

Celebration and Mourning according to the Shi`ah and the Wahhabis

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Celebrations and festivals The Wahhabis regard any kind of gathering for the passing away or :birth of the awliya' as a sort of worship of the saints of God, equating it to the worship of idols

هِيَ نَوْعٌ مِنَ الْعِبَادَةِ لَهُمْ وَتَعْظِيمِهِمْ .

It is a kind of worship and reverence to them.

In confirming their contention, they have pointed to the practice of the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance {ayyam al-jahiliyyah} who, on any occasion - related to birth or death, good or bad anniversary - would gather in idol-temples and celebrate, or mourn accordingly. Although they believed in One God, they also thought that these products of their own hands (i.e. the idols) had supreme authority on earth, and as such, they would plead for their :intercession

وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ .

And they say, 'These are our intercessors with Allah'. It must be stated that not only the Wahhabis but all Muslims oppose the holding of polytheistic assemblies. But the question is this: Why do the Wahhabis oppose any gathering, even if it is not polytheistic. Is it not because they want to suppress the beliefs of a number of Muslims by portraying their ideas and mindsets as against the religion?

The two festivals {idayn} acceptable to the Wahhabis According to the author of Fath al-Majid, the Wahhabis acknowledge two festivals: 'id al-Fitr and the feast of the day of Friday, and in :(this connection, they have cited this hadith of the Prophet (s

إِنَّ هَذَا يَوْمٌ قَدْ جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ عِيداً

Indeed, Allah has made this day (Friday) as a day of festivity for the Muslims.

In their perspective, merriment and singing are permissible and allowed on these two days as the Prophet (s) has singled out these two feasts and enjoined them. Other feasts, however, must not be held because no pertinent hadith and tradition have been transmitted to us concerning this, and in a bid to prove their claim, they have cited the following tradition on the authority of Thabit ibn @ahhak: He says that one day he asked the Prophet (s) about the slaughtering of camels in fulfillment of a vow in Bawanah. The Prophet (s) said that if there were no idols there; if the practice was not to commit a sin against Allah; and if none of the :customs of the jahiliyyah was observed, then there would be no wrong in fulfilling such a vow

...قَالَ: نَذَرَ رَجُلٌ أَنْ يَنْحَرَ إِبِلًا بِبَوَانَةَ. فَسَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ فَقَالَ: "هَلْ كَانَ فِيهَا وَثْنٌ مِنْ أَوْثَانِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يُعْبَدُ؟" قَالَ: "لَا".
قَالَ: "فَهَلْ كَانَ عِيدًا مِنْ أَعْيَادِهِمْ؟" قَالَ: "لَا". فَقَالَ: "فَإِنَّهُ لَا وَفَاءَ لِنَذْرِ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ

He said: {O Messenger of Allah (s)!} Somebody has made a vow to offer a sacrificial animal in Bawanah." The Prophet (s) asked: "Is there any idol from among the idols of jahiliyyah which is being worshipped there?" He said: "No." The Prophet (s) again asked: "Is there any feast from among the feasts of jahiliyyah being held there?" He said: "No." The Prophet (s) then said: "Fulfill the vow then, as it is correct because one should not fulfill a vow which results in the commission of sins against Allah."

Yes, in any place where there is an idol, or a custom of jahiliyyah is practiced, festivity should not be held or an animal slaughtered as the fulfillment of a vow. But the question that comes to the mind is this: How come the Wahhabis take this as the basis for prohibiting other
?festivities

Respectable places and dates

A duty which has been made incumbent by the Qur'an upon its followers is to reminisce and commemorate the Days of Allah {ayyam Allah} - the days whose association could play a constructive role in the destiny and guidance of human beings; days when truth and justice have been established and religious innovation {bid'ah} has perished. For this reason, Muslims not only honor the Days of Allah but also hold in high esteem places which, in one way or another, demonstrate the illumination of truth and justice and the extinguishment of falsehood and injustice - days such as Friday, 'id al-Fitr and 'id al-Qurban {al-adha}, or the places like

Rawdat an-Nabi, 'Arafah, Mina, Mash'ar al-Haram, Maqam Ibrahim {Station of Abraham}, Safa, and Marwah.

Of course, in addition to these, the Shi`ah honor other holy sites and shrines such as the mausoleums of Imam 'Ali and Imam al-Husayn ('a), and days such as Tasu'a' and 'ashura' {the ninth and tenth days of Muharram}. It is because each of these sacred places and days shows the endeavor and struggle of men who offered their lives in the path of exalting Islam. Therefore, the Wahhabis would have the right to protest against visitations to these blessed places and the commemoration of the Days of Allah only if these activities did not have all those spiritual and religious effects, and they would be correct to find fault with holding celebrations and ceremonies only if doing so entailed committing sins against God. Of course, their reason behind finding fault with these kinds of festivities, as we have stated before, is the ,hadith

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا قَبْرِي عِيدًا

Do not make my grave a site for festivity {id}.

In explaining this expression, we said that the Prophet (s) had prohibited his followers to hold celebrations beside his sacred tomb in case at that beloved place Muslims would end up committing acts which would be far from earning the pleasure of Allah and by which the dignity and station of the person buried there would not be properly observed. Distinguished Shi`ah 'ulama' such as Sayyid Muhsin Amin in Kashf al-Irtiyab and Sayyid 'Abd Allah Shubbar in Masabih al-Anwar, apart from affirming the above point, do not regard this .hadith as the proof for prohibiting these kinds of ceremonies

Festivity {id} in the Qur'an

A scrutiny of and reflection on the Qur'an indicate to us the point that it has divided days into two categories: 1. Blessed and festive days: These are days which encompass the material and spiritual blessings of people, which make it fitting for them to rejoice in recognition of these blessings and to express gratitude to God. One such day is when at the request of Hadrat '«sa (Jesus) ('a) a table spread full of food and drink was sent down, as the Qur'an :states

قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيدًا لِأَوَّلِنَا وَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً مِنْكَ وَارْزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ
الرَّازِقِينَ .

Said Jesus son of Mary, 'O Allah! Our Lord! Send down to us a table from the sky, to be a festival for us, for the first ones and the last ones among us and as a sign for You, and provide for us; for You are the best of providers'.

Similarly, one may point to the day when the people {qawm} of Musa (Moses) ('a) were endowed with the mercy and guidance of God, the Exalted, and saved from misguidance, and :°adrat Musa ('a) was enjoined to keep alive the memory and to commemorate these days

وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

And remind them of Allah's {holy} days. There are indeed signs in that for every patient and {grateful} {servant

Ominous and unblessed days: The days when God has withheld His mercy and grace from .2 His servants and afflicted them with wrath and calamity, such as the days when the fierce :eight-day wind struck the people of 'ad and sent this community to perdition

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَجَسَاتٍ

So We unleashed upon them an icy gale during ill-fated days.

Therefore, there is nothing wrong if, in following the Qur'an, we regard the day of the beginning of the Holy Prophet's (s) mission as a blessed day and the day of his passing away as an ill-fated day.

Now, if the Wahhabis oppose this understanding, these questions should be posed to them: When the Qur'an regards the day of guidance and enlightenment of the people of Musa ('a) as one of the Days of Allah, treating it as incumbent to commemorate such a day, is the day of the appointment of the Holy Prophet (s) for the guidance of the entire humanity not blessed and auspicious? Are we not supposed to honor the memory and commemorate that day and to ?rejoice on it

Festivity in Islamic narrations

After elucidating the viewpoint of the Qur'an about 'id, there is no need to pursue this discussion by referring to traditions and history because it will require more time, which is beyond the scope of this book. In order to clarify the view of the Imams ('a), however, we shall
:(suffice to mention a hadith from Hadrat 'Ali ('a

إِنَّمَا هُوَ عِيدٌ لِمَنْ قَبِلَ اللَّهُ صِيَامَهُ وَشَكَرَ قِيَامَهُ؛ وَكُلُّ يَوْمٍ لَا يُعْصَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ فَهُوَ عِيدٌ

Verily, it is a festivity for the one whose fast is accepted by God and whose prayer is taken as a gratitude, and any day in which none of the commandments of God is violated is a day of festivity.

In a nutshell, the traditions which have been narrated from the infallible Imams ('a) and whose authenticity has been confirmed by the scholars of hadith {muhaddithun} place particular emphasis on four festivities: 'id al-Adha, 'id al-Fitr, Friday, and 'id al-Ghadir. It must be noted that the Sunnis and the Shi`ah differ only on the last festivity, and it is the Shi`ah who regard that day as a day of honor and dignity. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) considers that day to be more sublime and greater than all the feasts, urging his followers to engage in these four acts on that day: remembrance of God, fasting, acts of worship, and sending benedictions upon Muhammad and his progeny {al} ('a). Then, the Imam ('a) adds: It is the day when not only the Prophet (s) enjoined 'Ali ('a) to reckon it as a day of festivity, but the other prophets ('a) have also called on their respective successors {awsiya'} to celebrate that day. Therefore, gatherings for celebration and merriment which are accompanied by the remembrance and recollection of God, the Prophet (s) and leaders of religion ('a) cannot be regarded as irreligious, and no decree should be issued concerning their religious illegitimacy. On one of the days when 'id Ghadir Khumm fell on a Friday, Imam 'Ali ('a) said: Two great .feasts have fallen on this day

The statements of al-Mawardi

Abu 'Ali al-Mawardi is one of the 'ulama' and writers in the 6th century AH who also held position and rank in the 'Abbasid Caliphate. While pointing to the method of administering a country and the government's duty over the people, he thus writes about days of festivity: One of the responsibilities of the government is to promote the conduct of devotional acts on

Fridays and of feast days {a'yad} as well as issues related to jihad, and to try and prevent any disruption to the conditions for its performance because these are divine rights must be kept. This statement indirectly implies that during the days of the caliphs festivities were held, otherwise it would have been absurd to talk about the feasts and the conditions for holding them.

The reason behind the Wahhabis' sensitivity to festivity and lamentation {'aza} The question that springs to the mind concerning the subjects discussed earlier is this: Why are the Wahhabis sensitive to the holding of gatherings for festivity and lamentation? What is wrong if Muslims are glad and joyful on the birthday or commencement of the Prophetic mission of their Prophet (s), and mourn on the day of his passing away?

If they raise the absence of pertinent hadith as their pretext, it must be noted in the first place that these affairs are not explicit acts of worship that require the decree and order of the Prophet (s). Secondly, the Companions of the Prophet (s) and their Followers {tabi'un} have not regarded these kinds of assemblies as unlawful {haram}, and Shi'ah sources have also issued decrees on the permissibility of holding them provided that sins are not committed therein. Some authors opine that the reason behind the Wahhabis' opposition is that they are afraid lest the gatherings for celebrating the event of Ghadir Khumm become widespread and the mourning ceremony for the tragedy in Karbala' become popular.

Mourning according to Islam and Wahhabism

Mourning and lamentation are not new phenomena in Islam. From the beginning, Muslims have been weeping for the death or martyrdom of their beloved ones. For example, one may refer to the martyrdom of Hamzah the Doyen of the Martyrs {sayyid ash-shuhada'} and the demise of 'adnat Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with them). One may equally refer to gatherings for passion plays and bereavement that were held afterward in mourning for Imam Husayn ('a).

In spite of the absence of prohibitions for holding mourning and bereavement ceremonies, the Wahhabis regard weeping and expressions of grief as unlawful {haram} and among the practices of jahiliyyah; of course, they have excluded lamentations during the early period of Islam from this ruling. In a bid to depict this belief as well-substantiated, they resort to traditions narrated from the Prophet (s), among which is the following

إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ: أَرْبَعٌ فِي أُمَّتِي مِنْ أَمْرِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ لَا يَتَرَكُونَهُنَّ: الْفَخْرُ بِالْإِحْتِسَابِ، وَالطَّعْنُ فِي الْأَنْسَابِ،

وَالْاِسْتِسْقَاءُ بِالنُّجُومِ، وَالنِّيَاحَةُ

Verily, the Messenger of Allah (s) said: Four (things from among the practices of jahiliyyah) in my ummah are not abandoned: taking pride in ancestors, finding fault with fathers and forefathers, seeking for rain based on astrology, and mourning for the dead {an-niyahah}. Then, in interpreting the word, "an-niyahah," they have said

النِّيَاحَةُ، أَي رَفَعَ الصَّوْتِ بِالنَّدْبِ عَلَى الْمَيِّتِ. وَذَلِكَ يُنَافِي الصَّبْرَ الْوَاجِبَ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَبَائِرِ لِشِدَّةِ الْوَعِيدِ وَالْعُقُوبَةِ عَلَيْهَا .

Niyahah means raising the voice over the dead in lamentation and weeping... This sort of mourning is inconsistent with obligatory patience. And it is among the major sins which entails .severe chastisement and tribulation

A critique of the quoted tradition

Without considering the authenticity or otherwise of the quoted tradition, it can be said that this tradition refers to the lamentation of some women during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance {ayyam al-jahiliyyah}. Their occupation was to gather in the houses of the bereaved and to mourn in a particular way. The inappropriate behavior and conduct of these women prompted the Prophet (s) to forbid us from wailing like them; otherwise, there is nothing wrong with mourning per se from the viewpoint of Islam. It must be stated that although patience is laudable and among the attributes of the faithful, there are no grounds for its being obligatory. That is, if a person fails to endure a tragedy, it .does not amount to committing a major sin

The other argument of the Wahhabis

Another tradition that the Wahhabis narrate from the Messenger of Allah (s) to which they have :resorted is this

إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ لَيُعَذَّبُ بِبُكَاءِ الْحَيِّ عَلَيْهِ... وَمِثْلُ أَنَّ الْمَيِّتَ يُعَذَّبُ فِي قَبْرِهِ بِالنِّيَاحَةِ عَلَيْهِ .

Indeed the dead experience agony due to the weeping of the living for them... Similarly, the dead is chastised in their graves due to mourning for them.

In criticizing this alleged hadith, two points must be highlighted: (1) the narrator of this hadith, Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah is a person whose sayings are not very reliable in the opinion of scholars of hadith, and (2) as stated by Sayyid Murtada, even granting that the act of the mourners is against religion and entails tribulation for the dead, this is not only against reason :but also contrary to the text of the Qur'an

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

Nor doth any laden bear another's load. Therefore, the belief of the Wahhabis concerning weeping, mourning and expressing grief over the dead is not only against reason {aql} and religious sources {naql} but also repugnant to the policy of Islam which is to keep filthy habits and reproachable manners away from Islamic society. Islam accepts mourning per se, but it opposes any obnoxious custom and manner in mourning assemblies, whether before or after the advent of Islam

The precedence of mourning

Earlier, we talked briefly about the precedence of mourning in Islam and stated that the Prophet (s) urged the women among the Companions to mourn for Hamzah the Doyen of the Martyrs {sayyid ash-shuhada'} or Khadijah al-Kubra may Allah be pleased with them). Now, with the aim of further informing the readers, we shall mention some other instances:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) exhorted the Companions to weep for the martyrdom of Ja'far ibn Abi :Talib at-Tayyar and the like of him

وَعَلَىٰ مِثْلِ جَعْفَرٍ فَلْتَبْكِي الْبَوَاكِي

For the like of Ja'far, let weepers weep.

2. Based on the traditions, the Prophet (s) allowed Umm Salamah to participate in the mourning ceremony. 3. According to Anas ibn Malik, when the Prophet (s) was faced with the :protests of some Companions against weeping over the death of his son Ibrahim, he (s) said

يَا بَنَ عَوْفٍ! إِنَّهَا رَحْمَةٌ؛ الْعَيْنُ تَدْمَعُ، وَالْقَلْبُ يَحْزَنُ، وَلَا نَقُولُ إِلَّا مَا يُرْضِي رَبَّنَا .

O Ibn 'Awf (epithet of Malik ibn Anas)! Crying is a mercy. The eyes cry and the heart gets sad, and certainly we do not say anything which will displease our Lord.

4. When the Prophet (s) arrived in Medina, he paid a visit to the grave of his mother and wept :for the memory of her great soul such that those who were present also shed tears

إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ زَارَ قَبْرَ أُمِّهِ فَبَكَى، وَأَبْكَى مَنْ حَوْلَهُ.

When 'Uthman ibn Maz'un passed away, the Prophet (s) removed the shroud adjacent to his .5 face, kissed the portion between his eyes, and wept a lot. When the coffin was raised, the Prophet (s) said: "O 'Uthman, blessed are you! The world did not fascinate you and you also did :become attached to it

إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ لَمَّا مَاتَ عُثْمَانُ بْنُ مَظْعُونٍ كَشَفَ الثَّوْبَ عَنْ وَجْهِهِ ثُمَّ قَبَّلَ مَا بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ، ثُمَّ بَكَى طَوِيلًا. فَلَمَّا رُفِعَ السَّرِيرُ قَالَ: طُوبَى لَكَ يَا عُثْمَانُ؛ لَمْ تَلْبَسْكَ الدُّنْيَا وَلَمْ تَلْبَسْهَا.

When the Prophet (s) passed away, °adrat Fatimah az-Zahra ('a) wept profusely; also, Imam .6 Zayn al-'abidin ('a) used to weep for the martyrs of Karbala' for forty years after the event of 'Ashura'.

Given all the pieces of evidence presented whose authenticity is attested by historical accounts, it seems that the saying of Ja'far Murtada, a contemporary researcher, is correct. He believes that "Probably, the reason behind the Wahhabis' prohibition of mourning is to prevent (the practice of weeping for Fatimah az-Zahra ('a

Types of elegy writing

1. Laudable and permissible {mubah}: Pleasant expressions of melancholic tones and words. For example, during the heavenly ascension of her esteemed father, Hadrat az-Zahra ('a) thus :said

يَا أَبَتَاهُ! مَنْ رَبُّهُ نَادَاهُ! يَا أَبَتَاهُ! مَنْ جِبْرِيلُ نَعَاهُ! يَا أَبَتَاهُ! أَجَابَ رَبًّا دَعَاهُ

*O my dear father! Blessed are you for being in the proximity of God, taking your abode beside
!Jibra'il, responding to the call of the Lord*

Blameworthy and unlawful {haram}: Clapping the hands; shouting and uttering offensive words; tearing off the shirt; harming the face; and making lamentation as one's occupation. The Prophet (s) thus says about those women who took lamentation as their occupation: "If they would not repent, they will be thrown into hellfire wearing special garments for hell-dwellers."

Note: The Wahhabis have overlooked all the hadith and historical proofs confirming the principle of mourning in Islam but instead resorted to a hadith about the crying of a group of people over a Jewish woman: The Messenger of Allah (s) one day passed by a locality and saw a Jewish family crying over a dead woman. He (s) said: They are shedding tears for the dead while the person in the grave is tormented.

Although this tradition is about a Jewish woman and does not relate to the Muslims, it must be said that if the said woman was being chastised, it was because her thoughts and works were not good and not due to the weeping of her family over her grave. So, the purport of the Prophet's (s) statement is something different from the idea of the Wahhabis.

The other pretext of the Wahhabis is this tradition: When 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was fatally wounded, his slave was groaning - "Oh, Brother! Oh, Friend!" The caliph of the time prohibited him from doing so, saying: "Did you not hear that the Prophet (s) has forbidden groaning and weeping {nudbah}?" This point has some problems such as the following:

1. In general, the origin of the tradition is doubtful and 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas has denied it.
2. The purport of the hadith is ambiguous and its instruction is not clear.
3. It is not clear which weeping in which manner and for whom the Prophet (s) regarded as impermissible

Mourning in the Shi`ah and Sunni schools {madhahib}

In the books of jurisprudence under the section of commercial issues {matajir}, by citing hadiths from Usul al-Kafi and Man La Yahduruh al-Faqih, which have been narrated in condemnation of lamentation {niyahah}, Shi`ah jurists {fuqaha} have issued a religious edict {fatwa} on the unlawfulness of the women's engagement in lamentation as an occupation. The opinion of the 'Allamah in the book, Qawa'id, and the author of the book, Mafatih al-Karamah, :like many other Shi`ah fuqaha, is as follows

وَيَحْرُمُ أَجْرُ النَّائِحَةِ بِالْبَاطِلِ، وَيَجُوزُ بِالْحَقِّ .

The occupation of those who are engaged in false {batil} elegizing is haram while the occupation of those who are engaged in true {bi'l-haqq} elegizing is halal.

In defining “false elegizing”, the fuqaha have said that it means lying or committing sins while performing an elegy. According to the fuqaha, an elegy is haram if it has false motive or manner; otherwise, we have many traditions indicating that great personalities in the world have wept over the death of their beloved ones. For example, Ibn al-Qudamah narrates that Hadrat Fatimah az-Zahra ('a) and Abu Bakr kissed the tomb or the corpse of the Prophet (s) and wept over his grave. Anas thus says: “When I saw the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (s) on the tomb of her father, the tears in her eyes were profuse.” 'A'ishah said: “Abu Bakr approached the remains of the Messenger of Allah, removed the shroud, kissed the face of the Prophet (s) and wept.” It has been narrated from 'Ali ('a) that 'adrat Fatimah ('a) took a handful of soil from the grave of the Prophet (s) and rubbed it over her eyes. Of course, there are also hadiths about unlawful mourning which have been :transmitted to us. As a specimen, we shall quote some cases

قَالَتْ أُمُّ عَطِيَّةَ: أَخَذَ عَلَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ الْبَيْعَةِ أَنْ لَا نَنُوحَ

Umm 'Atiyyah said: “During the pledge of allegiance to the Messenger of Allah (s), he asked us not to perform lamentation.” It is said that this hadith indicates that the Muslims have to avoid lamentation according to the practice of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance {ayyam al-jahiliyyah}.

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ قَالَ: لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ صَرَبَ الْخُدُودَ وَشَقَّ الْجُيُوبَ وَدَعَا بِدَعْوَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ .

Abu Musa (al-Ash'ari) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (s) says: “He who at the time of tragedy harms his face, tears off his shirt, and wails like that of the jahiliyah does not belong to us.” Ibn al-Qudamah thus adds: From this hadith a subject which we had stated earlier can be deduced and it becomes clear which form of mourning is haram, and if mourning is consonant with the natural disposition and human affection and is not beyond the ambit of reason {‘aql} and religion (or law) {sharh}, there is nothing wrong with it. Then, Ibn al-Qudamah elaborates, saying: Mourning is permissible for men while undesirable

.(but not unlawful) {makruh} for women