11669 - Going to visit places and mosques in which the Prophet prayed

the question

I see some people when they visit Madeenah, going to the seven mosques in addition to al-Masjid al-Nabawi (the Prophet's Mosque) and Masjid Quba'. In al-Taa'if they make sure that they visit Masjid 'Addaas, and they want to visit mosques in Makkah in order to pray there. What is the ruling on this?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Travelling to visit al-Masjid al-Nabawi is an action which is prescribed in sharee'ah as indicated by the hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "No journey should be made to visit mosques except forthree: this mosque of mine [in Madeenah], al-Masjid al-Haram [in Makkah] and al-Masjid al-Aqsa [in al-Quds/Jerusalem]. (Narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim; this version narrated by Muslim). Prayer in (al-Masjid al-Nabawi) is better than a thousand prayers anywhere else, apart from al-Masjid al-Haram.

Other places which it is prescribed to visit without travelling expressly for that purpose are the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the graves of his two companions [Abu Bakr and 'Umar], the graves of the people of al-Baqee' [the cemetery of Madeenah], the graves of the martyrs of Uhud, and finally, the mosque of Quba'.

With regard to visiting those graves, this is implied in the general meaning of the hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "I used to forbid you to visit graves but now visit them."

Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "It is also mustahabb (recommended) to visit the graves of the people of al-Baqee' and the martyrs of Uhud, to pray for

them and ask for forgiveness for them, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to do this, but this is prescribed for all the Muslim graves." (Majmoo' al-Fatawa, 17/470)

The evidence for visiting the Mosque of Quba' is the hadith narrated in al-Saheehayn from Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to come to Quba' riding and walking." According to another report: "and he would pray two rak'ahs there." (narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said, "Whoever purifies himself in his house then comes to the mosque of Quba' and prays there, he will have a reward like that for 'Umrah." (Narrated by Ahmad, al-Nasaa'i, Ibn Maajah and al-Haakim. Al-Haakim classed it as saheeh and al-Dhahabi agreed with him. Also classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Saheeh al-Jaami', 6154)

With regard to visiting other mosques and historical sites and claiming that they are "places which a person should visit", there is no basis for doing this, and they should not be visited for the following reasons:

1-There is no shar'i evidence to suggest that these mosques should be singled out for visits, as there is in the case of Masjid Quba'. As is well known, acts of worship should be based on following (the Sunnah), not on innovations.

2-The Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) were the most keen of all people to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). None of them are known to have visited those mosques and historical sites. If this were a good thing they would have been the first ones to do it.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmaan, 'Ali and all the predecessors of the Muhaajiroon and Ansaar used to travel from Madeenah to Makkah to perform Hajj and 'Umrah, or for other purposes, and none of them said that he was keen to pray in the places where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had prayed. It is known that if this had been mustahabb in their view, they would have been the first ones to do it, for they had more knowledge of the Sunnah and followed it more closely than

anyone else.” (Iqtidaa’ al-Siraat al-Mustaqeem, 2/748).

3-Visits to these places should be disallowed as a preventative measure. This is indicated by the actions of the righteous salaf, above all the rightly-guided khaleefah ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him). It was narrated that al-Ma’roor ibn Suwayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “We went out with ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab and we came across a mosque on our route. The people rushed to pray in that mosque, and ‘Umar said, ‘What is the matter with them?’ They said, ‘This is a mosque in which the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed.’ ‘Umar said: ‘O people, those who came before you were destroyed because they followed such (practices) until they made them places of worship. Whoever happens to be there at the time of prayer, let him pray there, and whoever is not there at the time of prayer, let him continue his journey.’” (Narrated by Ibn Waddah in his book al-Bida’ wa’l-Nahiy ‘anhaa; classed as saheeh by Ibn Taymiyah in al-Majmoo’, 1/281).

Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on this story, “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had not singled out that place for prayer; he prayed there only because he happened to be staying there. Hence ‘Umar thought that imitating him outwardly without having the same reason for doing so did not count as following the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Singling out that place for prayer was like the innovations of the People of the Book which had led to their doom, so he forbade the Muslims to imitate them in this manner. The one who did that was imitating the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in outward appearances, but he was imitating the Jews and Christians in his intention, which is the action of the heart. The action of the heart is what counts, because following in one’s intention is more serious than following in outward appearances.” (Majmoo’ al-Fatawa, 1/281)

In another example, it is narrated that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) heard that some people were visiting the tree under which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had accepted the bay’ah of people, so he commanded that it should be cut down.” (Narrated by Ibn Waddaah in his book al-Bida’ wa’l-Nahiy ‘anhaa, and by Ibn Abi Shaybah

in al-Musannaf, 2/375. Its isnaad was classed as saheeh by Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Baari, 7/448.Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: the men of its isnaad are thiqaat).

Ibn Waddaah al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Maalik ibn Anas and other scholars of Madeenah regarded it as makrooh to go to those mosques and historical sites connected to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), apart from Quba’ and Uhud.” (al-Bida’ wa’l-Nahiy ‘anhaa, p. 43). What is meant by Uhud is visiting the graves of the martyrs of Uhud.

Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Hence the scholars of the salaf among the people of Madeenah and elsewhere did not regard it as mustahabb to set out to visit any places in and around Madeenah after the Mosque of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), apart from the mosque of Quba’, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not specify any mosque to be visited apart from that.” (Majmoo’ al-Fatawa, 17/469).

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after mentioning the places which it is prescribed to visit in Madeenah: “With regard to the seven mosques, Masjid al-Qiblatayn (the Mosque of the Two Qiblahs), and other places which some authors who wrote about the rituals of Hajj include among the places to be visited, there is no basis for doing that, and there is no evidence for doing so. What is prescribed for the believer at all times is to follow [the Sunnah], not to innovate.” (Fatawa Islamiyyah, 2/313)

The prominent scholar Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah preserve him) said: “There are no places in Madeenah to be visited apart from these: al-Masjid al-Nabawi, the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), al-Baqee’, the martyrs of Uhud, and the Mosque of Quba’. As for other sites, there is no basis for visiting them.” (Fiqh al-‘Ibaadaat, p. 405)

Some may think that as long as one does not believe that these places hold any special virtue, that justifies visiting them or other historical places. This idea is unacceptable, for the following reasons:

Firstly: the righteous salaf (may Allah have mercy on them) forbade going to these places in absolute terms, without going into detail.

Secondly: going to these places and singling them out to visit because they are in the vicinity of Madeenah which witnessed the dawn of the Islamic call or because some battles happened there, proves that one believes in their virtue. If one did not hold such a belief, there would be no motive for visiting these places.

Thirdly: if we accept, for the sake of argument, that a person does not believe in their virtue, visiting them is still a means that may lead to that and to doing things that are not prescribed. Taking preventative measures is one of the things prescribed by sharee'ah, as is well known. Al-'Allaamah Ibn al-Qayyim – may Allah have mercy on him – gave ninety-nine examples illustrating this principle, and after giving the ninety-ninth example he said: "Taking preventative means is one-quarter of responsibility, for there are commands and prohibitions. The commands are of two types, one of which is the end in itself and the other is the means to that end. And prohibitions are of two types, the thing that is prohibited because it is evil in and of itself, and the means that lead to that evil. So preventing the means that lead to that which is Haram is one quarter of the religion." (I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een, 3/143)

Fourthly: It gives wrong ideas to ignorant people; when they see many people visiting those mosques and historical sites, they will think that this is an action which is prescribed in Islam.

Fifthly: Going to extremes in that matter and calling for visits to historical sites such as Mount Uhud and Jabal al-Noor for leisure purposes is one of the means that lead to shirk. The Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas issued a fatwa (No. 5303) stating that it is not allowed to climb up to the Cave of Hiraa' for that reason. And Allah is the One Whose help we seek.