

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRULY GOD'S GIFT TO THE WORLD Should Such a Thing be Celebrated?

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The blessings of Allah are so many. They are humanly innumerable:

﴿وَأَنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ﴾

﴿But if you count the favors of Allah, never will you be able to number them﴾

Ibrahim:14.

The greatest of them is without doubt, the blessing of faith. From the infinite wisdom of Allah faith does not come to us except by way of His Messenger, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah ﷺ. It was in fact the Will of Allah that no one can truly know Him except by way of the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ:

﴿لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ

وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

﴿Allah did confer great favor on the Believers when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves; rehearsing unto them the signs of Allah; sanctifying them, and instructing them in scripture and wisdom; while before that, they had been in manifest error.﴾

ali 'imran 164.

We spend our entire lives striving to show thanks to Allah for His blessing. In fact, showing thanks for the receipt of Muhammad ﷺ is akin to celebrating the gift of faith itself.

One of the legal definitions of *shukr* (thanksgiving) is:

"فَرَحُ الْقَلْبِ بِحُصُولِ النِّعْمَةِ مَعَ صَرْفِ الْجَوَارِحِ فِي طَاعَةِ الْمُنْعِمِ وَالْإِعْتِرَافِ بِنِعْمَةِ الْمُنْعِمِ

عَلَى وَجْهِ الْخُضُوعِ."

"The delight of the heart at the receipt of the blessing along with the disposal of the limbs in the obedience of the bestower; and the acknowledgement of the blessing of the bestower from a standpoint of submission."

Delivering thanksgiving to Allah is a legal obligation on every responsible person,

﴿وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُوا﴾

﴿Thank Me and don't be unappreciative﴾

al-baqara:15.

It is the mark of the sincere slaves,

﴿إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا﴾

«Indeed he was a thankful slave» *al-Isra:3*, Allah says of the Prophet Nuh عليه السلام; yet it is a rare station indeed,

﴿وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ﴾

«And very few of My slaves are thankful» *saba:13*. We ask Allah to assist us in being truly thankful slaves.

How could we not be thankful for, or celebrate the praises of the one whom Allah enumerates the praises of so many times in His Qur'an. Such as His saying:

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

«Indeed you are on a lofty standard of character»

al-qalam:4.

This verse was echoed in the words of Imam Abdullah al-Haddad when he said:

نَبِيٌّ عَظِيمٌ خُلُقُهُ الْخُلُقُ الَّذِي ☆ مَجَّدَ الرَّحْمَنُ فِي سَيِّدِ الْكُتُبِ

A prophet, his character tremendous, the character that was glorified by the All-Merciful in the Master of Books

Truly golden words, which can be found inscribed on the outside of the Prophetic Chamber itself in the Illumined City of Madinah.

How could we not appreciate the one whose emulation Allah has made the gateway to His love?

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ﴾

«Say: If you do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you»

ali 'imran 31.

The one whom the faith of no believer is complete until the love of him surmounts the love of all other things:

((لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَالِدِهِ وَوَالِدِهِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ))

((None of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his child or parent or all of the people in their entirety)) *bukhari, muslim, ahmad, ibn majah.*

The one about whose love his daughter Fatimah, the *Sayyida* of the Women of Paradise lamented:

مَاذَا عَلَىٰ مَنْ شَمَّ تُرْبَةَ أَحْمَدِ ☆ أَنْ لَا يَشُمَّ مَدَى الدُّهُورِ غَوَالِيَا

صُبَّتْ عَلَيَّ مَصَائِبُ لَوْ أَنَّهَا ☆ صُبَّتْ عَلَى الْأَيَّامِ عُدُنَ لَيَالِيَا

Is it not for the one who has smelt the earth of the grave of Ahmad; that he never – for time eternal – bear the fragrance of exquisite perfumes?

Upon me have been poured tribulations the extent of which, had they been poured upon the days, they would have turned into nights

How could we not be consumed with love and appreciation for the one but for whose presence amongst us, Allah would have unleashed His wrath:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ﴾

﴿But Allah would not punish them so long as you are amongst them﴾

al-anfal:33.

And he is still amongst us in his grave-life in Madinah. That said, it must also be noticed that what is usually translated here as "amongst" is actually the preposition *fi*, literally "in". So it becomes "Allah would not punish them so long as you are 'in' them. The deeper meaning of which is echoed in the verses of the Scholar and Jurist al-Bayanuni when he said:

قَلْبٌ تَمَكَّنَ حُبُّ أَحْمَدَ فِيهِ ★ تَاللَّهِ إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تُبْلِيهِ

A heart that the love of Ahmad has taken root therein; indeed – by Allah – never could the earth devour it

So this being the case, the believer should be preoccupied all year round with the mention of the praises of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; reviewing his *sirah* (biography), and extolling his virtues. Day in and day out, month in and month out, and even more critically in the month of *rabi' al-ammal*, the month in which Allah brought him into the world as a guidance and a mercy for all mankind:

﴿وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ﴾

﴿And you have no blessing but that it is from Allah﴾

al-nahl:53

If we are not giving special emphasis in this month, then what is going on during the rest of the year?

In fact, the observance or commemoration of a specific moment in religious history is nothing strange to Islamic Law. The Prophet ﷺ, upon his arrival to Madinah, found the Jews fasting the day of '*ashura*'. When he inquired about this he was told that this was the day in which Allah saved their Prophet and drowned their enemy so they fast out of thanksgiving to Allah for this blessing. To this the Prophet ﷺ responded:

((نحن أحقّ منهم بموسى))

((We have more right to Musa than they))

So he fasted and ordered the others to do likewise [*bukhari* & *muslim*]. When he was himself asked about his own custom of fasting on Mondays he responded:

((ذَٰكَ يَوْمٌ وُلِدْتُ فِيهِ وَيَوْمٌ بُعِثْتُ؛ أَوْ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيَّ فِيهِ))

((On this day I was born and on it I received revelation))

muslim, abu dawud, al-tirmidhi, al-nasa'i, ibn majah & *ahmad*

As that twelfth day of *rabi' al-ammal* passes every year, it is really the same metaphysical envelope that contained the moment of his birthﷺ. The day on which, in the words of the famous

poet of prophetic praise, al-Busayri:

وَمُحَيًّا كَالشَّمْسِ مِنْكَ مُضِيًّا ☆ أَسْفَرَتْ عَنْهُ لَيْلَةٌ غَرَاءُ
لَيْلَةُ الْمَوْلِدِ الَّذِي كَانَ لِلدُّ ☆ بَيْنَ سُرُورٍ بِيَوْمِهِ وَازْدِهَاءِ

“A Countenance Brilliant like the Sun itself; was unveiled by a Radiant Night”
“The Night of His Birth whose day was for the *Deen*; a Pride and Joy”

It was said of the birth of the Prophet Yahya عليه السلام,

﴿وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا﴾

﴿So peace on him the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life again﴾

maryam:15.

Likewise the Prophet 'Isa عليه السلام said of his own birth:

﴿وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا﴾

﴿So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life again﴾

maryam:33.

So what then of the birth of the seal of the Prophets for whom all other Prophets were only a precursor and a prelude?

Allah has commanded us to invoke blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ as He Himself and His angels do [*al-ahzab:56*];

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

﴿Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect﴾

al-Ahzab 33:56

and a command in Legal Method denotes an obligation to be obeyed. The Muslim celebration of the Prophet's birth (*mawlid*) is one way of responding to that command. It consists of invoking blessings upon him ﷺ, reviewing the story of his *sirah*, reminding the community of his virtues, feeding the Muslims, and giving charity to the poor; all of which are not only condoned by Islamic Law but sought after. The legal principle:

"ما لا يتم الواجب إلا به فهو واجب"

"That, without which a legal obligation cannot be completed, is itself obligatory" applies here.

It is not proposed for a moment that the exact format of the classical *mawlid* celebration was the practice of the first generation of Muslims. But the entirety of the format consists only of elements that were indeed the condoned practice of the first generation. In addition, the classical format as it stands has been received with acceptance by the overwhelming majority of scholars of this *ummah* from the earliest of generations. Here, the principle based on the famous statement of Ibn Mas'ud must be invoked:

"ما رآه المسلمون حسناً فهو عند الله حسنٌ؛ وما رآه المسلمون قبيحاً فهو عند الله قبيحٌ."

"What the Muslims see as good, is with Allah, good; and what the Muslims see as objectionable, is with Allah, objectionable."

And of course what is meant by 'the Muslims' – in any legal setting – is the Scholars of the Muslims.

Ibn Taymiyyah said in his *iqtida' alsirat al-mustaqim*:

... فتعظيمُ المَوْلِدِ واتِّخاذهِ مَوْسِماً قد يَفْعَلُهُ بعضُ النَّاسِ، ويكونُ له فيه أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ حَسَنٌ قُضِيهِ وَتَعْظِيمُهُ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ. (اقتضاء الصراط المستقيم)

"The magnification of the *mawlid* and the taking of it as a celebrational season might be done by some people. In it is a tremendous reward due to their praiseworthy objective and their magnification of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The noted Traditionist (*muhaddith*) *al-Hafiz al-Iraqi* said:

إِنَّ اتِّخَاذَ الْوَلِيمَةِ وَإِطْعَامَ الطَّعَامِ مُسْتَحَبٌّ فِي كُلِّ وَقْتٍ، فَكَيْفَ إِذَا انْضَمَّ إِلَى ذَلِكَ الْفَرَحُ وَالسُّرُورُ بِظُهُورِ نُورِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فِي هَذَا الشَّهْرِ الشَّرِيفِ. وَلَا يَلْزَمُ مِنْ كَوْنِهِ بَدْعَةً كَوْنُهُ مَكْرُوهًا. فَكَمْ مِنْ بَدْعَةٍ مُسْتَحَبَّةٍ بَلْ قَدْ تَكُونُ وَاجِبَةً.

"Indeed the performance of the *walimah* (feast) and the feeding of food is recommended at any time. So what if there is added to that the joy and happiness at the magnification of the Light of the Prophet ﷺ in this noble month? And just because it is an innovation doesn't mean that it is blameworthy. How many an innovation is not only recommended (*mustahabb*) but obligatory (*wajib*)?" ⁽¹⁾

Al-Suyuti has said:

يُسْتَحَبُّ لَنَا إِظْهَارُ الشُّكْرِ بِمَوْلِدِهِ ﷺ، وَالِاجْتِمَاعُ وَإِطْعَامُ الطَّعَامِ وَنَحْوُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ وُجُوهِ الْقُرْبَاتِ وَإِظْهَارِ الْمَسَرَّاتِ.

"it is recommended to manifest thanksgiving for his birth (*mawlid*) ﷺ. Also to gather for the feeding of food and the like, of types of offerings of thanksgiving and manifestations of happiness."

Shaykh al-Islam *Ibn Hajar* has said in his *Greater Legal Verdicts*:

أَصْلُ عَمَلِ الْمَوْلِدِ بَدْعَةٌ لَمْ تُنْقَلْ عَنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ السَّلَفِ الصَّالِحِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ الثَّلَاثَةِ. وَلَكِنَّهَا مَعَ ذَلِكَ قَدْ اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَى مَحَاسِنَ وَضِدَّهَا فَمَنْ تَحَرَّى فِي عَمَلِهَا الْمَحَاسِنَ وَجَنَّبَ ضِدَّهَا كَانَ بَدْعَةً حَسَنَةً؛ وَإِلَّا فَلَا.

وقد ظهر لي تحريجها على أصل ثابت في الصحيحين من أن النبي ﷺ قدم المدينة فوجد اليهود يصومون يوم عاشوراء. فسألهم فقالوا: هو يوم أغرق الله فيه فرعون ونجى موسى، فنحن نصومه شكراً لله تعالى.

فِيَسْتَفَادُ مِنْهُ الشُّكْرُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى مَا مَنَّ بِهِ فِي يَوْمٍ مَعَيَّنَ مِنْ إِسْدَاءِ نِعْمَةٍ أَوْ دَفْعِ نِقْمَةٍ. وَيُعَادُ ذَلِكَ فِي نَظِيرِ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ مِنْ كُلِّ سَنَةٍ. وَالشُّكْرُ لِلَّهِ يَحْصُلُ بِأَنْوَاعِ الْعِبَادَةِ كَالسُّجُودِ وَالصِّيَامِ وَالصَّدَقَةِ وَالتَّلَاوَةِ. وَأَيُّ نِعْمَةٍ أَعْظَمُ مِنَ النِّعْمَةِ بِرُوزِ هَذَا النَّبِيِّ ﷺ، نَبِيِّ الرَّحْمَةِ فِي ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ؟ وَعَلَى هَذَا فَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يُقْتَصَرَ فِيهِ مَا يُفْهِمُ الشُّكْرَ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنَ التَّلَاوَةِ وَالْإِطْعَامِ وَإِنْشَادِ شَيْءٍ مِنَ الْمَدَائِحِ النَّبَوِيَّةِ الْمُحَرِّكَةِ لِلْقُلُوبِ إِلَى فِعْلِ الْخَيْرِ وَالْعَمَلِ لِلْآخِرَةِ. وَأَمَّا مَا يَتَّبَعُ ذَلِكَ مِنَ السَّمَاعِ وَاللَّهُوِ وَغَيْرِ ذَلِكَ فَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يُقَالَ: مَا كَانَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ مُبَاحاً بِحَيْثُ يُقْتَضِي السَّرُورُ بِذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ لَا بِأَسِّ بِالْحَاقِقِ بِهِ؛ وَمَا كَانَ حَرَاماً أَوْ مَكْرُوهاً فَيُمنَعُ؛ وَكَذَا مَا كَانَ خِلَافَ الْأَوَّلِيِّ.

"The origin of performing the *mawlid* is an innovation, which has not come to us from any of the Righteous Predecessors of the first three generations. But this said [the performance of the *mawlid*] might be comprised of praiseworthy things and of their opposites. So for whoever seeks out the praiseworthy and avoids their opposites, it is a praiseworthy innovation, and otherwise it is not.

Its affirmation has appeared to me according to a firm origin in the two sahihs; in that the Prophet ﷺ upon arriving at Madinah found the Jews fasting the day of '*ashura*'. He asked about this and they responded: It is the day that Allah drowned Pharaoh and saved Musa, so we fast in thanksgiving to Allah the exalted.

We therefore derive from this the offering of thanksgiving to Allah for what He has bestowed on a specific day, of blessings poured forth or tribulations prevented. That is then repeated on the corresponding day of every year.

Thanksgiving to Allah is achieved through all types of devotion. Like prostration, fasting, charity, and recitation. What blessing is greater than that of the appearance of the Prophet ﷺ, the Prophet of Mercy on that day?

So this understood, it is imperative to suffice with what gives the meaning of thanksgiving to Allah the Exalted; of recitation and providing food, and singing something of the Prophetic Praises which move the hearts toward the performance of good and working for the hereafter.

As for what is pursuant to that, of audition (*sama*) and amusement and the like, it must be said that: what is legally permissible of this and brings about happiness for that day, there is no harm in including it. Likewise what is prohibited or blameworthy must be forbidden, as well as what is 'contrary to preference' (*khilaf al-awla*)."

In closing, we are reminded in the Qur'an:

﴿قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ﴾

﴿Say: With the Bounty of Allah and with His mercy – in that let them rejoice﴾

Al-Suyuti says – in transmission from Ibn Abbas – the Bounty of Allah is knowledge, and His Mercy is Muhammad ﷺ. Let us not forget the words of Allah:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

﴿And We have not sent you except as a mercy to all the worlds﴾

al-Anbiya:107

So, ﴿with His Mercy – in that let them rejoice﴾.

-- Written by the poor slave in need of his Lord,
Jihad H. Brown the *manla* of Bani Hashim

End Notes:

(1) Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: ((Whoever initiates in Islam a good tradition (*sunnah*) he has the reward for it and the reward for whoever acts on it after him without decreasing anything of his reward. Likewise, whoever initiates in Islam a blameworthy tradition (*sunnah*) has the sin of it and the sin of whoever acts on it after him with decreasing anything of their sins)) [*muslim, al-nisa'i, ahmad, ibn majah*].

So if it is unacceptable that there be such a thing as a praiseworthy innovation, could there be any such thing as a blameworthy *sunnah*?