

Visiting Madina Sharif during the Hajj.

To perform Hajj once in a lifetime is compulsory upon every Muslim adult who has the financial means to make the journey. In countless Ahadith, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has highlighted the immense reward for performing the pilgrimage. In a saying narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said;

‘A person who performs the pilgrimage during which he neither indulges in lewdness nor abuses, such a person returns (from the pilgrimage purified) as if born by his mother on that very day.’¹

In another saying narrated by Sayyida Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘There is no other day on which Allah frees the largest number of His servants from the fire of Hell than the Day of Arafah.’²

However certain scholars have cast doubt upon one of the established practices associated with the Hajj, namely to travel to Madina Sharif and visit the resting place of the greatest Prophet of all, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is despite the fact that millions of Muslims- since the birth of Islam until now -have always regarded the journey to Madina as an integral part of the pilgrimage, and have seldom returned home without offering their sincere and humble salutations to the Dear Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Specifically, the scholar in question is Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz. What follows is an extract from his book that is distributed free to all visiting Muslims during the Hajj season;

“Visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is not an obligation imposed on the Muslim, nor is it a pre-condition for an accepted pilgrimage, as some people think... Those who are far from Madinah are not duly bound to travel with the purpose of visiting the grave.”³

He continues;

“The Hadiths which are cited to support the legitimacy traveling to Madinah with the purpose of visiting the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) have weak transmission chains; indeed they are fabricated. Memorizers, such as Ad-Daraqutni, Al-Bayhaqi, Ibn Hajar and others, have pointed out this weakness and it is not permitted to contradict the sound

¹ *Riyad-us-Saleheen*, Book of Hajj.

² *Riyad-us-Saleheen*, Book of Hajj.

³ p.124. *Authentication and Explanation of Many Matters Related to Hajj, Umrah and Visit in the Light of the Holy Book and the Sunnah*. Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz. Published by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 1998.

Hadiths that prohibit packing off towards any mosque except the three mentioned [mosques, namely Makkah, Madinah and al-Quds].”⁴

The irony is that the title of the book is *Authentication and Explanation*. His fatwa is neither authentic nor in any sense of the word nor is it an explanation of the truth behind the matter. As this article will highlight, Insha’Allah, there are countless sound Ahadith which clearly encourage pilgrims to visit Madinah Sharif during the Hajj season. To dismiss the journey as ‘not an obligation’ is misleading, dangerous and wholly inaccurate.

Bin Baz writes that the countless sayings which encourage the journey to Madina are all fabricated. In particular, he refers to two Traditions and ask Muslims to ‘know them and avoid being beguiled and misguided by them.’⁵ They are;

* ‘He who performs the pilgrimage and does not visit me, will have shunned me’.

* ‘He who visits me after my death, is just like him who visits me during my lifetime’.

As a supposedly reputed scholar, Bin Baz should have at least backed up his claim and offered firm evidence as to why there are not authentic. No explanation is offered whatsoever.

With regards to the first Hadith, (*He who performs the pilgrimage and does not visit me, will have shunned me*) very little evidence exists to suggest that it is fabricated. In fact, numerous narrations are available which express the same meaning. Imam Ghazali (may Allah be pleased with him) has mentioned a similar Hadith in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*. The words are,

‘Whoever had the ability to visit me and chose not to, has shunned me’.⁶

Allama Zain al-Din Abu al-Fadl Abd al-Rahim bin Hussain al-Iraqi (d. 806 A.H.) wrote an commentary on *Ihya*, and added that the aforementioned Hadith had been recorded by Ibn ‘Addi, al-Dar Qutni and Ibn Habban. Imam Ghazali has not mentioned anything in *Ihya* to suggest that visiting Madinah Sharif is ‘not an obligation’ upon Muslims. To the contrary, he has included a heartwarming chapter in his book offering sincere advice to Muslims on how one should make the journey to Madinah Sharif, what one should read and how one should offer ones salutations to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The second Hadith (*He who visits me after my death, is just like him who visits me during my lifetime*) too has been mentioned by Imam Ghazali (may Allah be pleased with him) in *Ihya*.⁷ Scholars note that the Tradition has been narrated by Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and has been recorded by Tabrani and Al-Dar Qutni. Qadi Ayadh (d. 544 A.H/ 1149 A.D), mentions the same Hadith in his book *Al-Shifa*,

⁴ p. 126. Ibid.

⁵ p. 126. Ibid.

⁶ p.348, Book of the secrets of Hajj, Chapter ‘the visiting of Madinah and its etiquettes, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*. Imam Ghazali, Volume One, Dar al-Fajr li al-Turath, Cairo, Egypt.

⁷ p.348, Book of the secrets of Hajj, Chapter ‘the visiting of Madinah and its etiquettes, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*.

from Imam Bayhaqi with the words ‘Whoever visits me after my death, it as if he visited me while I was alive.’⁸

Qadi Ayadh continues to specifically mention the practice of visiting Madina Sharif during the Hajj season;

“Ishaq bin Ibrahim, the *faqih*, said that when someone goes on *Hajj*, he should go to Madina with the intention of praying in the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah, seeking the blessing of seeing his Meadow (i.e. the area in the mosque between his tomb and the Minbar, referred to as the *Rawdah*), his Minbar, his grave, the place where he sat, the places his hands touched and the places where his feet walked and the post on which he used to lean, where Jibril descended to him with the Revelation, and the places connected with the Companions and the Imam of the Muslims who lived there. He should have consideration for all these things.”⁹

A similar Hadith exists which has been narrated by Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and recorded by Tabrani. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘Whoever comes to me as a visitor and did not intend but to visit me, it will be the incumbent upon Allah to make me an intercessor for him on the Day of Judgement’.

Ibn Sakkun has authenticated this saying. By discouraging Muslims from visiting the grave of the Blessed Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Bin Baz is effectively denying Muslims from an immense reward and from comfort and relief on the Day of Judgement.

An observer will find it impossible to find support for Bin Baz’s opinions from the great scholars of yesteryear. Imam al-Bukhari added countless Ahadith in his *Sahih* on the superiority of Madina Sharif in the ‘Book of Hajj’, which thus implicitly suggests that the Hajj and the visiting of Madina are almost synonymous. Imam Muslim did exactly the same with his *Sahih*.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has encouraged his followers to visit his mosque in Madina and has given them glad-tidings of a huge reward for offering Prayer in the sanctuary. In an authentic saying narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) and recorded by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih*, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘One Prayer in this mosque [i.e. the Prophet’s Mosque in Madina] is better than a thousand Prayers in any other mosque, except for Masjid Haram.’¹⁰

Why would any sane Muslim want to claim that visiting Madina is not important, and thus denying one from such a huge reward?

⁸ p.265, *Muhammad- Messenger of Allah. Ash-Shifa of Qadi Iyadh*. Translated by Aisha Bewley. Madinah Press Granada. 1991.

⁹ p. 266. Ibid.

¹⁰ Book of Hajj, Hadith no. 2469, Chapter ‘The Superiority of Prayer in Makkah and Madina’.

In a famous saying recorded by both Imam Muslim and al-Bukhari, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘What is between my house and my minbar is one of the Meadows of the Garden (Paradise)’.

In fact, Allah himself affirmed the superiority of the Prophet’s (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) mosque;

“A Mosque that was founded on *Taqwa* from the first day is better for you to stand in” (9:108)

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was once asked which mosque the Qur’an was referring to in this verse, he replied ‘My mosque.’

To encourage virtuous behaviour and discourage vice is a sign of a believer (9:71). On the other hand, to discourage virtuous behaviour is the trait of a hypocrite (9, 67). There is no evidence to suggest that visiting Madina Sharif is not permitted; in fact ample evidence exists to highlight the immense reward a Muslim can expect from visiting this sacred place. Visiting Madina is not part of the actual rituals of the Hajj. But no dedicated and beloved follower of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would even consider making the journey for Hajj without visiting the Prophet’s resting place in Madina. Our love for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) demands that we visit his grave, offer our humble salutations and pray that we are included as one of the intercessors on the Day of Judgement.

Ather Hussain al-Azhari.