thus recorded in the valuable book, *al-Ghadir* under the section, "Virtues and Merits of Abu Hanifah" {*Bab Fada'il wa Manaqib Abu Hanifah*}:

Whenever he would go to Baghdad, Imam ash-Shafi'i would pay a visit to the grave of Abu Hanifah. He would stand beside his grave, offer salutation to him and seek his intermediation for the fulfillment of his needs. Ahmad ibn Hanbal did the same practice with respect to his master (Imam ash-Shafi'i) to such an extent that his son would get astonished. Ahmad ibn Hanbal explained to his son that there is nothing wrong in seeking the intermediation of Imam ash-Shafi'i for the removal of difficulties because he, like the sun, was beneficial to the people.⁸

Were the Prophet (s) and his *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) not like ash-Shafi'i for the people? This is while ash-Shafi'i and Abu Hanifah held the Imams ('a) in high esteem, and Imam ash-Shafi'i acknowledges the sublime station of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a).

Is the practice of these Imams of the Ahl as-Sunnah not a proof for their followers? Do the Wahhabis who regard *ziyarah* as an act of polytheism also consider the Imams of the Ahl as-Sunnah as polytheists?

Notwithstanding the Sunni and Shi`ah traditions regarding the *mustahabb* status of *ziyarah*, there is also another tradition narrated from the Prophet of Islam (s) that if anyone who goes to the cemetery and read *Surat Ya Sin*, the agony of the dead ones shall be mitigated. The Wahhabis, however, inscribed on a tabloid the *hadith*, "Allah curses those who visit the graves" and placed it at the Baqi' cemetery and on the grave of Abu Talib.

Critique: Although the imams of the Ahl as-Sunnah have approved of the practice of visiting the graves

and reckoned it as *mustahabb*, is not the opposition of the Wahhabis nothing but advancing the imperialist objectives and disrupting the unity of Muslims? Does it indicate the fact that they are determined to interpret and explain the religion in the way they like even if it is contrary to the opinions and views of the other Muslim schools of thought? If they really regard it permissible for men to perform *ziyarah*, why cannot male pilgrims visit the Baqi' cemetery at all times, but they are only allowed to do so at a specific time?

Why are Wahhabis determined to destroy all the holy shrines? For example, why in 1216 AH Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, on the order of his father, assaulted Karbala' and after killing and plunder, destroyed the holy shrine there? Or, why in 1217 and 1218 AH did they attack the holy city of Mecca and engage in demolishing the religious relics there? Or, why in 1220 AH under the slogan of "Kill the polytheists" did they invade an-Najaf al-Ashraf? Or, why in later years did they assault the holy city of Medina and raze the holy shrines to the ground in that blessed place—the shrines of great personages such as the father of the Prophet (s), the Imams (‘a) buried in Baqi', and the descendants and wives of the Prophet (s)?⁹

Must not the answer to these questions be sought in Wahhabis' enmity to the oppressed Imams of Baqi' and to the truth of Islam, or are we not compelled to say that they also do not regard as permissible the *ziyarah* for men which is proved by what they are doing in practice? for men which is proved by what they are doing in practice? for men which is proved by what they are doing in practice?

The laws pertaining to the graves and mosques

The Wahhabis are not much inclined to beautify and visit shrines. Based on some traditions some of which we shall quote later, they uphold the unlawfulness of visiting graves, considering their demolition as permissible. The basis of this mindset is traceable to Ibn Taymiyyah and Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab.

The Wahhabis claim that in practicing the religion and in explaining and interpreting its laws, one must take inspiration from the conduct and practice of the caliphs, the Companions {*sahabah*} and Followers {*tabi'un*} because they are closer to the time of revelation and the Prophet (s). We know that this is nothing but an empty claim and their beliefs regarding *ziyarah* is contrary to the sayings and practice of the Companions because the latter did not only visit Uhud and the martyrs of Baqi' but if they ever happened to conquer a territory they would also pay respect to the graves there. For instance, when Syria was conquered during the reign of the second caliph, the Muslims preserved the graves of Hadrat Zakariyya (Zechariah) and Yahya (John the Baptist) (‘a), considering them as holy. Or, when Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) was annexed to the Islamic territories, they preserved the graves beside Masjid al-Aqsa and no one demolished them.

The Wahhabis' opposition to the burial of the dead in a private house or mosque, or near it is another proof of the fact that contrary to their claim, they have adopted a different way which is discordant with the way of the Companions because these very Companions, 'Ali (‘a) in particular, buried the Prophet (s)

in his own house, or according to a certain narration, Fatimah az-Zahra (‘a), who was regarded by the Wahhabis as one of the great Companions, was buried in her own house. The incorrectness of this belief of the Wahhabis will be made clearer to us when we find out that based on historical evidence, many of the prophets (‘a) were buried in *Hijr Isma’il* and *Bayt al-Maqdis* without considering the fact that at the time of their burial, the nature of these sacred sites as places of worship were known.

Why did the Wahhabis not destroy the graves of the Prophet (s) and the Two Sheikhs {shaykhayn} (Abu Bakr and ‘Umar)?

The Wahhabis who play the companion card have never found an opportunity to demolish the graves of the Prophet (s) and the Two Sheikhs {shaykhayn} (Abu Bakr and ‘Umar) because such practice is against the conduct of the Companions of the Prophet (s), not to mention the fact that the Muslim world will be united in opposing them.

But on account its distance from Masjid an-Nabi, opposition to the Shi`ah and the gathering of the pilgrims, they destroyed the Baqi’ cemetery. In 1344 AH corresponding to 1912–1913 CE, the Wahhabis razed to the ground all the domes around Medina such as the domes of the four Imams (‘a) (buried in Medina such as al-Hasan, as-Sajjad, al-Baqir, and as-Sadiq (‘a)); ‘Abbas the uncle of the Prophet (s); the wives of the Prophet (s); ‘Abd Allah the father of the Prophet (s); ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan; Isma’il ibn Ja’far as-Sadiq; and Malik. 10

Therefore, since the Wahhabis do not believe in the visitation {ziyarah} to the graves of the prophets and the saints, considering it as a manifestation of polytheism and man's drifting away from God, they are of the opinion that people must be kept away from this practice and shrines and mausoleums must be destroyed.

Honoring the mosques and praying beside graves

The Wahhabis regard standing in prayer beside graves as an act of polytheism because it will be deemed worshipping those who are buried. Similarly, by citing the tradition below on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, they think that constructing a mosque beside graves is improper and against the religion.

The Prophet (s) said:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قُبُورًا، وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا قَبْرِي عِيدًا، وَصَلُّوا عَلَيَّ؛ فَإِنَّ صَلَاتَكُمْ تَبْلُغُنِي
حَيْثُ كُنْتُمْ.

Do not convert your houses into a graveyard and do not make my grave as a site for festivity {‘id}. Send salutations to me as your salutations, wherever you are, reach me.

This *hadith*, on account of its narrator whose practice of fabricating *habits* is known to all and sundry, is not very reliable, and it cannot be accepted except through explanation and analysis. In explaining this tradition it must be said that perhaps the phrase, “Do not convert your houses into graveyards,” is indicative of the fact that if the remembrance of God is forgotten in a house and spirituality in it dies out, it actually turns into a graveyard, from which no voice comes out.

In the same manner, the phrase, “Do not make my grave a site for festivity {*id*},” maybe a reminder of the reality that since the people usually engage in merrymaking and rejoicing on the eve of feasts and this merrymaking may possibly go against the religion or might result in neglecting God for some moments, festivity and celebration must not be held near the shrine of the Chief of the Prophets (s) because among the requisites of visiting that holy shrine is presence of heart and remembrance of God.

In the same vein, perhaps what is meant by the phrase, “Send salutations upon me,” is when the Holy Prophet (s) wants his followers to send salutations upon him which is perhaps a sort of need, his Companions and followers are more in need of this spiritual gift. Meanwhile, the phrase, “Do not convert your houses into graveyards,” has a health dimension and that is, if a dead body is not buried, after sometime it will emit an offensive odor and cause ailments and harm. And if it were also buried near the site of a residence, by emitting a nauseating smell, it would make life difficult for the residents, or bring about disease and unpleasantness. Of course, this expression does not include the Prophet (s) and the infallible Imams (*'a*) because their bodies and souls, based on this Verse of Purification {*ayat at-tathir*},

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾.

Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification, 1171

are pure and will not cause sickness and plague. Now, if by citing this tradition, there is someone who would protest against the burial of the Prophet (s) and Fatimah az-Zahra (*'a*) in the house, this criticism can be traced back to Abu Bakr and 'Umar who were not members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*), and based on the Verse of Purification, they were not purified. In conclusion, if the Wahhabis find fault with the burial of the dead and regard standing in prayer beside the grave as an act of polytheism, they would have to consider the Companions as polytheists though they were not so. 1272

Argument based on verse 21 of Surah al-Kahf

According to verse 21 of *Surat al-Kahf*, when the Companions of the Cave went to sleep again, the people differed with one another on how to mark the place where they had gone to sleep, and they finally agreed to build a place of worship so that visitors, apart from visiting, could also engage in worshipping God. With the aim of making their belief in the religious impermissibility of constructing

mosque over the graves acceptable, the Wahhabis utilized the verse below although no part of it can actually be taken to substantiate their belief. The verse in question thus states:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ أَعْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُيُوتًا رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَسْجِدًا﴾.

So it was that We let them come upon them, that they might know that Allah's promise is true, and that there is no doubt in the Hour. As they were disputing among themselves about their matter, they said, 'Build a building over them. Their Lord knows best.' Those who had the say in their matter said, 'We will set up a place of worship over them'.¹³

Another argument

At the outset, it must be noted that the Wahhabis oppose building mosques over the graves, regarding it as unlawful and religiously illegitimate. And in order to prove their belief, they resort to any tradition, no matter how weak {*da'if*} it is. For example, they have resorted to the following tradition, whose authenticity has no basis, for whatever purpose it may serve them:

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى؛ إِتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ وَصَالِحِيهِمْ مَسَاجِدَ.

Allah curses the Jews and the Christians for making the graves of their prophets and righteous ones as places of worship.¹⁴

Although both in terms of thought and practice, the Jews and the Christians have committed many errors, they have never worshipped graves. Secondly, this *hadith*—assuming that it is authentic {*sahih*}—does not include Muslims because contrary to the Jews and the Christians, they have never built a mosque over a grave, and if they are ever standing in prayer near a grave, their aim is the pleasure of God and to offer as gift its reward as a gift to the buried person, and if the latter is among the *awliya'*, they are praying to God to let them attain his station and rank.

It seems that through this sort of opposition, Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, in particular, wanted to show their open-mindedness and enlightenment, when they could have shown the greatness of their minds by learning the truth of Islam, Islamic management, means of social welfare and doing things like promoting the setting up learning and research centers and struggling against imperialism.

At the present time also, in order to display their knowledge and intelligence, some neophytes and novices have made holy shrines, mausoleums and supplications as the targets of their speeches. Consciously or unconsciously, they are using their pens for the advancement of imperialist objectives, and thus, pouring oil onto the fires of the enemy.

They have to know, however, that enlightenment does not mean regarding the prayers for *ziyarah* as superstitious and making a mockery of supplications. It rather means to remind the Muslims of their past glory and grandeur; to show to them way of deliverance from the yoke of despotism and to present to them the truth of religion. This method was made manifest when Imam Khomeini (r), throughout the course of the Islamic Revolution, exerted his utmost efforts and dedication along these lines.

Construction of mosques near the graves

With the conditions that we shall mention, Shi`ah *'ulama'* have consensus of opinion regarding the permissibility of mosques near graves and shrines of the prophets (‘a) and righteous people. Some scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah also believe in its permissibility and others are of the opinion that it is loathsome. The Wahhabis, however, in following Ibn Taymiyyah and Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, acknowledge its unlawfulness, and in order to prove their belief, they have resorted to any *hadith*, no matter how weak {*da'if*} it is. For example, they have cited as proof verse 21 of Surah al-Kahf and as we have stated earlier, from this verse the correctness of the Wahhabi belief cannot be deduced whatsoever.

It is said that some distinguished Shi`ah *'ulama'* such as 'Allamah Majlisi, 'Allamah Hilli and Shaykh at-Tusi have decreed that it is loathsome to build a mosque beside a grave if the mosque is built on the grave and the prayer is performed in such a manner that one has to face the grave, otherwise according to them, there is nothing wrong as it is permissible to build a mosque such as these in the vicinity of the holy shrines of Imam ar-Rida (‘a) and Hadrat Fatimah al-Ma'sumah.¹⁵ Some leading Shi`ah figures even opine that it is *mustahabb* to construct a mosque near shrines.

While expressing his opinion on the permissibility of building mosques near shrines under the conditions we have mentioned, 'Allamah Majlisi points to some traditions that confirm the permissibility of praying near the shrines of the Imams (‘a). For instance, he narrates that the Prophet (s) said:

“...وَاللَّهِ لَتُقْتَلَنَّ بِأَرْضِ الْعِرَاقِ وَتُدْفَنُ بِهَا. ” قُلْتُ: “يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! مَا لِمَنْ زَارَ قُبُورَنَا وَعَمَّرَهَا وَتَعَاهَدَهَا؟” فَقَالَ لِي: “يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى جَعَلَ قَبْرَكَ وَقَبْرَ وُلْدِكَ بِقَاعاً مِنْ بَقَاعِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَرَصَةً مِنْ عَرَصَاتِهَا.”

{The Prophet (s) said:} “You shall be killed in Iraq and you shall also be buried there!” I (Imam 'Ali (‘a))

said: O Messenger of Allah! What shall be the reward of the one will visit our graves, beautify them and maintain them?" He (s) said to me: "Your grave and that of your sons are among the edifices of paradise and among its fields."16

It can be deduced from this noble *hadith* that renovating the graves of the Imams ('a) is *mustahabb*. Visiting them shall have otherworldly rewards, and there is nothing wrong to pray in those sacred places.

Elevation of the graves

The Wahhabis, basing their opinions on a tradition, believe that graves must not be elevated beyond the ground level, or that a mausoleum should not be constructed upon graves. Abu'l-Hayyaj narrates that 'Ali ('a) said:

أَلَا أُبْعَثُكَ عَلَى مَا بَعَثَنِي عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ؟ أَنْ لَا تَدَعَ قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلَّا سَوَّيْتَهُ، وَلَا تَمْتَالًا إِلَّا طَمَسْتَهُ.

{O Abu'l-Hayyaj!} Be aware that I shall send you for a mission for which I was dispatched by the Messenger of Allah (s). Your mission is to level to the ground the elevated and ornamented graves and to demolish statues. 17

Thereafter, the author of *Fath al-Majid* infers from this *hadith* that construction of monuments-like domes and statues, and elevation of outstanding and looming graves are not permissible and they must be destroyed.

In reply, it must be said that first of all, as indicated by the book, *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*, the *hadith* is not substantiated. Secondly, this tradition has ruled on the demolition of statues and razing graves to the ground, and this rule cannot be applied to edifices and domes.

Therefore, the Sunnis and the Shi'ah have consensus of opinion that graves must not be stupendous, but it is permissible to build mausoleums over the graves of the righteous and the '*ulama*'. It is recorded in the book, *Al-Ghadir*, that "Malik ibn Anas passed away in 179 AH and his grave is in Medina, in the Baqi' cemetery in particular, and has a small dome and a small building: 18

عَلَيْهِ قَبَّةٌ صَغِيرَةٌ مُخْتَصِرٌ الْبِنَاءِ.

Therefore, it is permissible to construct domes and shrine according to the Maliki '*ulama*'. In the book, *Al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, it is thus stated about the manner of making grave:

وَيُنْدَبُ ارْتِفَاعُ التُّرَابِ فَوْقَ الْقَبْرِ بِقَدْرِ شِبْرٍ.

It is *mustahabb* for the grave to be an inch above the ground. 19

The Wahhabi viewpoint concerning the ornamentation of mosques and holy shrines

This is the underpinning of the Wahhabi creed—if they do not find a supporting document and tradition about a certain case, they will prohibit it. It is for this reason that they do not consider the ornamentation of mosques, such as the Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca) and Masjid an-Nabi (in Medina), with lanterns, chandeliers, etc. as permissible, because they have not found a pertinent *hadith*. In reply, it must be said that if the Wahhabis really give importance to this criterion, then they are not supposed to make use of any manifestation of the modernity because there has not been any traditions about the permissibility of using vehicles, telephones, etc.

Secondly, the fact that we have no *hadith* about the unlawfulness of this kind of issues is perhaps proof that it is permissible and acceptable to use them. In conclusion, it may be said that if ornamentation of mosques does not distract the attention of people but rather encourages them to be present in it, it is therefore permissible and there is nothing wrong with it.

Traveling to for visit mosques

By relying on a certain tradition, the followers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab believe that traveling with the intention of surveying mosques is unlawful. Their main basis is a tradition on the authority of Abu Sa'id who narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s) said:

لَا تُسَدُّ الرِّحَالُ إِلَّا إِلَى ثَلَاثَةِ مَسَاجِدَ: الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ، وَمَسْجِدِي هَذَا، وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى.

You are not supposed to travel except for the visitation {*ziyarah*} of three mosques: Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca), this mosque of mine (Masjid an-Nabi in Medina), and Masjid al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem).

The Wahhabis have concluded from this *hadith* that travel to see other mosques are not lawful.

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab also says:

مَنْ سَافَرَ لِمُجَرَّدِ زِيَارَةِ قُبُورِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ فَهُوَ مُشْرِكٌ.

He who travels only to visit the graves of the prophets and the pious is a polytheist.²⁰

Of course, this *hadith* expresses the importance of these three mosques and one cannot infer from it the unlawfulness of visiting other mosques. Visiting mosques located in Muslim lands is not only not blameworthy but it also acquaints us with the past glory and grandeur of Muslims and thus encourages us to strive hard to regain that honor and dignity.

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1. Ibn al-Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, vol. 2, p. 430.
 2. *Ibid.*
 3. Ibn al-Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, vol. 4, pp. 426, 431.
 4. 'Allamah Majlisi, *Mir'at al-'Uqul*, vol. 14, p. 191.
 5. Surat at-Tawbah (or, Bara'ah) 9:84.
 6. Surat al-Ahzab 33:23. Waqidi, *Al-Maghazi*, vol. 1, p. 312.
 7. Sayyid Ja'far Murtadha, *As-Sahih fi Sirat an-Nabi*, vol. 4, p. 318.
 8. 'Allamah Amini, *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 5, p. 194.
 9. 'Ali Dawani, *Firqeh-ye Wahhabi*, pp. 32-40.
 10. 'Ali Asghar Faqih, *Wahhabiyyan*, p. 407.
 11. Surat al-Ahzab 33:33.
 12. *Fath al-Majid*, p. 261.
 13. Surat al-Kahf 18:21.
 14. *Fath al-Majid*, p. 267.
 15. Fatimah al-Ma'sumah: the sister of Imam ar-Rida ('a) who was buried in Qum. [Trans.]
 16. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 100, p. 120.
 17. *Fath al-Majid*, p. 493.
 18. *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 5, p. 195.
 19. *Al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, vol. 1, p. 420.
 20. *Fath al-Majid*, p. 261.

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