36863 - Islamic Guidelines for Visitors to the Prophet’s Mosque

the question

I know a group of brothers who are going to visit the Prophet’s Mosque after they do Hajj this year. They would like some advice and guidelines from you.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

O you who come to the City of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), you have come to a good place and you are going to earn great reward. May Allaah accept your righteous deeds and fulfil your greatest hopes. Welcome to the land of Hijrah and victory, the land of the Chosen Prophet, the land to which the righteous Sahaabah migrated and the home of the Ansaar.

There follow a few words of advice to those who want to visit the Mosque of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him):

1 – O you who come to Madeenah, you are in a place which, after Makkah, is the best and noblest of all places, so respect it as it should be respected; honour its sanctity and holiness and observe the best etiquette therein. Know that Allaah has warned of the severest punishment for those who commit evil therein. It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Madeenah is a Haram (sanctuary), so whoever commits evil therein or gives protection to an evildoer, the curse of Allaah, the angels and all of mankind may be upon him. Allaah will not accept any obligatory or naafil deed from him on the Day of Resurrection.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1867; Muslim, 1370.

So whoever commits any evil action or offers protection to any evildoer who seeks his help is exposing himself to a humiliating punishment and the wrath of the Lord of the Worlds.

One of the most serious of evil deeds that violate its purity is openly doing acts of bid’ah and spoiling its atmosphere with myths and false ideas, and contaminating its pure land with the spread of articles which promote bid’ah, books which contain shirk, and all kinds of reprehensible and haraam actions which go against Islamic sharee’ah. The evildoer and the one who gives him protection are equally guilty of sin.

2 – Visiting the Prophet’s Mosque is an act that is Sunnah; it is not an obligatory action and has nothing to do with Hajj, nor is it an action that is required in order for Hajj to be complete. All the ahaadeeth which say that it is connected to Hajj or that say that visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is connected to Hajj are fabricated and false. Whoever travels to Madeenah for the purpose of visiting the Mosque and praying therein, his intention is acceptable and his efforts will be rewarded. Whoever travels there only for the purpose of visiting the graves and seeking the help of their occupants, his intention is haraam and his actions are reprehensible. It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Do not travel to visit any mosques except three: al-Masjid al-Haraam [in Makkah], this Mosque of mine [in Madeenah] and al-Masjid al-Aqsa [in Jerusalem].” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1189; Muslim, 1397.

It was narrated from Jaabir (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The best places to which a person may travel are this Mosque of mine, and the Ancient House (i.e., the Ka’bah).” Narrated by Ahmad, 3/350; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, 1648.

3 – Prayers offered in the Mosque of Madeenah bring a multiple reward, both obligatory and naafil prayers according to the more correct of the two scholarly opinions. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “One prayer in this Mosque of mine is better than one thousand prayers offered anywhere else, except al-Masjid al-Haraam.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1190; Muslim, 1394.

But offering naafil prayers at home is better than offering them in the mosque, even if the reward for offering them in the Mosque is multiplied, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah

be upon him) said, “The best prayers are those that a man offers in his home, apart from the prescribed [obligatory] prayers.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 731; Muslim, 781.

4 – The visitor to this great Mosque should note that it is not permissible to seek blessing (barakah) from any part of the Prophet’s Mosque, such as the pillars, walls, doors, mihraab or minbar, by touching or kissing them. It is also not permitted to seek blessing from the Prophet’s hujrah (chamber) by touching it, kissing it, or wiping one's clothes against it or to circumambulate it. Whoever does any of these things has to repent and not repeat it.

5 – It is prescribed for the one who visits the Prophet’s Mosque to pray two rak’ahs in the Rawdah or whatever he wants of naafil prayers, because it is proven that there is virtue in doing so. It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The area between my house and my minbar is one of the gardens (riyaad, sing. rawdah) of Paradise, and my minbar is on my cistern (hawd)” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1196; Muslim, 1391.

And it was narrated that Yazeed ibn Abi ‘Ubayd said: “I used to come with Salamah ibn al-Akwa’ and he would pray by the pillar which was by the mus-haf, i.e. in the Rawdah. I said, ‘O Abu Muslim, I see that you are keen to pray by this pillar!’ He said, ‘I saw that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was keen to pray here.’” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 502; Muslim, 509.

Being keen to pray in al-Rawdah does not justify being aggressive towards people or pushing the weak aside, or stepping over their necks.

6 – It is prescribed for the visitor to Madeenah and for the one who lives there to go to the Mosque of Quba’ and pray there, following the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and seeking the reward of ‘Umrah. It was narrated that Sahl ibn Haneef said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever goes out until he comes to this mosque – meaning the Mosque of Quba’ – and prays there, that will be equivalent to ‘Umrah.” Narrated by Ahmad, 3/437; al-Nasaa’i, 699; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb, 1180, 1181.

According to Ibn Maajah: “Whoever purifies himself in his house, then comes to the Mosque of Quba’ and prays there, he will have the reward of ‘Umrah.” Narrated by Ibn Maajah, 1412.

In al-Saheehayn it is narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to go to the mosque of Quba’ every Saturday, walking or riding, and he would pray two rak’ahs there. Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1191; Muslim, 1399

7 – For the visitor to Madeenah, it is not prescribed to visit any other mosques in the city apart from these two, the Mosque of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the Mosque of Quba’. It is not prescribed for the visitor or anyone else to head for a particular spot, hoping for blessing or to worship Allaah in that place, when there is no evidence from the Qur’aan or Sunnah concerning visiting that place and no evidence that the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with them) did that.

It is not prescribed to go to the places and mosques in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or the Sahaabah prayed in order to pray there or to worship Allaah by offering du’aa’s there etc., because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not enjoin that or encourage people to visit these places. It was narrated that al-Ma’roor ibn Suwayd (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: We went out with ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, and we passed by a mosque on the way. The people hastened to pray there, and ‘Umar said, “What is the matter with them?” They said, “This is a mosque in which the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prayed.” ‘Umar said, “O people, those who came before you were doomed because they followed such practices, until they established places of worship in such locations. If a time for prayer comes when you are there, then pray, and if it is not the time for prayer, then move on.” Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf, 7550.

When ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab heard that there were people who came to the tree under which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had received the bay’ah (oath of allegiance), he ordered that it be cut down. Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf, 7545.

8 – It is prescribed for men who are visiting the Prophet’s Mosque to visit the grave of the Prophet

(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the graves of his two companions Abu Bakr and ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with them), and to send salaams upon them and make du’aa’ for them. But for women it is not permissible for them to visit graves according to the more correct of the two scholarly opinions, because of the hadeeth narrated by Abu Dawood (3236), al-Tirmidhi (3236) and Ibn Maajah (1575) from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him), according to which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) cursed the women who visit graves. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Islaah al-Masaajid.

And al-Tirmidhi (1056) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) cursed women who visit graves. Al-Tirmidhi said it is hasan saheeh. It was also narrated by Ahmad, 2/337; Ibn Maajah, 1574; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 843; Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 1770.

The way in which the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is to be visited is that the visitor should come to the grave and face it and say “Al-salaamu ‘alayka ya Rasool-Allaah (Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allaah).” Then he should move about a yard to his right and say salaams to Abu Bakr by saying, “Al-salaamu ‘alayka ya Aba Bakr.” Then he should move a little further to his right, about a yard, and say salaams to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, by saying, ‘Al-salaamu alayka ya ‘Umar.”

9 – It is prescribed for men who are visiting Madeenah to visit the people buried in Baqee’ al-Gharqad and the martyrs of Uhud, to send salaams on them and to make du’aa’ for them. It was narrated that Buraydah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to teach them, when they went out to the graveyards, to say, “Al-salaamu ‘alaykum ahl al-diyaar min al-mu’mineen wa’l-muslimeen, wa innaa in sha Allaah bikum laahiqoon. Nas’al Allaah lana wa lakum al-‘aafiyah. (Peace be upon you, O dwellers of these abodes, believers and Muslims. We will, when Allaah wills, join you. We ask Allaah to grant salvation to us and you).”

10 – Visiting the graves is prescribed for two great purposes:

(i)So that the visitor may receive a lesson and reminder.

(ii)So that the person visited will benefit from the du'aa's and prayers for mercy and forgiveness that are offered for him.

Permission to visit graves is subject to the condition that no false words are spoken, the worst of which are shirk and kufr. It was narrated from Buraydah from his father that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I used to forbid you to visit graves, but now whoever wants to visit them let him do so, but do not utter any falsehood." Narrated by al-Nasaa'i, 2033; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, 886.

Muslim narrated this also (no. 977), but without the phrase, "but do not utter any falsehood."

It is not permitted to circumambulate these graves or any others, or to pray towards them or amongst them, or to perform acts of worship beside them such as reading Qur'aan, making du'aa', etc, because these are means of associating others in worship with the Lord of all creation and taking them (graves) as places of worship , even if no mosque is built over them. It was narrated that 'Aa'ishah and 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said: When death was approaching the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), he put a cloak over his face, and when he felt hot he removed it and said, "May Allaah's curse be upon the Jews and Christians, for they took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship" – warning against doing what they did. Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 436; Muslim, 529.

And he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The most evil of people are those upon whom the Hour will come when they are still alive and those who take graves as places of worship." Narrated by Ahmad, 1/405. It is also narrated by al-Bukhaari in a mu'allaq report in Kitaab al-Fitan, Baab Zuhoor al-Fitan, 7067. Also narrated by Muslim in Kitaab al-Fitan, Baab Qurb al-Saa'ah, 2949, without mentioning the taking of graves as places of worship.

It was narrated that Abu Marthad al-Ghanawi said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say, "Do not sit on graves or pray facing towards them." Narrated by Muslim, 972.

And it was narrated that Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, “All of the earth is a place of prayer apart from graveyards and bathrooms.” Narrated by Ahmad, 3/83; al-Tirmidhi, 317; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa’ al-Ghaleel, 1/320.

According to a hadeeth narrated by Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade people to pray between graves. Narrated by Ibn Maajah, 1698. Al-Haythami said in Majma’ al-Zawaa’id (2/27), Its men are the men of saheeh.

It is not permissible to prostrate on graves, rather that is a kind of idolatry and ignorance, and a sign of intellectual deviation and backwardness. It is not permissible for the visitor to those graves or anyone else to seek blessings from them by touching them, kissing them, clinging with any part of the body to them, or to seek healing from its dirt by rubbing one’s hands or face with it or to take anything from them in order to dilute it with water and wash oneself with it. It is not permissible for visitors to the grave or others to bury any part of their hair or body or handkerchiefs in them, or to put their pictures or anything else that they may have with them in their soil in order to seek blessing (barakah). It is not permissible to throw money or any kind of food such as grains etc. on them. Whoever does any of these things has to repent, and not do it again. It is not permissible to perfume them, or to swear to Allaah by their occupants. It is not permissible to ask of Allaah by virtue of their occupants or their status, rather that is a haraam kind of beseeching Allaah and is one of the means that lead to shirk. It is not allowed to build up the graves or erect any structure over them, because this is a means of veneration that leads to shirk. It is not permissible to sell food or perfume etc to one who it is known will use them for such seriously wrong actions.

Seeking the help of the dead or asking them for support or calling upon them and asking them to meet needs and to help alleviates calamity and to bring benefits and ward off hardships are all forms of major shirk which put a person beyond the pale of Islam and make him a worshipper of idols, because no one can relieve a person of worries and distress except Allaah alone with no partner or associate. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Such is Allaah, your Lord; His is the kingdom. And those, whom you invoke or call upon instead of Him, own not even a Qitmeer (the thin membrane over the date stone).

If you invoke (or call upon) them, they hear not your call; and if (in case) they were to hear, they could not grant it (your request) to you. And on the Day of Resurrection, they will disown your worshipping them. And none can inform you (O Muhammad) like Him Who is the All-Knower (of everything”

[Faatir 35:13-14]

“Say (O Muhammad): ‘Call upon those — besides Him whom you pretend [to be gods like angels, ‘Eesa (Jesus), ‘Uzayr (Ezra) and others]. They have neither the power to remove the adversity from you nor even to shift it from you to another person.’

Those whom they call upon [like ‘Eesa (Jesus) - son of Maryam (Mary), ‘Uzayr (Ezra), angel and others] desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord (Allaah), as to which of them should be the nearest; and they [‘Eesa (Jesus), ‘Uzayr (Ezra), angels and others] hope for His Mercy and fear His Torment. Verily, the Torment of your Lord is (something) to be afraid of!”

[al-Isra’ 17:56-57]