

# The Ruling on Using Musical Entertainment to Gather People for the Purpose of Da'wah

*-The Methodology of the People of Sunnah Concerning Calling the Sinful to Righteousness-<sup>1</sup>*

By the Illustrious Scholar,  
Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728)

An enlightening piece authored by the tremendous Scholar of the middle-ages of Islaam, Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah. A scholarly approach to the topic is made, establishing the basis of the argument from the book and the Sunnah, then exposing the faults and corruption in the proposed practise of using music to gather the people towards Allah.

Shaykhul-Islaam states:

*"...the fact that those who understand these innovated musical gatherings to be a valid means unto Allah, give precedence to these gatherings over gatherings in which the Qur`ān is recited, pondered and thus reflected upon. It is also possible that these individuals intentionally gave precedence to music over the Qur`ān, to the extent that they would only listen to the Qur`ān with heedless hearts, mimicking tongues, wavering actions, voices deemed unacceptable to the hearts, and dispositions that are not comforted by its recitation.*

*So if they were to hear whistling and handclapping, their hearts would become attentive, they would draw closer to their beloved, voices would lower, individuals would remain motionless. There would be no coughing, sneezing, clamoring, or raised voices. But if something was recited from the Qur`ān or they heard something from the Qur`ān, then this would be something that was unwanted and overbearing just as people find it difficult to listen to what they feel is unnecessary, contains no benefit, or what they feel they are in no need of."*

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<sup>1</sup> This passage of *Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah* has been translated by *Abū-Layth Qasim ibn Aggrey Mutiva* and can be found in its original Arabic on pages 237-245 from volume 11 of *Majmū` Fatāwá*.

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<sup>1</sup> This table of contents has been added by the editor.

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## **The Question**

**Q:** The *Shaykh* of Islam and sign of his times, *Taqī ud-Dīn Abul-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdul-Ḥalīm ibn ‘Abdus-Salām ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Abīl-Qāsim ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarānī* (رحمته الله) was asked concerning a gathering of individuals who were brought together because of their sinfulness and because of their falling into the major sins (*al-Kabā'ir*); like killing, hijacking, theft, consuming intoxicants, and other than this.

In these gatherings, a *Shaykh* who is well-known for his uprightness and adherence to the *Sunnah* and who intends to prevent the aforementioned individuals from their acts of disobedience is unable to reach out to these individuals except by way of a gathering that involves a type of singing.

The singing is accompanied by a drum but without cymbals. This type of singing involves permissible poetry without the musical accompaniment of a reed flute. So when gatherings of this nature were held, a group from amongst them repented. Suddenly the ones who did not pray, stole things, and withheld the *Zakah* began to stay away from doubtful matters and observe the obligations imposed upon them while abstaining from that which has been prohibited.

So is this type of outreach by the *Shaykh* which involves singing in the manner that has been described to you permissible because of what may result of it of benefit? Especially considering that he (the *Shaykh*) might not be able to get through to these individuals without using this approach.

## A Foundational Principle – Actions Must Be In Accordance with the Book of Allaah and the Authenticated Sunnah

**A:** All praise is for Allah, the Lord of creation. The principle that can be used as a foundation to address this issue and other similar or related issues is the following: Let it be known that Allah sent *Muhammad* (ﷺ) with guidance and the religion of truth to distinctly establish it over all other religions and sufficient is Allah as a witness. As Allah the Exalted says: **“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and chosen for you Islam as your religion.”** [*Sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:3]

Certainly, he [*Muhammad* (ﷺ)] gave glad tidings of happiness and bliss for those who obey him and foretold of wretchedness and misery for those who disobey him. Allah the Exalted says in this regard: **“And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, then they will be in the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace; from the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, and how excellent these companions are.”** [*Sūrah al-Nisā'* 4:69]

And (elsewhere) Allah says: **“And whomever disobeys Allah and His Messenger; then indeed for him is the fire of Hell wherein they will abide forever.”** [*Sūrah al-Jinn* 72:23]

And Allah has commanded His creation; whenever they differ in matters of religion, to refer back to what was sent to them as He says: **“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those in authority from among you. And if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, then refer it back to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is the best and most suitable determination.”** [*Sūrah al-Nisā'* 4:59]

And He similarly, informed His creation that the Messenger [*Muhammad* (ﷺ)] calls the people to Allah and to the straight path of Allah as He the Exalted says: **“Say: This is my way; I invite unto Allah with insight; myself and those who follow me.”** [*Sūrah Yūsuf* 12:108] And He the Exalted says: **“And surely, [O *Muhammad*], you guide to a straight path. The path of Allah, to whom belongs**

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**everything in the heavens and everything in the earth. Unquestionably, to Allah [all] matters return.” [Sūrah ash-Shūrā 42:52-53]**

Allah has informed [His creation] that the Messenger [Muḥammad (ﷺ)] commands the good and forbids the evil, permits everything virtuous and pure and prohibits anything that involves evil and wickedness as Allah the Exalted says: **“And my mercy encompasses all things and I will decree it for those who possess taqwá and those who give the Zakah and believe in our verses. It is for those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whose mention they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel. [He is] the one who enjoins upon them the good and forbids them from evil; and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their own burdens and the shackles which were upon them. So the ones who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him; then it is those who will be the successful.”** [Sūrah al-A‘raf 7:156-157]

## **The Messenger (ﷺ) Has Commanded Every Good, Forbade Every Evil**

Indeed Allah commanded the Messenger (ﷺ) to encourage every good and forbid every evil just as he made lawful the virtuous and pure things and prohibited wickedness and evil. It has been established in an authentic narration that the Messenger (ﷺ) said: “Allah did not send a Prophet except that it was an obligation upon him to direct his nation towards goodness in the best manner known to him, and similarly to prohibit them from evil in the best manner known to him.”<sup>1</sup>

It has been authentically established upon the authority of *al-‘Irbād ibn Sāriyah* that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) gave us an admonition that made our hearts tremble and made our eyes shed tears. So we said to him: O Messenger of Allah, it is as if this is a farewell admonition; so with what do you command us? He (ﷺ) replied: I resolutely advise you to hear and to obey. For indeed those from amongst you who live long after me will witness great differing. So I beseech you

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<sup>1</sup> Transmitted by *Muslim* in the Book of *Imārah* and also the *Sunan* of *Ibn Mājah* in the Book of *Fitn*.

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to uphold my *Sunnah* and the *Sunnah* of my rightly guided successors (caliphs) who will follow me. Grab hold of it (this *Sunnah*) and cling to it with your molar teeth. And beware of newly invented matters. For indeed every (religious) innovation is misguidance.”<sup>1</sup>

It has also been authentically established that he (ﷺ) said: “I have not left anything that distances an individual from the Hellfire except that I have spoken to you concerning it.” And he (ﷺ) said: “I have left you upon clear white proof; its night is like its day, no one strays from it except that they are destroyed.”<sup>2</sup>

And the supporting evidence for this great and comprehensive principle is numerous and found throughout the *Qur`ān* and the *Sunnah*. This evidence is interpreted and further explained by the people of knowledge in their books. In the chapter entitled: Holding Fast to the *Qur`ān* and *Sunnah*, *al-Bukhārī* interprets this narration as does *al-Baghawī* who interprets this narration elsewhere as well as others besides them.

So whoever holds fast to the *Qur`ān* and the *Sunnah*, is considered from those who are close to Allah and possessors of *taqwá*, the party of Allah who are successful, and His triumphant and conquering army. The *salaf* – the like of *Imām Mālik* and other than him - used to say: “The *Sunnah* is like the ark of *Nuh* (Noah), whomever embarks upon it is saved and whomever forsakes it drowns.” *Az-Zuhrī* said: “Those who preceded us from our scholars used to say: Holding on to the *Sunnah* is a means of attaining success.”

## **Correction, Guidance and the Call to Uprightness can only be Upon the Principles Obtained in the Book and the Sunnah**

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<sup>1</sup> Narrated by *Abū Dāwud* in the Book of *Sunnah* and *at-Tirmidhī* in the Book of Knowledge and *at-Tirmidhī* said concerning this narration that it is *Ḥasan/Ṣaḥīḥ*. An extensive discussion of one of the wordings of this narration can be found in the book: *Silsilatul-Aḥādīth aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah* by *Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣirud-Dīn al-Albānī*. The discussion in question can be found on pages 526-529 from volume 6 of the book wherein narration number 2735 is examined.

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by *Aḥmad* and *Ibn Mājah* in his introduction. *Shaykh al-Albānī* declared this narration *Ṣaḥīḥ* in his book *Ṣaḥīḥ at-Targhīb wat-Tarhīb* volume 1 page 88.

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So if all of this is understood [correctly], then it becomes apparent that what Allah guides the misguided with, and leads the misled to, and uses as a means to forgive the repentant, can only be what He has sent His Messenger with by way of the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah*. So if we were to assume [for the sake of argument] that what Allah sent His Messenger (ﷺ) with was not sufficient in this regard, then it must be concluded that the religion of the Messenger is deficient and requires something else to complete it. It is also important to know that the righteous actions that Allah has commanded are either obligatory or strongly encouraged whereas the baseless and corrupt actions are strictly prohibited.

And the actions which involve both, benefit and corruption or harm; then most certainly the One who has revealed legislation concerning it is All-Wise. So if the benefit of an action outweighs its potential harms, then it is legislated and conversely if its harms outweigh its benefits, it is not made lawful. Rather, this action becomes prohibited as Allah says: **“Fighting has been prescribed for you while it is something detested by you. But perhaps you hate a thing that is better for you; and perhaps you love a thing yet it is worse for you. Allah Knows, while you do not know.”** [*Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:216]

Similarly, Allah the Exalted says: **“They ask you about intoxicants and gambling. Say: In them is great sin and benefit for mankind. But the sin of them is greater than the benefit.”** [*Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:219] So for this reason, Allah the Exalted prohibited these actions thereafter [i.e. after the revelation of this verse].

So in light of this, whatever is seen from the people in terms of actions thought to be a means of drawing closer to Allah, yet these actions have not been legislated or sanctioned by Allah or His Messenger; then it must be known that the harms of these actions must outweigh the [perceived] benefits. However, if this was not the case and the benefits of such actions far outweighed the harm contained in them, then the like of these actions would not have been overlooked or neglected by the one who legislates them.

This is because the legislator is wise and would not neglect or overlook something that would benefit the religion or bring the believers closer to the Lord of creation.

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**The One Who Calls to Correction upon Evil, Sinful or Innovatory  
Practises is an Ignorant Caller**

So if all of this has become clear, then we respond to the questioner with the following: If the *Shaykh* mentioned [by the questioner] intended to assist those whom he gathered together to repent and turn away from the major sins, however he was unable to do so without resorting to the innovated means that have been mentioned, then this is a clear indication that the *Shaykh* is either ignorant of the ways legislated by Allah and His Messenger for the sinful to repent or unable to implement them.

Certainly the Messenger (ﷺ), the companions, and their students used to call people who were far more deeply rooted in disbelief, disobedience, and transgression with a type of outreach that was legislated in the religion such that they were in no need of resorting to innovated practices [foreign to the religion of Islam].

So it is not permissible to say that there is no way of encouraging the sinful to repent found in the legislation of Islam which Allah sent His Messenger with. For indeed it is known from the religion by necessity and has been conveyed to us by an overwhelming number of *Hadīth* coming from a similarly large number of narrators that he [the Prophet (ﷺ)] caused so many to repent from disbelief, disobedience, and transgression by virtue of ways and means that were legislated in the religion, that the true number of individuals can be known only by Allah the Exalted.

So there was no need to resort to innovated practices. Rather, the first and the foremost (in belief) from the *Muhājirūn* (those who migrated from *Makkah* to *Madīnah*) and the *Anṣār* (the inhabitants of *Madīnah* who welcomed the Prophet and his companions) and those who followed them upon goodness, and they are considered the best of those who have *taqwá* and those who are closest to Allah from this great nation; these illustrious individuals repented to Allah by virtue of the means and ways legislated by Allah and not by the innovated ways [of those who came after them].

And the lands of the Muslims and their villages and cities both past and present are filled with examples of individuals who turned back to Allah in repentance,



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and drew closer to Him with actions that He loves and is pleased with from the legislation of Islam and not by way of these newly innovated practices.

So it is not possible to say that the sinful cannot be encouraged to repent without resorting to these new innovated ways of making outreach. Rather, it is more befitting that one says: From amongst the *Shuyūkh* are those who are either ignorant of the legislated ways of calling the sinful to righteousness or unable to do so.

So these individuals do not possess knowledge of the *Qur'ān* nor the *Sunnah* or the ways to address the people that will cause the people to listen to them or the reasons why Allah will accept the people's repentance.

So this *Shaykh's* ignorance of these matters caused him to forsake the legislated means of calling the sinful to righteousness in favor of innovated practices. This individual did this either with a good intention if he was a religious individual or in an effort to gain control over those individuals and to acquire their wealth unjustly as Allah the Exalted says: **"O you who believe! Certainly many of the learned and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and mislead [them] from the way of Allah."** [*Sūrah at-Tawbah* 9:34]

So a person does not forsake the means and ways legislated by Islam in favor of newly invented ways except due to their own ignorance, inability, or evil intentions.

## **The Rectifying Effects of Guidance Built Upon the Admonitions of the Qur'aan and Sunnah**

And if this is not the case, then clearly assembling to listen intently to the speech of Allah is an action observed by the Prophets as well as the learned and the believers in general as Allah the Exalted says [concerning the prophets]: **"They were those whom Allah blessed from the prophets who descended from Adam and those whom We carried [upon the ship] along with Nūḥ (Noah), and those who descended from Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and Isrā'īl (Israel), and those whom**

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**We guided and selected. When the verses of the Most Merciful were recited to them, they fell down in prostration - weeping."** [*Sūrah Maryam* 19:58]

And Allah says concerning the learned: **"And if they hear what was revealed to the Messenger you will see their eyes begin to swell with tears from what they recognize of the truth."** [*Sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:83]. And Allah the Exalted says concerning the people of knowledge: **"Indeed, those who were given knowledge before it - if it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration. And they say: Glorified is our Lord! Certainly, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled. And they fall upon their faces weeping, and [its recitation] increases them in humble submission."** [*Sūrah al-Isrā'* 17:107-109]

And Allah says concerning the believers: **"Certainly the believers are strictly those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts tremble, and when His verses are recited to them, their faith increases; and upon their Lord they rely. They are the ones who establish the prayer, and from what We have provided them, they spend charitably. Those are the true believers."** [*Sūrah al-Anfāl* 8:2-4].

And Allah the Exalted says: **"Allah has sent down the best of speech: a consistent Book wherein there are reminders. The skin of those who fear their Lord shivers; then both their skin and their hearts find relief at the remembrance of Allah; that is the guidance of Allah."** [*Sūrah az-Zumar* 39:23]

In this type of gathering, Allah guides His servants, rectifies the affairs of their livelihood in this life as well as their station in the hereafter, and with this Allah sent the Messenger (ﷺ). The *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* were commanded with this as were those who followed them upon righteousness. And upon this the *salaf* used to gather just as the companions of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) whenever they would gather, they used to command an individual from amongst them to recite for them while the others would listen.

## **Examples of the Righteous Gatherings of the First Generation**

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'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) used to say to Abū Mūsá: "Remind us of our Lord." Then he (Abū Mūsá) would recite while the others would listen.

It has been authentically established that the Prophet (ﷺ) passed by Abū Mūsá al-Ash'arī while he was reciting the Qur'ān. So the Prophet (ﷺ) remained in his presence such that he could listen to his recitation of the Qur'ān. Then he (ﷺ) said: "Certainly, you have been given this instrument which is similar to the instruments endowed to the family of Dāwud (David)."<sup>1</sup>

And he (ﷺ) said: "I passed by you last night while you were reciting and I stopped to listen to your recitation." Then he (Abū Mūsá) replied: "Had I known that you were listening to me, I would have beautified for you my recitation."<sup>2</sup>

It has also been authentically established that the Prophet (ﷺ) said to Ibn Mas'ūd: "Recite for me the Qur'ān." Ibn Mas'ūd replied: "Should I recite unto you the Qur'ān while it was revealed to you?!" The Prophet (ﷺ) responded saying: "I like to hear it recited by other than myself." Ibn Mas'ūd went on to say: "So I recited for him *Sūrah an-Nisā'* until I reached the verse: **"So how [will it be] when We bring forth from every nation a witness and we bring you, [O Muhammad] as these a witness over all of them?!"**[*Sūrah an-Nisā'* 4:41]. He then said to me: "This is sufficient." Then when I looked to him, I saw that his eyes had swelled from his tears."<sup>3</sup>

So this was the type of gathering that was established by the earliest generations of Muslims whom the Prophet (ﷺ) used to praise in his statement: "The best of the generations was the generation that I was sent to, then those who came after them, and then those who came after them."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Narrated by *al-Bukhārī* in the chapter concerning the Superiority of the Qur'ān and Muslim in the chapter concerning the prayer of the travelers.

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by *al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī* in *Tārikh Baghdād* and similarly by *al-Haythamī* in *Majma' az-Zawā'id*.

<sup>3</sup> Narrated by *al-Bukhārī* in the chapter concerning the explanation of the Qur'ān and Muslim in the chapter concerning the prayer of the travelers.

<sup>4</sup> Narrated by *al-Bukhārī* in the chapter concerning witnesses and Muslim in the chapter concerning the superiority of the companions.

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So there did not occur amongst this initial group from the *salaf* another type of gathering of the people of righteousness besides this. Not in the *Hijāz*, or Yemen, or *ash-Shām*, or Egypt, Iraq, *Khurāsān*, or *al-Maghrib*.

## **Gatherings Built Upon Innovation and Misguidance Occurred After**

The innovated types of gatherings and assemblies appeared after this. And certainly Allah has praised the types of gatherings that involve the recitation of the *Qur'ān* and similarly praised those who participate in them just as he censured those who avoid these types of gatherings. And He has also informed us that they are a means of attaining mercy as He says in His statement: **“And when the *Qur'ān* is recited then listen to it attentively such that you might be shown mercy.”** [*Sūrah al-A'raf* 7:204]

And Allah the Exalted says: **“And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall down prostrate for they are deaf and blind.”** [*Sūrah al-Furqān* 25:73]

And Allah the Exalted says: **“Hasn't the time come for the hearts of those who believe to become submissive because of the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth?”** [*Sūrah al-Hadīd* 57:16]

And Allah the Exalted says: **“And had Allah known there was any good in them, He would have made them hear. And if He had made them hear, they [still] would have turned away, and they are ever opposed to the truth.”** [*Sūrah al-Anfāl* 8:23]

And Allah the Exalted says: **“Then what is wrong with them that they turn away from the reminder?! As if they were alarmed donkeys - fleeing from a predator?”** [*Sūrah al-Muddathir* 74:49-51]

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And Allah the Exalted says: **“And who is more unjust than the one who is reminded of the verses of his Lord but turns away from them and forgets what his hands have put forth?”** [Sūrah al-Kahf 18:57]

And Allah the Exalted says: **“And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows my guidance will neither go astray nor will he be from amongst the wretched. And whoever turns away from my remembrance, indeed he will lead a restricted life, and We will resurrect him on the Day of Judgment blind. He will say: My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I used to see? [ Allah ] will then say: Since our signs did come to you, but you forgot them; thus on this day you will be forgotten.”** [Sūrah Ta Ha 20:123-126]

The like of these verses can be found in numerous places throughout the *Qur'ān* where Allah commands the people to follow that which He has sent His Messenger with by way of the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* and gathering and uniting upon that.

Allah the Exalted has indeed legislated gatherings for the Muslims at the time of the sun's setting (*Maghrib*), in the evenings (‘*Ishā*’), and at daybreak (*Fajr*) as He the Exalted says: **“And the Qur'ān of daybreak. Indeed, the recitation of the daybreak is [a practice] ever witnessed.”**[Sūrah al-Isrā‘ 17:78]

And for this reason ‘*Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah*’ praised the Prophet (ﷺ) in those few lines of poetry wherein he said:

وَفِينَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو كِتَابَهُ	إِذَا انشَقَّ مَعْرُوفٌ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ سَاطِعٌ
يَبِيتُ يَجَافِي جَنْبَهُ عَنِ فِرَاشِهِ	إِذَا اسْتَقَلَّتْ بِالْكَافِرِينَ الْمَضَاجِعُ
أَتَى بِالْهُدَى بَعْدَ الْعَمَى فِقَلْبُونَا	بِهِ مَوْقِنَاتٌ أَنْ مَا قَالُوا وَقَعُ
-	وَأَفْجَعُ

*“And amongst us is the Messenger of Allah who recites his Book when the radiance of the dawn begins to be revealed.*

*He spends his nights forsaking his bed preventing his sides from resting; while the disbelievers lie sound asleep in the comfort of their places of rest.*

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*He came with guidance after a period of blindness; so our hearts are certain that whatever he says will come to pass."*

The circumstances surrounding this type of gathering are mentioned in the *Qur'an* from the trembling of the hearts to the shedding of tears and the shivering of the skin. Indeed, the gatherings for the recitation of poetry only occurred after the passing of these illustrious generations of predecessors.

For this reason the *Imāms* have rejected this practice. *Ash-Shāfi'ī*, may Allah the Exalted have mercy upon him, went so far as to say: "I left something in *Baghdād* that was innovated by the *Zanādiqah* (heretics) called *at-Taghbīr*. They claim that it is a means towards softening the hearts while it actually turns the people away from the *Qur'an*."

And *Imām Ahmad* was asked concerning this (i.e the practice of *at-Taghbīr*) to which he replied: "innovated." So when it was said to him: "Should we sit with them when they do this?" He responded by saying: "Do not sit with them."

*At-Taghbīr* involves beating their animal hides with a rod, which is from the most influential types of melodious gatherings. However, this practice was detested by the *Imāms*; so how should other types of similar gatherings be viewed?

## **None of the Imaams of the Salaf, from the Early Generations to the Later Partook in the Gatherings of Music and Vice**

And the *Imams* and major scholars from amongst the *Mashā'ikh* never attended these types of innovated gatherings. So you would not find the like of *al-Fuḍyl ibn 'Iyāḍ*, *Ibrāhīm ibn Adham*, *Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī*, *Ma'rūf al-Kirkhī*, and *as-Sariyyu as-Saqāṭī* or those who were similar to them engaged in this type of behavior.

You won't even find the great latter day scholars like: *Shaykh 'Abdul-Qādir*, *Shaykh 'Adī*, *Shaykh Abū Madyan*, *Shaykh Abūl-Bayān*, *Shaykh Abūl-Qāsim al-Hawfī*,

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*Shaykh 'Alī ibn Wahb*, and *Shaykh Ḥayāh*<sup>1</sup> and the like of them supporting such behavior. There was a group of scholars that at least initially attended these types of gatherings however they later abandoned them.

*Al-Junayd* was asked concerning these gatherings and responded saying: "Whoever intentionally busies himself with these types of gatherings is put to trial by them, and whoever accidentally attends one of these gatherings may feel relieved by them."

So *al-Junayd* clarifies how the one who intends on participating in these types of musical gatherings<sup>2</sup> is put to trial by them (i.e. literally these gatherings become a *fitnah* for him). However, the one who may randomly encounter one of these gatherings without prior knowledge of what is occurring there; if this person were to hear an excerpt from this type of gathering that he feels is beneficial, then there is no blame upon him.

So the prohibition here is directed towards listening and not hearing. So for this reason if a man passes by a group of people who are engaged in talk of a forbidden nature, it is not obligatory upon him to cover his ears. But it is not appropriate for him to listen to this speech without a valid reason. And it is for this reason that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not command *Ibn 'Umar* to cover his ears when he heard the flute of the shepherd since he was not listening to it but rather only heard it.<sup>3</sup>

## Is it Permissible to attend these Gatherings in General?

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<sup>1</sup> He is *Ḥayāh ibn al-Walīd al-Yahṣabī*.

<sup>2</sup> **Translator's note:** I have translated the Arabic word *as-Samā'* here and elsewhere in this treatise as musical gatherings. The reason for this translation hinges primarily on context but is also supported by the definition of Edward Lane found on page 1429 of volume 4 of his lexicon where he mentions: "And [hence,] Singing or song; and any [musical performance whether vocal or instrumental or both combined, or any other] pleasant sound in which the ears take delight: as in the saying, *بَاتَ فِي هُوٍ وَسَمَاعٍ* [He passed the night in the enjoyment of diversion and singing, &c.]."

<sup>3</sup> Narrated by *Abū Dāwūd* in the Chapter concerning *al-Adab* (Manners).

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As for the statement of the questioner and others: Is it permissible or impermissible? This is an expression which is general and contains a type of wording which is deceptive since the ruling concerning it is elusive to the extent that many of those who issue *fatāwá* err in their judgments concerning this issue. This is because the discussion concerning the issue of these musical gatherings and other than them from similar actions can be classified into one of two categories.

**The First:** Is it permissible or impermissible? Rather it is an action which is performed just as other actions that are pleasing to the people are also performed even though this action involves a certain level of play and amusement like the musical gatherings held prior to weddings and other than them from the things people do with the intention of enjoyment and amusing themselves. So the intention here is not worship and drawing closer to Allah.

**The Second:** That this action is performed for religious reasons, as an act of worship, to rectify the hearts, to redirect the servants to their Lord, to help them purify themselves, cleanse their hearts, instill submissiveness into the hearts *khashyah* (awe) as well as *inābah* (repentance), *al-hubb* (love), and to further soften the hearts. All of this and other than this is from the actions that are considered worship and obedience and should not be considered from the actions which are performed in play and for the purpose of entertainment.

So it is obligatory that one differentiates between the musical gatherings of the one who seeks to draw closer to Allah and the musical gatherings of the one who seeks to entertain himself. It is similarly obligatory to distinguish between the musical gatherings that the people hold in celebration of weddings or at other customarily festive occasions and the musical gatherings of the one who seeks to rectify the hearts and draw closer to the Lord of the heavens.

Certainly, it is this [second] category that should be asked about. Is this considered drawing close to Allah or obedience? Is this an appropriate path to Allah? Should those people have done this because of how it might soften their hearts, incite them towards their Lord, purify them, and remove harshness from their hearts and other than this from the reasons why a person might hold this type of gathering like the Christians who hold similar gatherings in their churches as a form of worship and obedience and not as a form of play and amusement?



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**Is it lawful to establish these types of Activities that are either;  
*ḥarām*, *makrūh* or *mubāḥ* – in calling to Allaah?**

So if a person understands this, then the reality of the question becomes: Is it lawful for a *Shaykh* to establish these types of activities that are either *ḥarām* (impermissible), *makrūh* (detested), or *mubāḥ* (lawful) as a means of drawing close to Allah, a form of worship and obedience, or as a way towards Allah that one may use to call people to Allah and to encourage the repentance of the sinful, lead the misled, and guide the misguided?

It is well-known that the religion consists of two principles. There is no [valid] religion except for the one that Allah legislated. And that nothing is considered *ḥarām* (impermissible) except that Allah legislated that it is so. And Allah the Exalted criticized the people of *shirk* for their making unlawful what Allah had not declared unlawful and for their legislating a religion that Allah had not permitted.

And if a scholar were asked on the one who races between two mountains, and whether this is permissible? He would respond by saying that it is. However, if it were said that this person does this as a form of worship just as it is performed between *aṣ-Ṣafā* and *al-Marwah*, then in this case he would say: If this is done for that reason then it should be considered a *ḥarām* (impermissible) rejected action for which the person who does it should be encouraged to repent. If he repents then so be it. However, if he does not, then he should be killed.

Similarly if a scholar were asked concerning uncovering the head and wearing an *izār* and a *ridā'*, he would most likely say that this action is permissible. However, if it were said that this action was done for the same reason that this is done during the *ḥajj*, then it would be said concerning this practice that it is *ḥarām* (impermissible) and rejected.

And if a scholar were asked concerning the one who stands in the glaring sun, he would say that this is permissible. However, if it was said that he does this as a form of worship, then it would be said that this is rejected just as *Al-Bukhārī* narrated from *Ibn 'Abbās* (C) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saw a man standing

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in the sun refusing to sit, take shade, or speak. So the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Tell this man that he should speak, sit, take shade, and continue fasting."<sup>1</sup> So if this person did this for comfort or another lawful reason, he would not have been prohibited from this. However, since he did this as an act of worship he was prohibited from this.

Such is also the case with a man's entering his own home from the back of the house. This action in of itself is not unlawful. However, if this action is done as a form of worship as the Arabs used to do in *al-Jāhiliyyah* (one of them when he would enter into the state of *Ihrām* would not enter or walk underneath ceilings). So in this case they were prohibited from this as Allah the Exalted says: "**And it is not [considered] righteousness that you enter the homes from the back, but righteousness is [exemplified by] the one who fears Allah and enter the homes from their doors.**" [*Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:189]

So Allah the Glorified clarifies that this is not considered righteousness and if this action isn't *ḥarām* (impermissible), the one who does it thinking that it is a form of righteousness and that it will bring a person closer to Allah is a sinful, blameworthy, innovator whose innovation is more beloved to *Iblīs* than mere sinfulness. This is because the sinful individual knows that he is sinning and thus repents. However, the innovator believes that his innovation is an act of obedience and therefore does not repent.

For this reason, whoever attends this musical gathering for play and amusement does not believe that the gathering is a righteous action or that it merits reward. As for the one who does this believing that it is a means toward Allah the Exalted, then this individual takes this practice as part of his religion; and if someone were to forbid this practice, it is as if someone has just forbade this person's religion. This would lead this person to believe that he was being prevented from drawing closer to Allah and that a portion of his reward would be diminished if he were to abandon this practice. These individuals are misguided by unanimous agreement of the scholars of the Muslims.

No one from amongst the *Imāms* of the Muslims would say: "The taking of this practice as part of the religion and a means unto Allah the Exalted is an affair

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<sup>1</sup> Narrated by *Al-Bukhārī* in the chapter of *Īmān* and *Abū Dāwūd* in the chapter concerning *al-Aymān* (oaths) and *an-Nudhūr* (vows).

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that is lawful." Rather, whoever takes this practice as part of the religion and a means unto Allah the Exalted has indeed strayed, falsely asserted a baseless claim, and opposed the consensus of the Muslims.

As for the one who looks merely into what is apparent from this practice before speaking concerning it; without looking into the act of the one who performs this action as well as the person's intention, then this individual is ignorant and speaks in the affairs of the religion without knowledge.

**In Conclusion - The Real Question: Is this Action (gathering people through modes of music and entertainment) a Righteous Action and Permissible form of Worship?**

So the real question concerning this is: Is what these people are doing considered a valid means unto Allah, an act of devotion or obedience to Allah, and a form of worship that is acceptable such that those who have performed this action under these pretenses are permitted to believe this regarding what they have done and that it is correct to do in the manner which they did it?

If the question is posed in this manner, then there is no opportunity for the scholar who follows and adheres to the *Sunnah* of the Messenger (ﷺ) to say that this is from the acts of devotion and obedience, and that it is from the various types of worship and is similarly a valid means and path unto Allah the Exalted from which the sinful are to be called to righteousness.

This individual also cannot say that this action is from the actions that Allah commands His servants with; neither the type of command that necessitates obligation nor the type of command that conveys how an action is considered *mustahabb* (strongly encouraged). So if an action cannot be considered from the affairs that are *wajib* (obligatory) nor the affairs that are *mustahabb* (strongly encouraged), then they cannot be considered praiseworthy, good, acts of obedience, or worship by unanimous agreement of the Muslims.

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So whoever performs an action that is neither *wājib* (obligatory) nor *mustahabb* (strongly encouraged) as though it should be classified as either *wājib* (obligatory) or *mustahabb* (strongly encouraged), then this individual is an astray innovator whose action in this regard is undoubtedly *ḥarām* (impermissible).

This is especially true when taken into consideration is the fact that those who understand these innovated musical gatherings to be a valid means unto Allah, give precedence to these gatherings over gatherings in which the *Qur'ān* is recited, pondered and thus reflected upon. It is also possible that these individuals intentionally gave precedence to music over the *Qur'ān*, to the extent that they would only listen to the *Qur'ān* with heedless hearts, mimicking tongues, wavering actions, voices deemed unacceptable to the hearts, and dispositions that are not comforted by its recitation.

So if they were to hear whistling and handclapping,<sup>1</sup> their hearts would become attentive, they would draw closer to their beloved, voices would lower, individuals would remain motionless. There would be no coughing, sneezing, clamoring, or raised voices. But if something was recited from the *Qur'ān* or they heard something from the *Qur'ān*, then this would be something that was unwanted and overbearing just as people find it difficult to listen to what they feel is unnecessary, contains no benefit, or what they feel they are in no need of. This is often the case to the extent that were they to hear the instrument of *Shayṭān*, they would like it, accept it, and busy themselves and their souls with it.

So those individuals are the soldiers of *Shayṭān* and the enemies of the *Ar-Rahmān* (the Most-Merciful). They think that they are from the allies of Allah who possess *taqwá* while their condition is actually more reminiscent of the enemies of Allah, the hypocrites. This is because the believer is the one who loves those things that are beloved to Allah the Exalted and detest those things that are detested by Allah. They associate with the allies of Allah and disassociate with the enemies of Allah.

Those people however, love things which are detested by Allah and detest things that are beloved to Allah. They seek to associate with the enemies of Allah and disassociate with the allies of Allah. For this reason you will find them making

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<sup>1</sup> See *Sūrah al-Anfāl* 8:35.

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*Shayṭān* inspired concessions in the religion concerning their actions involving the instruments of *Shayṭān*.

Certainly, the more that these people distance themselves from Allah, His Messenger, and the way of the believers; the more you will find them drawing closer to the enemies of Allah and His Messenger and the soldiers of *Shayṭān*.

From amongst them are those who fly through the air accompanied by *Shayṭān*. From them is also those who cause their audience and those who are present to prostrate<sup>1</sup> and it is the *Shayṭān* who causes their prostration. Amongst them are those who present food, condiments, and fill empty pitchers while it was really *Shayṭān* who did all of that.

So the ignorant believe that these are from the *karāmāt* (miraculous works) of the pious allies of Allah while in fact they are only from the type of actions performed by diviners, soothsayers, magicians and their like from the *Shayṭān*. And the one who can differentiate between the affairs that are initiated by *Ar-Rahmān* (the Most-Merciful) and the affairs that are initiated by individuals and affairs that are influenced by *Shayṭān* will not mistake the truth for falsehood.

And we have simplified the discussion of the issue of “*as-Samā*” or musically themed gatherings and mentioned the speech of the scholars concerning it in more than one place. So with Allah is the success and Allah knows best and may the Allah extol His Prophet and send the prayers of peace as well as His blessings upon him, his family, and his companions.



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<sup>1</sup> **Translator's note:** I have translated the Arabic word *yaṣrau* and its derivatives here as prostrating. The reason for this translation hinges primarily on context but is also supported by the definition of Edward Lane found on page 1678 of volume 4 of his lexicon where he mentions in his definition of *ṣara*: “He threw him down, or prostrated him, on the ground.”