

Why We Remember the Prophet's Birth ﷺ

Introduction:

Dear brothers and sisters!

Throughout Islamic history, the Ummah has faced different intellectual and religious challenges. At various times, ideas have arisen that created confusion about matters firmly established in Islam, such as the finality of Prophethood and the authority of the Sunnah. Allah says regarding the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

“وَلَكِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

But he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets.” (Al-Aḥzab 33:40).

Such challenges remind us of the importance of understanding our religion through sound knowledge and the guidance of recognized scholarship.

Similarly, as soon as Rabīʿ al-Awwal arrives, discussions begin about commemorating the birth of the Prophet ﷺ. Sometimes these discussions become unnecessarily harsh and create confusion among ordinary Muslims. Our purpose is not to argue with those who choose not to commemorate Mawlid. Rather, it is to explain why Muslims across the world have, for centuries, used this blessed occasion to thank Allah, remember the Sirah, send ṣalawat upon the Prophet ﷺ, give charity, and renew their love for him.

The real question is simple: Is it permissible to thank Allah for sending His Messenger? Is it permissible to rejoice in Allah's mercy, remember the Sirah, feed people, recite Qur'an, and send ṣalawat? These are all established acts of goodness. Therefore, Mawlid should be understood through the principles and objectives of the Sharia rather than through slogans and arguments.

1. The Birth of the Prophet ﷺ Is a Great Blessing

The coming of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was among Allah's greatest blessings upon humanity. Through him we received the Qur'an, learned our religion, and were shown the path to Allah.

Allah says:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ

“Indeed, Allah bestowed a great favor upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from themselves.” (Ale-Imran 3:164)

Allah also commands:

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

“And proclaim the blessing of your Lord.” (Al-Duḥā 93:11)

If Allah commands us to acknowledge His blessings, then remembering and thanking Him for the blessing of His beloved Messenger ﷺ is certainly meaningful. This is why Muslims use Rabi‘ al-Awwal to remember the Prophet ﷺ, study his life, teach his character, and express gratitude to Allah.

2. Remembering the Great Days of Allah

Allah says:

وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ

“And remind them of the Days of Allah.” (Ibrahim 14:5)

The Qur’an reminds us of significant days when Allah manifested His mercy, assistance, and blessings. The birth of the Prophet ﷺ marked the beginning of an extraordinary mercy for humanity.

Allah says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“We have not sent you except as a mercy to all the worlds.” (Al-Anbiya 21:107)

Therefore, Rabi‘ al-Awwal is an opportunity to remember that mercy and ask ourselves how much of the Prophet’s ﷺ guidance is present in our own lives.

3. Rejoicing in Allah’s Mercy

Allah says:

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا

“Say: In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy, in that let them rejoice.” (Yunus 10:58)

The Qur’an describes the Prophet ﷺ himself as a mercy to the worlds. Therefore, scholars who permitted Mawlid understood expressing happiness at the coming of the Messenger ﷺ as consistent with the Qur’anic principle of rejoicing in Allah’s guidance and mercy.

Of course, this happiness must remain within the boundaries of Islam. A Mawlid gathering should encourage Qur'an, Sirah, ṣalawat, charity, beneficial knowledge, and greater obedience to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

4. “The Prophet ﷺ Did Not Celebrate His Birthday”

A common objection is that the Prophet ﷺ did not organize an annual Mawlid gathering.

Here we should understand an important juristic principle:

تَرْكُ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ لِفِعْلٍ مِنَ الْأَفْعَالِ لَيْسَ دَلِيلًا بِمُجَرَّدِهِ عَلَى حُرْمَةِ ذَلِكَ الْفِعْلِ

“The Prophet’s leaving an action is not, by itself, evidence that the action is prohibited.”

Not everything absent from the Prophetic period automatically becomes haram. Today, for example, Islamic teachings are delivered through English lectures, microphones, websites, online classes, conferences, and many other methods that did not exist in the first generation. These are means used to accomplish legitimate Islamic objectives.

Likewise, Mawlid is not the ultimate objective. It is a wasilah, a means. The objective is to increase our love for the Prophet ﷺ, learn his Sirah, strengthen our relationship with Allah, and revive the Sunnah.

The jurists state:

مَا لَا يَتِمُّ الْوَاجِبُ إِلَّا بِهِ فَهُوَ وَاجِبٌ

“Whatever is necessary for fulfilling an obligation takes the ruling of that obligation.”

Similarly, permissible means may be used to facilitate recommended religious objectives. An alarm clock is not Fajr prayer, but it helps us reach the objective of praying Fajr on time. In the same way, a gathering is a means; remembering, loving, and following the Prophet ﷺ are the objectives.

5. The Prophet ﷺ Remembered Significant Days

When the Prophet ﷺ arrived in Madinah, he found the Jews fasting on ‘Ashura’ because Allah had saved Musa (AS) from Pharaoh on that day. The Prophet ﷺ said:

نَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِمُوسَى مِنْكُمْ

“We have a greater right to Musa than you.”

He then fasted and instructed the Muslims to fast. (Bukhari, no. 2004; Muslim, no. 1130)

This shows that remembering a particular day because Allah granted a great blessing on that day has a basis in the Sunnah.

More importantly, the Prophet ﷺ himself connected Monday with his birth. When asked about fasting on Monday, he said:

ذَٰكَ يَوْمٌ وَلِدْتُ فِيهِ، وَيَوْمٌ بُعِثْتُ أَوْ أُنْزِلَ عَلَيَّ فِيهِ

“That is the day on which I was born and the day on which I was commissioned [as a Prophet] or revelation was sent down to me.” (Muslim, 1162)

The Prophet ﷺ did not organize the later historical form of Mawlid, but this Hadith clearly shows that he acknowledged the day of his birth through an act of worship and gratitude.

6. Gratitude Can Be Expressed in Different Permissible Ways

The Prophet ﷺ expressed gratitude through fasting. Muslims may also express gratitude through other permissible acts: giving charity, feeding people, reciting Qur'an, studying Sirah, sending ṣalawat, or teaching their children about the Prophet ﷺ.

Allah says:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more.” (Ibrahim 14:7)

Therefore, the issue is not that everyone must express gratitude in exactly the same form. The essential requirement is that the means itself remains permissible and the intention is sincere.

7. “Are You Celebrating His Death?”

Some ask: “If the Prophet ﷺ passed away in Rabi‘ al-Awwal, are you also celebrating his death?”

The precise numerical date of the Prophet's ﷺ passing has been discussed differently by historians and Sirah scholars. The 12th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal is famous, but it is not an uncontested historical conclusion.

More importantly, Islam judges actions according to intention. The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

“Actions are only according to intentions, and every person will have only what he intended.” (Bukhari, 1; Muslim, 1907)

Muslims gathering for Mawlid intend to thank Allah for the birth and mission of His Messenger ﷺ. They are not celebrating his passing.

8. “Mawlid Is Bid‘ah”

Another common objection is that Mawlid is bid'ah. Certainly, innovations that contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah are rejected. But Muslim scholars have distinguished between blameworthy religious innovation and new arrangements or means used to accomplish something already recognized by the Sharia.

During his caliphate, Sayyiduna Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab organized people to perform the Ramadan night prayer behind one imam. Seeing them gathered, he said:

نِعْمَ الْبِدْعَةُ هَذِهِ

“What an excellent bid'ah this is!” (Bukhari, 2010)

Sayyiduna 'Umar did not invent Tarawih itself. It already had a basis in the Sunnah. He organized its regular congregational performance. This demonstrates that something can be new in its organization without being a prohibited alteration of Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ also said:

مَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً حَسَنَةً فَلَهُ أَجْرُهَا وَأَجْرُ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا بَعْدَهُ

“Whoever initiates a good practice in Islam will have its reward and the reward of those who act upon it after him.” (Muslim, 1017)

This does not permit inventing new beliefs or contradicting the Sunnah. Rather, it shows that introducing or reviving beneficial practices within the established framework of Islam can be rewarded.

9. The Real Purpose of Mawlid

After all these arguments, there is a more important question: What does our love for the Prophet ﷺ produce in our lives?

Allah says:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ

“Say, ‘If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you.’” (Ale-Imran 3:31)

The greatest evidence of love is following the Messenger ﷺ.

If we celebrate Mawlid but neglect Salah, honesty, mercy, good character, and the Sunnah, we have missed its purpose. Rabi' al-Awwal should bring the Prophet ﷺ into our daily lives: his mercy into our homes, his honesty into our businesses, his forgiveness into our relationships, his worship into our nights, and his Sunnah into our character.

Conclusion:

Dear brothers and sisters!

Mawlid should not become merely an annual argument about terminology, dates, or customs. Its real purpose is to strengthen our relationship with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and, through him, our relationship with Allah. Muslims have used this occasion for centuries to study the Sirah, recite Qur'an, send ṣalawat, feed people, give charity, and thank Allah for sending His beloved Messenger ﷺ.

At the same time, disagreement over Mawlid should not create hatred among Muslims. Those who choose not to commemorate it should not be attacked, and those who gather within the limits of Sharia to remember the Prophet ﷺ should not casually be accused of misguidance. What must unite us is our love, respect, obedience, and commitment to Muhammad ﷺ.

Therefore, let this Rabi' al-Awwal bring a genuine change into our lives. Let us learn more about his Sirah, increase our ṣalawat, revive his Sunnah, improve our character, show mercy to others, and introduce our children to the Messenger ﷺ. May Allah fill our hearts with sincere love for His beloved Prophet ﷺ and grant us the ability to follow his Sunnah throughout our lives. Amin.