

TOPIC:
Commemorating the Birth (Mawlid) of the Prophet (asws)

The Mawlid as it is celebrated today did not exist in the first three generations of Islam's history, and so according to the *literal* sense, it is an 'innovation' (*bid'a*). However, as we have seen in the previous chapter on the understanding of "innovation" as it applies to the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence, the Salaf and the scholars after them (such as Imam Shafi'i, Imam Nawawi, etc.) defined *reprehensible* innovations as those things which **both**: 1- did not exist in the time of the Prophet (asws), **AND** 2- cannot be inferred from a primary basis in the Qur'an or Sunna. Both of these conditions have to be met for something to be considered a 'reprehensible innovation' according to the Shari'a. Therefore, in regards to the Mawlid, it cannot be considered a reprehensible or forbidden innovation, because it *does* have an inferable basis in the Qur'an and Sunna, as we shall see below. Remembering the Prophet's birthday is an act that the scholars of Islam have accepted and still accept. This means that Allah accepts it, according to the saying of Ibn Mas'ud: "Whatever the (majority of) Muslims see as right, then it is good to Allah, and whatever is seen by the (majority of) Muslims as evil, it is evil to Allah."³⁰³ How then can someone declare the belief of the vast majority of Muslims a *bid'a*? What does it mean to follow "Ahlus-Sunna wa'l JAMA'A"?

From the Qur'an

1) To rejoice and express happiness for the Prophet (asws) coming to us is an obligation given by Allah through Qur'an, as He said: "Of the favor of Allah and His mercy, in that should they rejoice" (Q10:58). Ibn 'Abbas said that "His mercy" refers to the Prophet (asws), as documented in the many Tafsirs of that verse. What greater mercy did Allah give to us than the Prophet (asws) himself, of whom Allah says:

- "Indeed, Allah has granted an immense bounty upon the believers in that He sent them a Messenger from them selves..." (Q3:164); and
- "There has come to you a Messenger from your selves... and to the believers is he most kind and merciful" (Q9:128); and
- "We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to all the worlds" (Q21:107).

2) He also commands us to honor and venerate him (asws), and informs us that He sent him (asws): "...so that you may believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that you may honor him and venerate him and glorify Him/him morning and evening" (Q48:9).

The scholars of Tafsir are in two camps concerning this verse. The first group considers all of the pronouns to refer to the Prophet (asws). The second considers the last pronoun to refer to Allah ("glorify Him") but the rest to refer to the Prophet (asws), in such a way that honoring and venerating the Prophet (asws) naturally leads to and is considered glorification of Allah, which the wording of this verse implies.

³⁰³ Recorded by Imam Ahmad (#3418), Hakim (3:78-79 *Sahih*), Tayalisi (#243), Tabarani (*M. Kabir* 9:118 and *Ansar* 4:58 #3602), Bazzar (*Zawa'id*, 1:81 #130), Abu Nu'aym (1:135), Baghawi (#105), Ibn Mardawayh (*Amali*, #18), and Imam Bayhaqi in his *Kitab al-I'tiqad* (p. 208 = p. 251). See also: Sakhawi (*Maqasid*, #959) and 'Aj'luni (*Kashf al-Khafa'*, #2214). It is Sahih according to Haythami (*Majma'* 1:177-78 #832) and Dhahabi.

3) Allah said, “Whoever honors the symbols of Allah does so from the *taqwa* of their hearts” (Q22:32). There is no doubt that he and the other prophets (upon all of them be blessings and peace) are among the greatest symbols of Allah upon this earth.

Imam Shihab ud-Din Abu Shamma al-Shafi’i, who was one of the main teachers of Imam Nawawi, wrote in his book *The impetus to reject the innovations and invented matters* the following (p. 13): “Among ***the best of what has been newly introduced in our era is what occurs every year during the time of his birth*** (asws), such as charity, show of happiness and joy, and other good deeds. For this – which includes beneficence towards the needy – is a manifestation of love of him (asws) and veneration of him in the heart of the one who commemorates that event, and an act of gratitude to Allah for the great bounty He blessed us with in creating His Messenger (asws), whom He sent as a mercy to all the people...”

4) Remembrance of the birth of the Prophet (asws) is an occasion for and an encouragement towards praying for blessings upon the Prophet and praising him, which is an obligation on us through Allah’s order in the verse, “Indeed Allah and His angels shower blessings upon the Prophet. O you who truly believe, ask blessings upon him and greet him with greetings (worthy of his high station)” (Q33:56). Coming together and remembering the Prophet (asws) causes us to pray for blessings upon him and to praise him, and is a means of consolidating frequent remembrance and love of him in our hearts, which is one of the manifestations of the experience of the sweetness of true faith. And it is known among the scholars of the fundamentals of Fiqh that “any action which aids one in performing an obligation is itself praiseworthy and recommended.” Therefore, this is one of the Qur’anic verses that serve as a primary basis for the Mawlid, thus taking it out of the category of reprehensible innovation into praiseworthy innovation.

That obligation, furthermore, is mentioned in the plural: Allah and His angels are continuously sending blessings upon and praising the Prophet -- in a heavenly gathering. It is entirely incorrect, therefore, to say that sending blessings (*salawat*) upon and praising the Prophet must be done alone. We have also seen before the hadith recorded by Imam Muslim in his Sahih (and others) that the Prophet (asws) encouraged dhikr of Allah and salawat upon him in a group, and warned that any group which does not send salawat upon him (asws) exposes themselves to the punishment of Allah.

5) Allah said, “And all that We relate to you about the messengers is to make your heart firmly rooted thru that...” (Q11:120). And He said to Sayyidina Musa (asws), “bring your people from the darkness into the light, and remind them of the *Days of Allah*...” (Q14:5). In the first verse, Allah emphasizes the importance of regularly recounting the stories of the messengers and righteous people, so that our hearts may be kept firm thru mention of them. One of the principle functions of the Mawlid is to recount the events of his birth and life, and draw lessons from it, so this is another Qur’anic basis.

Furthermore, the second verse here goes further in supporting the regular recounting of the events of the “Days of Allah”...and what is meant by the “Days of Allah”? The scholars of Tafsir state that it means those days in which Allah granted them great blessings and in which occurred notable and great events, such as the day when Allah saved the Bani Isra’il from the grip of the Pharaoh. Those who explained the verse in this way include Ibn ‘Abbas,

Mujahid, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, and Qatada; and this explanation is the preferred one in the Tafsirs of at-Tabari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Baydawi, Imam Fakhruddin ar-Razi, Suyuti, Shawkani³⁰⁴, Baghawi, Mawardi, Ibn 'Atiyyah, Nasafi, Khazin, Sayyid Mahmud al-Alusi, Imam al-Qushayri, and many others. Again, what did Allah say? "Indeed, Allah has granted an immense bounty upon the believers in that He sent them a Messenger from them selves..." (Q3:164).

Shaykh 'Isa ibn Mani' al-Himyari wrote about this verse (Q14:5):

"The intended meaning behind it is to make regular mention of them and to recall the blessings Allah graced them with, and to remember the guidance, light, wisdom, laws, counsels, and miracles they came with, by virtue of which hearts and intellects are turned towards the favors of Allah upon His slaves. By this, they will attend to the rights of Allah upon them, in the hopes they will come to hope for His mercy and fear His punishment, and call Him in desire and dread. Therefore, this verse includes in its meaning the events and lives of the Messengers from the moment of their birth until their passing away from this world, all of which is considered guidance by which Allah makes the hearts firm (upon the truth), and enlightens the intellects, and uplifts the spirits, and polishes the insights, and purifies the emotions, and softens the hold of the rebellious self so that it is returned to the obedience of Allah and submersion in His love, and to remain constant in His company and stick to His Presence, and become attached to His contentment and escape from His anger. All of this and more are among the benefits of recalling and commemorating the blessings of Allah. This is why it is recommended to invite people to this activity, to make them aware of and encourage them in following the object of the Mawlid (i.e., Muhammad asws)...Indeed, the longing of the souls after noble goals and sublime intentions and lofty stations occurs as a result of making regular mention and commemorating he who is the most perfect model and example. For there is nothing that has a deeper and longer-lasting effect upon the soul than mentioning and commemorating the life-story of he whom people recognize and love, whose lofty image and sublime stature is firmly etched in their minds. For when they hear news of him and listen to recountings of events related to him, in which the unsurpassed greatness of his life and acts and the inimitable eloquence of his words and speech is brought to light, then without doubt they will constantly press themselves towards imitating him and following him with unquenchable desire and great longing. How much clear loss have the Muslims suffered when they dispensed with and abandoned the commemoration of their great leaders and models ... It is indeed strange that they neglected the commemoration of our noble Messenger (asws) while the Qur'an is replete with commemoration of the love of the great ones, and took great care concerning their lives, from the moment they were fetuses in their mothers' wombs until Allah took them to Himself. Therefore, this is among the Qur'anic verses from which we can infer the desirability of commemorating his birth of the Messenger (asws)."

6) As an example of the previous point, Allah said:

³⁰⁴ Who mentions in his tafsir of this ayah a hadith from the Messenger (asws) wherein he himself interprets it this way, which is recorded in the collections of: Nasa'i, Imam Ahmad (#20207, from Ibn 'Abbas) and his son Abdullah ibn Ahmad in his *Zawa'id al-Musnad*, Daylami in *Firdaws* (5:123 #7377), Imam Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-Iman* (#4418, from Ubayy ibn Ka'b), Ibn Jarir, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Mardawayh, Abdur-Razzaq, and 'Abd ibn Humayd in his *Musnad* (#168).

“Isa, son of Maryam, said, ‘O Allah, our Sustainer, send down for us a table spread with food from the heaven that it might be an ever-recurring feast (‘eid) for us – for the first of us and the last of us – and a Sign from You...’ (Q5:114). In other words, the day of its descent would become an ‘Eid which we and the succeeding generations to follow would commemorate. By extension, the same principle would apply to the blessed event of our noble Prophet’s birth, with the exception that it should not be taken as a once-a-year event, but rather a regularly recurring one, not restricted to a particular time or place.

7) There is commemoration of the birthdays of some of the Prophets and righteous servants in the Qur’an itself! Allah recounts the events and details the blessings found in and lessons derived from the births of Sayyidina Yahya (Q3:38-41, Q19:2-15), Sayyidina ‘Isa (Q3:42-48, Q19:16-34), Sayyida Maryam (Q3:33-37), and so on, may Allah bless them all and grant them peace. In addition, Allah details how the Prophet ‘Isa ibn Maryam celebrated his own birthday when he said, “and peace be upon me the day I was born...” (Q19:33). Is there not in all of this evidence for the permissibility of commemorating the blessing of the birth of our Prophet (asws), who is the best of Allah’s creation?

From the Sunna

1) The Prophet (asws) emphasized Monday as the day he was born. Abu Qatada al-Ansari narrates that the Prophet (asws) was asked why he regularly fasted on Monday, and he answered, “That is the day that I was born and that is the day I received the prophecy.”³⁰⁵ This means that the Prophet was expressing his gratitude for the day of his birth and commemorating it by fasting, which is a kind of worship.

2) Expressing happiness and celebrating the Prophet (asws) on his birthday causes even unbelievers, by Allah’s favor and mercy, to gain some benefit. For example, every Monday, Abu Lahab in his grave is released from punishment because he freed his handmaiden Thuwayba when she brought him the news of the Prophet’s (asws) birth. This hadith is mentioned in Bukhari’s Sahih (*Kitab an-Nikah*, #4711), Abdur-Razzaq’s *Musannaf* (7:478), Baghawi’s *Sharh as-Sunna* (9:76), and Ibn Kathir mentions it in his books *Sirat al-Nabi* (1:224), *Mawlid al-Nabi* (p. 21), and *al-Bidaya*. The hafiz Shamsuddin Muhammad ad-Dimashqi wrote on this the following verses in his book *Mawrid as-sadi fi Mawlid al-Hadi*: “If this, a kafir who was condemned to hell eternally with “Perish the hands” (Q111:1), is said to enjoy a respite every Monday because he rejoiced in Ahmad, what then do you think of the servant who, all his life, was happy with Ahmad, and died believing in Divine Unity?”

3) Some object to the Mawlid because according to them, it fosters the deification of the Prophet Muhammad (asws) due to the people over-exaggerating in praising him (asws) and invoking too many prayers upon him, and that this poses the danger of *shirk*. However, the

³⁰⁵ Recorded by Muslim (*Kitab as-Siyam* #1977-78), Abu Dawud (#2071), Nasa’i (*Sunan Kubra*, 2:147), Imam Ahmad (#21508), Hakim (2:602), Bayhaqi (*Sunan* 4:286, *Dala’il* 1:72-73), Abu Ya’la (1:133-34 #144), Tayalisi (#636), Baghawi (#1789), Ruyani (3:325), and others. Similarly, Ibn Hibban (8:403 #3642) and Ibn Khuzayma (3:298 #2087) in their Sahih collections both devoted a whole chapter to this topic and called it: “Mention of the desirability of the fast of Monday **because** on that day the Messenger (asws) was born and on that day the Revelation descended.”

Prophet Muhammad (asws) is known to have encouraged frequent invocations of blessing (*salawat*) upon him, as is established in the following hadiths:

Ubayy ibn Ka'b said: "O Messenger of Allah, I make much *salawat* upon you as a personal habit. How much of my daily devotions should I devote to you?" The Prophet (asws) said: "As much as you like." Ubayy said: "A quarter?" The Prophet (asws) said: "As you like, but if you add to that it will be better for you." Ubayy then mentioned a third, then a half, then two thirds, and always the Prophet (asws) answered: "As you like, but if you add to that it will be better for you." Finally Ubayy said: **"O Messenger of Allah, I want to devote my entire prayer to you." Whereupon the Prophet said: "Then you will be freed from care and your sins will be forgiven."** (Another version has: "Then Allah will suffice you in the matter of your worldly life and your hereafter.")³⁰⁶ Both Anas and 'Ali said that "every supplication is blocked (*mahjub*) until the one making it sends *salawat* upon the Prophet."³⁰⁷

The Prophet (asws) also said, "The person most deserving of me (my closeness, kindness, intercession) on the Day of Rising is the one who sends the most *salawat* upon me."³⁰⁸ He (asws) also said, "None of you will believe until I am more beloved to him than his parents, children, and all of mankind,"³⁰⁹ and "Whoever loves something mentions (*dbiker*) it frequently."³¹⁰ This means that the true believers love the Prophet Muhammad (asws) more than any other human, and that because of this love, they mention and invoke him frequently, each time sending *salawat* upon him. The Prophet (asws) also said, "No Muslim sends *salawat* upon me without the angels sending *salawat* upon him in return, as long as he sends *salawat* upon me. So let him decrease or increase (his *salawat*) as he wishes."³¹¹ Let those who complain of people reciting "too much" *salawat* upon the Prophet Muhammad (asws) reflect upon these hadiths.

4) Imam Qastallani said in his commentary on Sahih Bukhari: "In his book on *Jana'iz* (Funerals, hadith #1298), Bukhari named an entire chapter "Dying on Monday." In it there is the hadith of 'A'isha relating her father's (Abu Bakr as-Siddiq) question: "On which day did the Prophet die?" She replied: "Monday." He asked: "What day are we today?" She said,

³⁰⁶ Recorded by Tirmidhi (#2381), Hakim (2:421, 513 *Sabih*), Imam Ahmad (5:137 #20290), Tabarani (*M. Kabir* 4:41-42 #3574 – Hasan: Haythami 10:160, Mundhiri 2:500-01), Abdur-Razzaq (#3114), Ibn Abi Shayba (2:399), Diya' (*Mukhtara*, #1185-88), Bayhaqi (*Shu'ab*, #1579-80), Bazzar (*Zawa'id*, 4:45-46), Ruyani (3:21), 'Abd ibn Humayd (#170), Ibn Shahin (#21), Qadi Isma'il (*Fadl as-Salat*, #13-14), and others. Hadith Sahih.

³⁰⁷ Recorded with thiqa narrators (Mundhiri's *Tarhib* 2:505, Haythami's *Majma'* 10:260) by Tabarani (*M. Amsat*, 1:220 #721), Bayhaqi (*Shu'ab*, 2:216 #1575), Daylami (*Musnad Firdaws*, 3:255 #4754), Abu'l Shaykh, and others.

³⁰⁸ Recorded by Bukhari in his *Tarikh al-Kabir* (5:177), Tirmidhi (*Kitab as-Salat*, #446), Bazzar (*Musnad* 4:278 #1446), Abu Ya'la (8:428 #5011, 9:13 #5080), Bayhaqi (*Shu'ab*, #1563-64), Tabarani in his *Mu'jam al-Kabir* (10:22 #9800), Ibn Hibban (3:192 #911), and Ibn 'Adiyy (*Kamil*, 3:906, 6:2342), from Ibn Mas'ud. Hadith Hasan, while Suyuti states it is Sahih (*Jami' Saghir* #2249). Cf. *Fath al-Bari* (11:167).

³⁰⁹ Recorded by Bukhari (#14), Muslim (#62-63), Imam Ahmad (#12349), Nasa'i (#4927-29), Ibn Majah (#66), Darimi (#2624), Bayhaqi (*Shu'ab*, #1374-75), Tabarani (*M. Amsat*, 8:355 #8859, also 6:59 #5790), 'Abd ibn Humayd (#1173), and others.

³¹⁰ Ibn Daylami (*Musnad Firdaws* – Da'if: Suyuti's *Jami' Saghir* #8312), Ibn Abi Dunya and Imam Ahmad (p. 259) in their *Kitab az-Zuhd*, Ibn Shahin (*Tarhib*, 1:191 #158), Abu Nu'aym (2:144), and Bayhaqi (*Shu'ab*, #501), with slight differences in wording. See also: Sakhawi (*Maqasid*, #1050) and 'Ajiluni (*Kashf*, #2352).

³¹¹ Recorded by Imam Ahmad (3:445-46), Ibn Majah (#897), Diya' al-Maqdisi, Ibn Abi Shayba (2:398), Abdur-Razzaq (#3115), Baghawi (#688), Bayhaqi (*Shu'ab*, #1557), Abu Nu'aym (1:180), Ibn Mubarak (*K. Zuhd*, #1026), Qadi Isma'il (*Fadl as-Salat*, #3, 6), 'Abd ibn Humayd (#317) and Ibn Ja'd (#896) in their *Musnads*, and it is Sahih according to Suyuti (*Jami' Saghir*, #8074) and Hasan according to Mundhiri (*Tarhib*, 2:500).

“O my father, this is Monday.” Then he raised his hands and said: “I beg you, O Allah, to let me die on Monday in order to coincide with the Prophet’s day of passing.” Imam Qastallani continues, “Why did Abu Bakr ask for his death to be on Monday? So that his death would coincide with the day of the Prophet’s passing, in order to receive the blessing of that day... Does anyone object to Abu Bakr’s asking to pass away on that day for the sake of blessing? Then why are people objecting to celebrating or emphasizing the day of the Prophet’s birth in order to get blessing?”

5) One lady came to the Prophet when he was returning from one of his battles and she said, “Ya Rasulallah, I have made an oath that if Allah sends you back safe, I would play this drum near you and sing for you.” The Prophet said, “Fulfill your oath.”³¹² One commentator wrote: “There is no doubt that the playing of a drum is a kind of entertainment, even though the Prophet (asws) ordered her to fulfill her oath. He did that because her intention was to honor him for returning safely, and her intention was a good intention, not with the intention of a sin or of wasting time. Therefore, if anyone celebrates the time of the birth of the Prophet in a good way, with a good intention, by reading *Sira* and praising him, it is accepted.”

6) When the Prophet (asws) reached Madina, he saw the Jews fasting on the day of ‘Ashura’. He asked about that day and they told him that on that day, Allah saved their Prophet, Sayyidina Musa (asws) and drowned their enemy. Therefore, they fast on that day to thank Allah for that favor. The Prophet (asws) replied, “We have more right to Musa than you,” and he used to fast that day and the day preceding it.³¹³ Similarly, the Prophet (asws) was ordered by Angel Jibril (asws) during the Isra’ to commemorate the birth of Sayyidina ‘Isa (asws) by dismounting from the Buraq in Bethlehem and praying at the place where he was born, precisely for that reason and no other.³¹⁴

7) Just as places can be blessed because of their connection to blessed people, times can similarly be blessed. As an example of this, the Prophet (asws) declared the day of Friday as a special day of ‘Eid because “it was the day in which Sayyidina Adam (asws) was created.”³¹⁵

³¹² Recorded by Abu Dawud (3:237 #2880), Tirmidhi (#3623), Imam Ahmad (5:353 #21911, 5:356 #21933), Ibn Hibban (#4386), Bayhaqi (*Sunan*, #20681), and Tabarani (*M. Amsat*, 4:191).

³¹³ Recorded by Bukhari (#3649), Muslim (#1910-11), Imam Ahmad (1:291, 310, 336, 340 and 2:359; also mentions that the Ark of Sayyidina Nuh landed on Judi on that day), Humaydi (1:452 #525), Tayalisi (#2747), and Abu Ya’la (4:441 #2567) in their Musnads, Darimi (#1694), Tabarani in his *Mu’jam Kabir* (12:25, 44, 50) and *Amsat* (7:107), Ibn Khuzayma (3:286 #2084), Bayhaqi in his *Sunan al-Kubra* (4:286, 289), Ibn Hibban (#3625), Baghawi (#1782), and many others. Similarly, Ibn Khuzayma (3:284) and Bayhaqi (4:289) record that the Prophet (asws) said, “Ashura is a day among the days (*ayyam*) of Allah.”

³¹⁴ Part of a longer hadith from Anas recorded by Imam Nasa’i (*Kitab as-Salat*, #446), and from Shaddad ibn Aws by Imam Bayhaqi in *Dala’il an-Nubuwwa* (2:355-57), Tabarani in his (*M. Kabir*, 7:283) and *Musnad al-Shamiyyin* (1:194 #341), Bazzar (8:409-10, *Zawa’id* 1:36), and Ibn ‘Asakir (65:281). Declared Sahih by Haythami (*Majma’* 1:73-74 #236), Ibn Hajar (*Isaba* 4:764), Bayhaqi, and Ibn Kathir (*Bidaya* 2:66, 75).

³¹⁵ Recorded by Imam Bukhari in his *Tarikh al-Kabir* (5:432), Imam Malik (#222), Muslim (#1410), Tirmidhi (#453), Nasa’i (#1356, 1413), Abu Dawud (#882), Imam Ahmad (#9041, 10141), Ibn Sa’d (*Tabaqat*, 1:30), Tayalisi (#2483), Abu Ya’la (10:331 #5925, 11:176 #6286), Bayhaqi in *Sunan al-Kubra* (3:250) and *Dala’il* (5:485), Ibn Khuzayma (#1729), Ibn Abi Shayba (2:398-99), Ibn Hibban (3:191 #910), Hakim (*Mustadrak*, 1:277-78, 2:544 *Sahih*), Tabarani (*M. Kabir* 5:23, *M. Amsat* 4:326), Bazzar (*Zawa’id*, 1:294 #615, 1:298 #620), Harith (*Zawa’id*, p. 67 #189), ‘Abd ibn Humayd (#309), Abu Shaykh (*K. Adhamab*, #888), Imam Shafi’i in his *Musnad* (1:277-28), Hakim Tirmidhi in his *Nawadir al-Usul* (Asl #192), and Daylami in *Firdaws* (#1397, #3297). See also Imam Suyuti’s *Tafsir Durr al-Manthur* (Q62:10).

Therefore, the day of Friday partly derives its blessings from the birthday of our common father Adam (upon him be peace). The same principle applies to the day of Monday being blessed, because on it fell the birthday of our Prophet (asws).

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani wrote ³¹⁶ in relation to this: “Abdur-Razzaq recorded (*Musannaf* 3:159-60 #5144) from Muhammad ibn Sirin with a Sahih chain of narrators that the Ansar of Madinah came together – before the Messenger (asws) came to them and before (Surat) al-Jum’a was revealed – and they said, ‘the Jews have a special day in the week for them in which they gather, as do the Christians, so let us make a special day for ourselves in which we gather to invoke (*dhikr*) Allah and pray and show our gratitude to Him,’ and so they chose the day of the Arabs (meaning, Friday), and As’ad ibn Zurara led them in prayer that day. Later on, Allah revealed the verses of Jum’a. Even though this hadith is *Mursal* (missing a Companion-link in its chain), it has authentic corroborating narrations (*shawahid*) which strengthen it, which are recorded by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Ibn Majah on the authority of Ka’b ibn Malik, and declared Sahih by Ibn Khuzayma (#1724) and others. This means that the Ansar chose the day of Friday thru independent reasoning (*ijtihad*)...and it is said that the wisdom behind the cause of choosing Friday is that Adam (asws) was created in that day, and that mankind was created for worship, so it is most proper that this day be a day of special worship; and also that on this day Allah completed the creation of things, from which the human derives benefits, so it is most appropriate that gratitude be expressed on that Day...”

The Prophet (asws) agreed to their gathering on this day, even though they did not wait for permission from him or an order. From this incident we also gain another indication of the desirability of commemorating the days in which great blessings occur.

8) Imam Suyuti writes: “I have derived the permissibility of Mawlid from another source of the Sunna (besides the hadith of ‘Ashura’), namely, the (authentic) hadith found in Bayhaqi (and others), narrated by Anas, that the Prophet (asws) slaughtered an ‘*Aqiqa* (sacrifice for newborns) for himself after he received the prophecy ³¹⁷, although it has been mentioned that his grandfather ‘Abd al-Muttalib did that on the seventh day after he was born, and the ‘*Aqiqa* cannot be repeated. Thus the reason for the Prophet’s (asws) action is to give thanks to Allah for sending him as a mercy to the worlds, and to give honor to his Umma, in the same way that he used to pray on himself. It is recommended for us, therefore, that we also show thanks for his birth by meeting with our brothers, by feeding people, and other such

³¹⁶ In his *Fath al-Bari* (2:355). Imam Suyuti also mentioned it in his *Tafsir Durr al-Manthur* (Surat al-Jum’a) and said that it was also recorded by ‘Abd ibn Humayd and Ibn Mundhir.

³¹⁷ Recorded by Bayhaqi in his *Sunan al-Kubra* (9:300), Ruyani (#1371), Ibn ‘Adiyy (4:1452), while Haythami said that Bazzar (*Zawa’id*, 2:74) and Tabarani narrated it, the latter with a Sahih chain (*Majma’* 4:59 #6203). The chains of Bayhaqi, Ruyani, and Bazzar contain Ibn Muharrar, who is very weak and abandoned as a narrator, according to Ibn Hajar, Bayhaqi, and others. However, the hadith is related thru other chains that do not include Ibn Muharrar, which are recorded by: Imam Tahawi in *Sharh Mushkil al-Athar* (ch. 162), Hafiz Diya’ al-Maqdisi in *al-Ahadith al-Mukhtara* (5:205, Sahih) – which is a collection of mostly Sahih hadiths, Tabarani in *Mu’jam al-Awsat* (1:298 #994) from Anas, Ibn Hazm in *al-Muhalla* (7:258) where he considers it Sahih, and Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bari* (9:595) mentions other chains recorded by Abu’l Shaykh thru Ibn al-Muthanna (from Thumama from Anas), whom Bukhari and others consider trustworthy, and Bukhari in his Sahih (#92, 93, 954, 1362, 2307, 3434, 4620, 5775) narrated a number of hadiths with this very chain, meaning that this hadith of the ‘*Aqiqa* is at least Hasan and most probably Sahih. Therefore, Imam Suyuti is correct in adducing it as one of the authentic proofs for the commemoration of the Mawlid.

good works and rejoicing.” This hadith confirms the aforementioned hadith of the Prophet’s (asws) emphasis on Monday as the day of his birthday and that of his prophet-hood.

Another objection against the Mawlid

Some of those who are against the commemoration of the Mawlid argue that the man who introduced it as it is celebrated today – Muzaffar Abu Sa’id the king of Irbil (d. 630H.) – was an evil man and other unfounded claims. Consider the testimony of our trustworthy scholars concerning this man...

Imam Dhahabi wrote in his *Siyar A’lam an-Nubala’* (22:335-336) about him: “He loved charity and built four hospices for the poor and sick... **He would forbid any reprehensible matter to enter into his country...** As for his celebration of the Noble Mawlid al-Nabawi, words are too poor to describe it. The people used to come all the way from Iraq and Algeria to attend it... Preachers would roam the field exhorting the people. Great sums were spent (as charity). He was modest, a lover of good, and a **true sunni** who loved scholars of jurisprudence and scholars of hadith, and was generous even to poets. He was killed in battle according to what is reported.”

Imam Ibn Kathir wrote in his *al-Bidaya wa’l Nihaya* (1966 ed., 13:136-137) the following about him: “He used to celebrate the noble Mawlid in Rabi’ al-Awwal and organize huge festivities for it. **He was a wise king, brave, a fierce fighter, intelligent, learned, and just.** May Allah have mercy on him and ennoble his grave. Shaykh Abu al-Khattab ibn Dihya compiled for him a book on the Mawlid of the Prophet (asws) and named it *al-Tanwir fi Mawlid al-Bashir al-Nadhir* and the king rewarded him with 1,000 dinars for it. His rule lasted until he died in the year 630H. as he was besieging the French in the city of ‘Akka (in Palestine) **after a glorious and blameless life.**”

I ask the reader to reflect upon the words of these trustworthy scholars, and see how their defense of King Muzaffar is a defense of the Mawlid itself. May Allah bless those who have no arrogance keeping them from accepting the truth when they see it!

The Celebration of Mawlid as Understood by the Scholars of Ahlus-Sunna

Ibn Taymiyya on the Mawlid

This is Ibn Taymiyya’s opinion about Mawlid from his *Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya* (23:132) and his *Iqtida’ al-sirat al-mustaqim* (Section on: “The innovated festivities of time and place”, p. 266):

“Also: what the people do, either as a competition with the Christians in their commemoration of the birth of ‘Isa (asws), or out of love and veneration of the Prophet (asws), and **indeed Allah will reward them for this act of love and sound inference.**” And: “Honoring the day of his birth and taking it as a date of celebration, as some people do, will confer upon them an immense reward, due to the soundness of their good intentions and their veneration (*ta’dhim*) of the Messenger (asws).” However, the Muslims never commemorated his birth to compete with the Christians, so this claim is unfounded.

Other scholars who wrote in support of the Mawlid include, but are not limited to:

- Hafiz Ibn Kathir ad-Dimashqi, in his book *Mawlid Rasul Allah* (published in Beirut in 1961, and edited by Salahuddin al-Munajjid), as mentioned by Hafiz Ibn Hajar in his *Durar al-Kamina*;
- Imam Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani and Imam Jalaluddin as-Suyuti (and his Shaykh Hafiz al-Munawi), as detailed in his *Hawi lil-Fatawa* (1:196) – see below;
- Ibn Hajar al-Haytami in his *Itmam an-Ni’ma ‘ala-l ‘Alam bi Mawlid Sayyid walad Adam*
- The Shafi’i Mufti of Makka Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan (d. 1304H.), in his book *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya wa al-Athar al-Muhammadiyya* (p. 51), wrote: “To celebrate the Mawlid and to remember the Prophet (asws) is accepted by all the ‘Ulama.”
- Shaykh al-Islam Taqiyyudin as-Subki said, “When we celebrate the Prophet’s birthday, a great *uns* (pleasure) comes to our heart, and we feel something special.”
- Imam Shawkani, in his book *al-Badr at-tal’*, said, “It is permissible to celebrate the Prophet’s birthday.”
- Mullah ‘Ali Qari al-Hanafi held the same opinion in his book entitled *al-Mawrid ar-Rawi fi al-Mawlid al-Nabawi*.
- Hafiz Sakhawi said, “The Mawlid was begun three centuries after the Prophet, and all Muslim nations celebrated it, and all ‘Ulama accepted it, by worshipping Allah alone, by giving donations and by reading the Prophet’s Sira” (quoted in *Sira Halabiyya* 1:83-84). He also wrote a book in defense of the Mawlid called *al-Fakhr al-Ulwi fi’l Mawlid an-Nabawi*.
- Ibn al-Jawzi wrote a booklet of poems and sira to be read at mawlid celebrations. It is entitled *Mawlid al-‘Arus*. He also said that commemoration of the Mawlid constitutes Divine protection for that year (quoted in *Sira Halabiyya*).
- San’ani in his *Subul as-Salam* (2:166)
- Ibn al-Haj al-Maliki in his *Madkhal* (1:361)
- ‘Ali al-Halabi in his *Sira Halabiyya* (1:83-84) where he also quotes other scholars
- Hafiz Shihabuddin al-Qastallani al-Maliki, in his *Mawahib Ladunniyya* (1:147-48)
- Imam Shamsuddin al-Jazri, in his *‘Urf at-Ta’rif bi’l Mawlid ash-Sharif*
- Ibn Dihya al-Maliki, in his *Tanwir fi Mawlid al-Bashir an-Nadhir*
- Hafiz Ibn Nasir ad-Din ad-Dimashqi, in his *al-Mawlid as-Sadi fi Mawlid al-Hadi*
- Hafiz al-‘Iraqi, in his *al-Mawrid al-Haniyy fi’l Mawlid as-Saniyy*
- Imam Muhammad Ibn ‘Abidin al-Hanafi in his *Sharh Mawlid Ibn Hajar*.

Shaykh Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti said (*Hawi lil Fatawi* 1:196): “The Shaykh of Islam and hadith master of his time, Ahmad ibn Hajar (‘Asqalani) was asked about the practice of commemorating the birth of the Prophet, and gave the following written reply:

“As for the origin of the practice of commemorating the Prophet’s birth, it is an innovation that has not been conveyed to us from any of the pious early Muslims of the first three centuries, despite which it has included both features that are praiseworthy and features that are not. If one takes care to include in such a commemoration only things that are praiseworthy and avoids those that are otherwise, **it is a praiseworthy innovation**, while if one does not, it is not. An authentic primary textual basis from which its legal validity is inferable has occurred to me, namely the authentic hadith in the collections of Bukhari and

Muslim that the Prophet came to Medina and found the Jews fasting on the tenth of Muharram ('Ashura'), so he asked them about it and they replied: "It is the day on which Allah drowned Pharaoh and rescued Moses, so we fast in it to thanks to Allah Most high," which indicates the validity of giving thanks to Allah for the blessings He has bestowed on a particular day in providing a benefit, or averting an affliction, *repeating one's thanks on the anniversary of that day every year, "giving thanks" to Allah taking any various forms of worship* such as prostration, fasting, charity or reciting the Qur'an... And what blessing is greater than the birth of the Prophet (asws) – the Prophet of Mercy – on this day?"

Did the Sahaba commemorate the birthday of the Prophet (asws)?

Yes, it is a well recorded fact that they did commemorate his birthday by fasting on Monday, like the Prophet himself did when he told them he fasted on Mondays because it was the day he was born (thereby commemorating his own day of birth), and also by composing and reciting poetry in praise of the Prophet (for example: Ka'b ibn Zubayr, Abdullah ibn Rawaha, Hassan ibn Thabit, Qurra ibn Hubayr, and many others), and through other expressions of joy, due to which he (asws) would reward them greatly (as narrated by the compilers of Sira, such as Ibn Sayyid an-Nas in his *Minah al-Madb*, who listed the names of over 180 companions who composed praise-poetry for him asws). Anyone who claims otherwise, that the Sahaba did not commemorate his day of birth but rather ignored it, will have to answer before them on the Day of Judgment for his claims. Let us look at some detailed examples:

1) The uncle of the Prophet (asws), al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (RA) said: "And then, **when you were born**, a light rose over the earth until it illuminated the horizon with its radiance. We are in that illumination and that original light and those paths of guidance and thanks to them we pierce through."³¹⁸ The light mentioned by al-'Abbas is confirmed by the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) himself in the famous narration describing his own birth. 'Irbad ibn Sariya and Abu Umama - Allah be well-pleased with both of them - said that the Prophet said: "I am the supplication of my father Ibrahim, and the good tidings of my brother 'Isa. The **night I was delivered** my mother saw a light that lit the castles of Damascus so that she could see them."

2) Ibn Hisham, in the last lines of his Sira, related that the poet of the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) Hassan ibn Thabit (RA) said: "By Allah, no woman has conceived and **given birth** to one like the Messenger, the Prophet and guide of his people. Nor has Allah created among his creatures One more faithful to his sojourner or his promise Than he who was the source of our light." This is clearly commemoration of his birth set in poetry.

3) Consider what the noble Ansari companions sung together as the Prophet (asws) was making his way into Madinah: "The full moon rose over us from the mountains of al-Wada'! **We must give thanks** as long as there remains one who calls unto Allah!"

³¹⁸ Ibn Sayyid al-Nas narrated it with his isnad through al-Tabarani and al-Bazzar in *Minah al-Madb* (p. 192-193), also Ibn Kathir in *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya* (ed. Mustafa `Abd al-Wahid 4:51), and `Ali al-Qari in his *Sharh al-Shifa`* (1:364) says it is narrated by Abu Bakr al-Shafi`i and al-Tabarani, and cited by Ibn `Abd al-Barr in *al-Isti`ab* and Ibn al-Qayyim in *Zad al-Ma`ad*.

4) Finally, part of the funeral eulogy Hassan ibn Thabit recited for the Prophet states: *“I say, and none can find fault with me/ But one lost to all sense and kept far/ My love shall never cease to praise him/ It may be for so doing I shall be forever in Paradise/ With the Chosen One for whose support in that I hope/ And to attain to that day I devote all my efforts”*.³¹⁹

As for the hollow argument that Mawlid celebrations should be banned because of some unlawful activities that take place in some of them, then one should similarly forbid weddings celebrations, ‘Eid al-Fitr celebrations, ‘Eid al-Adha celebrations, and other similar ones because people perform unlawful activities in these too.

Who, then, can forbid the commemoration of his birth (in the *Mawlid Sharif*) after:

- 1) Allah commanding us to rejoice in His bounties and mercies, and he (asws) is the greatest mercy from Allah to us;
- 2) The Prophet (asws) himself commemorating his own day of birth by fasting on every Monday, and his companions also fasting on Monday for the same reason;
- 3) His companions composing poetry specifically for the occasion of his birth and in praise of him;
- 4) The scholars of the Ahlus-Sunna supporting the Mawlid and participating in it and composing books about it, finding nothing reprehensible about it (save for illicit practices later introduced to it, like free mixing and immoral dancing).

We should now clearly understand why the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) is supported by the Qur’an, by the Sunna, and by the majority consensus of the scholars of Ahl us-Sunna. The Prophet (asws) has told us that “this Ummah will never come together (as a consensus) upon misguidance, and the Support of Allah is with the gathering.”³²⁰ Therefore, the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet (asws) is not only allowed but recommended in Islam.

³¹⁹ Narrated by Ibn Hisham in his *Sira* (6:91) and Ibn Kathir in his *Bidaya* (5:281).

³²⁰ Recorded by Ibn Majah (#3940 Sahih – Suyuti’s *Jami’ Saghir* #2221), Tirmidhi (*K Fitan* #2093), Abu Dawud (#3711), Nasa’i (*Sunan Kubra*, #3483), Bayhaqi in *Asma’ wa Sifat* (p. 322 *Sahib*) and *Shu’ab al-Iman* (6:67 #7517), Abu Nu’aym (*Hilya*, 3:37, 9:238), Hakim (1:115-16, 4:556 *Sahib*), ‘Abd ibn Humayd (*Musnad*, #1218), Ahmad (*Musnad*, #25966), Darimi (#54, *Da’ij*), Quda’i (1:167 #239), Daraqutni in his *Sunan* (4:245), Ibn Abi Shayba (8:604, 672, 683), Tabarani in his *Mu’jam al-Kabir* (1:153 #489, 1:186, 3:209, 12:447, and 17:239-40, Sahih according to Haythami in his *Majma’* 5:218-19) and *Mu’jam al-Awsat* (5:122, 6:277, 7:193), Ibn Abi ‘Asim in his *Kitab as-Sunna* (p. 39-41 #80-85, p. 44 #92), Ishaq ibn Rahawayh (*Matalib*, 5:7), Daylami (*Firdaws*, #1667, #8165-66), Harith (*Zawa’id*, p. 36 #54), and others. And it is well-known and authentic. See also ‘Ajluni’s *Kashf al-Khafa’* (#2999) and Sakhawi’s *Maqasid* (#1288).