

The etiquette the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) followed when visiting graves

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Tawassul

Question: There is a grave in our village which is said to belong to one of the righteous people. A house was built over this grave and there are two people appointed to take care of it. These people inherited this mission from their fathers. They tell people: "This night, the dweller of this grave said so and so and asked for so and so. They have attracted people's hearts that live beside the grave. People believe everything that is said by these two people. Therefore, people make Tawaaf (circumambulation) around the grave, sacrifice animals for its sake, etc. What is the ruling on a person who thinks that this Walee (pious person) brings benefit or causes harm? Is it permissible to vow or sacrifice for the sake of this Walee? What should someone do if they know that these things contradict the Sharee'ah (Islamic law) especially if they live with these people?

Answer: The guidance of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)¹ in visiting the graves is clear in Saheeh Hadeeths (Hadeeths that have been transmitted by people known for their uprightness and exactitude; free from eccentricity and blemish). Muslim reported in his Saheeh Book of Hadeeth that Buraydah (رضي الله عنه)² said: **The Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) used to teach them when they went out to the graveyard to say: 'Peace be upon the inhabitants of the graves from among believers and Muslims. Verily we will, Inshaa'allaah (if Allaah wills), join you. I beg of Allaah peace for us and for you. You have preceded us. We ask Allaah to give us and you good.'** Imaam Ahmad and Al-Tirmidhee related, and the latter considered it to be Hasan (a Hadeeth whose chain of narration contains a narrator with weak exactitude, but is free from eccentricity or blemish), on the authority of Ibn `Abbas (رضي الله عنهما)³ that he said: **The Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) passed by the graves at Al-Madinah. He turned his face towards them and said: 'May you be granted safety, O dwellers of the graves. May Allaah forgive us and you. You have preceded us, and we are to follow.'** The four Rightly-Guided Caliphs followed the example of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), as did those who followed them in righteousness. If those who visit graves go there to make Du'aa' (supplication) to Allaah believing that this may be more beneficial in answering their Du'aa'

¹ (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

² (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

³ (رضي الله عنهما) (rad iyallaahu `anhumaa) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with them both

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and want to use them as a means or intercessors with Allaah, then these deeds are prohibited as they are not ordained by the Sharee'ah. Means have the same ruling as ends. Allaah (Exalted be He) says: [Say: (O Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to polytheists, pagans) "Call upon those whom you assert (to be associate gods) besides Allaah, they possess not even an atom's (or a small ant's) weight either in the heavens or on the earth, nor have they any share in either, nor there is for Him any supporter from among them.] The Ayah (Qur'aanic verse) denotes that those who are called upon beside Allaah are either possessors or not; if they are not possessors, then they may be partners; if they are not partners, they may be helpers; if they are not helpers, they may be intercessors without Allaah's permission. All four things are false and invalid. Therefore, we can only go by the fifth thing i.e. no one intercedes except with Allaah's permission. The saying of Allaah (Exalted be He): [...and they cannot intercede except for him with whom He is pleased] proves that Allaah's satisfaction and permission to the one who intercedes is a condition for Shafaa'ah (intercession). Those are the two conditions for Shafaa'ah. The Sahaabah (Companions of the Prophet, (رضي الله عنهم)⁴) did not perform Tawassul (supplicating to Allaah through a means) with the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). They used to ask him to make Du'aa' to Allaah for them. Seeking the help of a living present person who is able to do so is permissible provided that he is not asked any thing that is due to Allaah. This is the rule for those who are alive. On the contrary, dead people should not be asked or sought as intercessors as this is one of the avenues that lead to Shirk (associating others with Allaah in His Divinity or worship).

As for the people who stay beside graves, they are of two kinds:

Firstly: In case that the aim of staying beside the grave is to offer `Ibaadah (worship) to Allaah Alone, it is still not permissible as it combines between the sin of staying beside the grave and the sin of offering `Ibaadah to Allaah beside the graves. This is also one of the ways that leads to Shirk that was prohibited by the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم). As for the prohibition of staying beside graves, Al-Tirmidhee related a hadeeth in his book al-Jami` and considered it to be Saheeh on the authority of Aboo Waqid Al-Laythee (رضي الله عنه) that he said: **We went out with Allaah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) on the campaign to Hunayn and we had just abandoned Kufr (disbelief) for Islam. Mushriks (those who associate others with Allaah in worship) had a Sidra (lote-tree) that they would stay there and hang their arms on, called Dhat Anwat. When we passed by a Sidra, we asked: 'O Messenger of Allaah, will not you make for us another Dhat Anwat just like their Dhat Anwat?' Allaah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: 'Allaah is the Most Great! Verily these are the ways of earlier nations. By the One (Allaah) Who holds my soul in His Hand, You have said exactly as the Children of Israel said to Moosa (Moses, (عليه السلام)⁵): 'Make for us a god just as their gods.' He said: 'Verily you are a people who know not.' Certainly you will follow the ways of those who were before you.'**

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) told them that asking for a tree to stay beside and to hang their arms on it seeking its blessings is similar to the request of the Children of Israel when they

⁴ (رضي الله عنهم) (rad iyallahu 'anhum) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with them

⁵ (عليه السلام) ('alaihi-salaam) Peace be upon him

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asked Musa to make a god for them. Staying beside graves is similar to that. Al-Tirmidhee, Aboo Daawood and Ibn Maajah related in their Sunan (Hadeeth compilations classified by jurisprudential themes) that Aboo Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) said: **Do not make your houses graves, and do not make my grave a place of celebration but invoke blessings on me, for your blessings reach me wherever you may be.** Offering `Ibaadah to Allaah beside graves is prohibited by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim related on the authority of Aboo Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) that the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **Let Allaah destroy the Jews for they have taken the graves of their Prophets as places of worship.** The prohibition of using graves as Masjids (mosques) includes using them as places for offering `Ibaadah to Allaah or to anyone other than Allaah whether it is in a Masjid or not.

Coming to the dweller of this grave and making Du'aa' to him believing that they bring benefit and cause harm is an act of Al-Shirk-ul-Akbar (major form of associating others in worship with Allaah). Whoever indulges in such practice is either aware of its ruling or not.

In case that they persist in committing such grave sin though they know its ruling, they are regarded as Mushriks who are out of the fold of Islam. If he does not know the truth, he has to be shown the truth. On the other hand, in case that they accept the truth after being pointed out to him, they are not to be blamed. But in case that they insist on their views, they are regarded as Mushriks. There are many proofs for this. Allaah (Exalted be He) says: **[Say: (O Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to these Mushrikoon and Kaafiroon): "O Al-Kaafiroon (disbelievers in Allaah, in His Oneness, in His Angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Day of Resurrection, and in Al-Qadar)!"I worship not that which you worship],** Allaah (Exalted be He) says **["And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him."]** It is reported in a Hadeeth Qudsee (Revelation from Allaah in the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه وسلم) words): **If anyone does anything in which he associates anyone else with Me, I shall abandon him with one whom he associates with Allaah.** Moreover, it is impermissible to build a decorated house over the grave as it is a means of glorifying the person who is buried in it. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) advised Alee ibn Aboo Taalib (رضي الله عنه) saying: **Spare no portrait unwiped out, and leave not a high grave unlevelled.**

It is authentically reported that: **He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) forbade plastering graves, using them as sitting places (for people), or building over them.** The duty of individual Muslims towards the foregoing is pointed out by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in his saying: **Whoever, among you, sees something abominable should rectify it with his hand; and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue; and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of Faith.** This building should be removed if it is possible to do so. As to living among these people, one should not live among them as long as they can live in another place. Allaah (Exalted be He) says: **[So keep your duty to Allaah and fear Him as much as you can].** Regarding sacrificing and vowing for the sake of a Walee, doing so is tantamount to Al-Shirk-ul-Akbar because these acts are forms of `Ibaadah and Rights of Allaah that should not be dedicated to any one other than Him. Allaah (Exalted be He) says: **[Say (O Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم)): "Verily, my Salaah (prayer), my**

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sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allaah, the Lord of the 'Alameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists). "He has no partner. And of this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims."] The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) says: "Whoever vows that he will be obedient to Allaah, should remain obedient to Him; and whoever made a vow that he will disobey Allaah, should not disobey Him." And a man vowed to slaughter camels in Buwanah and asked the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) about that. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: "Did the place contain any idol worshipped in pre-Islamic times?" They (the people) said: "No." He asked: "Was any pre-Islamic festival observed there?" They replied: "No." The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: "Fulfil your vow, for a vow to do an act of disobedience to Allaah must not be fulfilled, neither must one do something over which a human being has no control."

May Allaah grant us success. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions.

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