

The Display of Delight At the Birth of the Light ﷺ

Iẓhār al-surūr li mawlid al-Nūr ﷺ

On the Issue of Assembling to Celebrate and Show Gratitude and Joy
for the Birth of the Greatest Messenger ﷺ, with a Discussion of its Legal Proofs
and the Arguments of Those Who Forbid It

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May Allah Most High forgive him, his parents, and the believers

Translated by
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INTRODUCTION

LL PRAISES ARE DUE TO ALLAH, who has given light to the cosmos through the light of the Master of the Messengers¹, who took the Covenant from each of the Prophets that they believe in him and support him, to which they admitted and testified—and Allah is with them among the witnesses. Praise be to Him, the Exalted and Sublime, who poured out to His beloved's noble soul and majestic reality the quality of Prophethood (*nubuwwa*), and clothed him with the robes of proximity and love, so as to distinguish him and set him apart from the rest of creation, even while Ādam was still between water and clay. The Prophet ﷺ is the quintessential manifestation of lordly mercy gifted to creation, the epitome of the heavenly messages, and Allah's mercy to all created beings. Our Lord, the Blessed and Exalted, says, and He is the Most Truthful of speakers: “*And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.*” (al-Anbiyā': 107) Allah, the Glorified and Most High, declared the Prophet ﷺ innocent of the charges of the oppressors: “*And your companion is not mad.*” (al-Takwīr: 22) Elsewhere in the Preserved Quran, Allah swore an oath by the Prophet's life: “*By your life, they are blind in drunkenness.*” (al-Hijr: 72) And He sufficed him from the burden of responding to the liars who said: “*Or do they say: 'He is a poet for whom we await some misfortune of time'?*” (al-Ṭūr: 30) Allah revealed: “*And We have not taught him poetry, and it is not fitting for him. It is but a reminder and a clear Quran.*” (Yā Sīn: 69) And Allah refuted the plot of the connivers who said “*You are not a Messenger*”: “*Yā Sīn. By the Wise Quran. Indeed, you are of the Messengers sent.*” (Yā Sīn: 1–3)

Allah sealed the sacred laws by sending the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ last, and He cast light on the world with his beautiful countenance. He has obliged us to worship Him through following the

¹ It is textually affirmed that our master Muḥammad ﷺ is described as light. An example of that is the position of the majority of Quranic exegetes regarding the verse in Sūra al-Mā'idā: “*Certainly, there has come to you from Allah a light and a manifest Book.*” The light mentioned in this verse, say the exegetes, is the light of our master Muḥammad ﷺ. And ever more explicit than that is the report narrated by Muslim in his rigorously authentic collection, from Ibn 'Abbās who said that one of the Prophet's ﷺ supplications that he made for himself was: “. . .and make me light.” Of course, it is well known that the supplications of the Prophets ﷺ are accepted.

Prophet's way and wont, and brought repose to the souls of the lovers through hearing his mention and life. Allah has chosen the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ over His creation entire. One of the noble unique qualities of the Prophet ﷺ is that when the Prophet of Allah and Messiah, ʿĪsā b. Maryam ﷺ, descends towards the end of time, he will follow the lead of the Prophet's Household (Āl al-Bayt) and the Mahdī of this nation. So may our Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, send benedictions, blessings, and salutations upon the one whose intellect He purified: *"Your companion has not strayed, nor has he erred"* (al-Najm: 2); and whose tongue He purified: *"Nor does he speak from his own desires"* (al-Najm: 3); and whose law He purified: *"It is but revelation revealed"* (al-Najm: 4); and whose companion He purified: *"Taught to him by one of intense strength"* (al-Najm: 5); and whose heart He purified: *"The heart did not lie about what it saw"* (al-Najm: 11); and whose vision He purified: *"The sight did not swerve, nor did it transgress"* (al-Najm: 17); and whose entire being He purified: *"And certainly you have an exalted standard of character."* (al-Qalam: 4)

Allah, the Exalted and Majestic, explained that the sign of His love is following His beloved ﷺ: *"Say: 'If you truly love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you and forgive you your sins.'" (Āl-ʿImrān: 31)* And He explained that obedience to His beloved Prophet ﷺ is identical to obedience to Him, the Exalted and Sublime: *"And whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah."* (al-Nisā': 80) And Allah crowed all of this by making the pledge of loyalty to His beloved ﷺ equivalent to pledging loyalty to Him, the Glorified and Most High. He said: *"Indeed, those who pledge loyalty to you are but pledging loyalty to Allah."* (al-Fath: 10)

To commence:

Our virtuous and noble student, **Asad Amiruddin al-Hasani** (may Allah Most High preserve him) of Toronto, Canada, urged me to write an essay explaining the legal ruling on displaying delight at the birth of the light and most resplendent full moon and noblest Messenger (may Allah send benedictions and salutations upon him and his family), and the permissibility of people assembling for that end. And so I say, seeking the aid of Allah Almighty:

Whether for or against, a great deal has been said concerning the permissibility of commemorating and celebrating the noble birth of the Prophet ﷺ and displaying delight and joy for that day. Our intention in gathering people together for that day is to assemble them to recite the Holy Quran, learn the noble Sunna, send benedictions and salutations upon the Prophet ﷺ, and to learn about the narrations found in the Sunna and the noble Prophetic biography (*sīra*) detailing his noble birth and its immensity, and what had accompanied it of precursors to the

Prophet's mission (*irhāṣāt*), and related lessons of mercy to the creation, guidance, justice, and freedom for humanity. Gatherings such as these might involve the singing of poetry in praise of the Prophet ﷺ and sitting for a meal and giving out sweets—all out of joy upon the remembrance of the Prophet's auspicious birth ﷺ—after which people leave, and nothing more.

Commemorating, reminding others, and displaying gratitude and delight during the day marking the Prophet's noble birth, are sound practices rooted in the Sunna of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ never grew tired or weary from commemorating and showing joy and gratitude for his birth each week, and in his action there is guidance to his nation regarding the commemoration of that noble day and the display of gratitude and happiness in it. This is proven in the revealed texts. We ask Allah Most High to make every day for the Muslims one of love and joy for Allah Most High and His Messenger ﷺ.

Joy is a pleasure that Allah creates within a person when he or she accomplishes a goal or attains what is beloved and sought after. It strikes the heart and grabs the person's soul, resulting in the heart experiencing happiness and bliss. It causes the breast to expand, the soul to open up, and the spirit to soar with glee from one spiritual state to the next, until it nearly reaches the upper limits of the heavens. On other occasions it is possible that delight overcomes a person and brings him to tears, or seizes his entire mind and causes him to lose all thought of himself. An example of this is found in the narration recorded by Imam Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection from the hadith of Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه, who reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah is more joyful at the repentance of one of His servants when he turns toward Him than one of you would have been over his riding mount, which, having escaped from him in the middle of a wasteland desert with his food and drink and caused him to despair, whereupon he goes to a tree to lie down in its shade, when suddenly his mount appears before him while he is in that state, so that he takes hold of its reins and says out of the intensity of his joy, 'O Allah, You are my slave and I am Your lord!'—misspeaking because of his intense joy."

Some forms of joy are praiseworthy, while others are blameworthy; Islam directs the Muslims at every moment to rejoice at the truth and with goodness and bounties, and it forbids them from rejoicing at oppression, falsehood, beguilement, or corruption in the earth. The Most High says: "*Yet they take delight in the life of the world, but the life of the world is but a fading enjoyment* [with respect to the Hereafter]." (al-Raʿd: 26) He also says: "*That is because you used to experience delight in the earth without right, and because you were conceited*" (al-Ghāfir: 75) and: "*Rejoicing in what Allah has given them of His bounty*" (Āl-ʿImrān: 170) and: "*Say: 'In the bounty of Allah and His mercy, with that let them rejoice; it is better than what they amass.'*"

(Yūnus: 58) In other words, let them rejoice in this guidance and true religion that has come to them from Allah, and let them see to it that they perform good works and righteous acts, and let them show gratitude to Allah Most High for His many graces upon them, for expressing joy at His granting them the providential success (*tawfīq*) to be thankful to Him and perform good works takes priority over all other rejoicing. This is from the mercy of Allah Most Exalted, because when He wills to display His bounty upon you, He both creates it and attributes it to you, and for that reason “*it is better than what they amass*,” i.e., it is better than the material world and all that it contains.

Now, the greatest form of rejoicing is rejoicing in Allah Most High and His beloved Prophet ﷺ; this is one of the most tremendous stations of gnosis, as the believer takes delight in his Lord when he or she worships Him and loves Him, and rejoices in Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, as his Lord and as Bestower of Favor, Merciful, Healer, Provider, Reliever of Difficulties and Tribulations, Close in all circumstances, Beloved, Subtly Kind, and Present with a “withness” (*maʿīya*) that is intimately known by the people of proximity and intimate discourse with the Divine. In addition, the believer rejoices with the Beloved of Allah ﷺ as a Messenger, Teacher, Guide, Leader, and as one Covetous for our wellbeing, full of grief for what befalls us, and Merciful and Kind, and as a Inculcator of virtue, Beloved, and Concerned Father—may Allah Most High send benedictions and salutations upon him and his Family!

The Noble Quran has laid down the foundations for this delight and joy. It mentions praise for those who rejoice in the signs of Allah that He has revealed in the Quran. Allah Most High says: “*Whenever a chapter is revealed, some of them say: ‘Which of you has been increased in faith by this?’ But in the case of those who believe, it increases them in faith and they rejoice.*” (al-Tawba: 124) Allah Most High also said: “*And those to whom We have given the Book rejoice in what has been revealed to you.*” (al-Raʿd: 36) This rejoicing of theirs has not been restricted to a set time at the exclusion of all other times; rather, it is during and after the verses are revealed, and for all times evermore. If this is said regarding those who rejoice at a sign (*āyat*) from Allah’s Book, what say you of those who rejoice at the Supreme Sign and the Greatest Mercy—the Prophet ﷺ? Expressing joy and delight with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stems from love and longing, and signals ones reverence and exaltation of the Messenger ﷺ. So that person’s love for him, his preoccupying thoughts about him, his intense yearning and longing for him ﷺ—all of these are signs of true love, for if someone does not yearn for a thing will not rejoice when it is near or grieve when it is remote.

Allah Most High has lauded His saints (*Awliyā'*), stating that shall have a day in which they rejoice in Him, and that is when Allah Most High grants victory to them against oppression, falsehood, and corruption on the earth. Allah Most High says: “. . . *and on that day the believers shall rejoice. In the victory of Allah; He grants victory to whom He wills, and He is the Almighty, the Merciful.*” (al-Rūm: 4–5) And there is no doubt whatsoever that the angels and other created beings greatly rejoiced and delighted in tidings of goodness, victory, and mercy when they learned of the birth of the Seal of the Messengers ﷺ, and the day of the Prophet's birth is doubtless one of the momentous events of Allah and a day for which the believers rejoice.

The Prophet ﷺ has informed us that a fasting person experiences two joys. Muslim and al-Bukhārī both reported in their rigorously authentic collections from Abū Hurayra ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: “The fasting person experiences two joys: joy when he breaks his fast, and joy when he meets his Lord.” This joy, and the other forms of joy mentioned above, are praiseworthy and laudable in the Sacred Law, and they include joy felt with the birth of the Prophet ﷺ.

As for the joy that Allah Most High has condemned, it is the exuberance that lends itself to arrogance, transgression, enmity, and wantonness (*baṭar*)—it is to rejoice in remissness in obedience to Allah, lassitude in righteousness and rectification, slackness in the performance of good works and inviting others to them, or to rejoice in impeding others from swiftness to good works and pious acts, as Allah has said about the hypocrites: “*Those who lagged behind [from battle] were glad that they remained home, away from the Messenger of Allah, and they hated to struggle with their wealth and lives in the path of Allah, and they said: ‘Do not march forth in the heat!’ Say: ‘The Fire of Hell is hotter, if only they understood.’ So let them laugh for a short while; they shall weep much—a wage for what they have earned.*” (al-Tawba: 81–82) And even more dangerous than that is the one who satiates himself with what he has not been given, and the one who dons a garment of false testimony. Allah Most High says about such a person: “*Think not that there is escape from torment for those who rejoice in what they have been given and love to be praised for what they have not done. Theirs is a painful torment.*” (Āl-ʿImrān: 188)

Al-Bayhaqī narrated in his collection the Divine decree and pre-ordainment (al-Qaḍā' wa al-Qadar) with a good chain of transmission from ʿUqba b. ʿĀmir al-Juhānī, who reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “When you see Allah giving a servant what he loves while the servant remains entrenched in disobedience, know that it is a gradual luring to destruction (*istidrāj*).” And after saying this, the following verse was revealed: “*So when they forgot what they had been warned about, We opened for them the doors to all things; until, as they rejoiced in what they were given, we seized them in punishment and then they despaired.*” (al-Anʿām: 44)

Therefore, the truly intelligent person does not rejoice save in Allah, the Exalted and Sublime. It has been said: “No one rejoices in other than Allah except that it is due to his heedlessness of Allah; as such, the heedless person rejoices in his frivolity and passions, while the person of invocation rejoices in the love of his Master.”

Rejoicing at the birth of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is from faith, and no one with an atom's weight of faith in his heart could ever express hatred with it. The Noble Quran has enjoined the display of happiness with Allah's mercy and bounty upon His servants. He says in Sūra Yūnus: “Say: *‘In the bounty of Allah and His mercy, with that let them rejoice; it is better than what they amass.’*” (Yūnus: 58) So what about displaying delight and joy with the Supreme Mercy gifted by the Creator, Most Exalted, to all created beings, the Bounty of Allah to creation entire ﷻ? Showing happiness and delight with the birth of the Prophet ﷺ is from this realm and is emphatically commanded in the Noble Quran and the authentic and purified Sunna. No one in the *Umma*, whether as disparate individuals or groups, differs about this obligation. The only difference of opinion among Muslims here concerns the way or modality of showing this joy, and whether or not it is permitted to rejoice with celebration and assembly to recite the Quran, the Prophetic biography, the Prophetic descriptions (*Shamā'il*), and to remind each other to send abundant prayers and salutations upon the Prophet and his Family, sing odes in praise of him ﷺ, feed those in attendance, and hand out sweets, and nothing more.

The first person to bring attention to the act of displaying gratitude and joy with the birth of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah himself; he never let his noble birthday pass by nonchalantly like any ordinary day, and he would never forget or let anyone forget his noble birthday ﷺ, and thus he has established the Sunna for us in that. On each day that marked the anniversary of his noble birth, the Prophet ﷺ would show happiness and thankfulness for the blessing of being born, reminding the Umma entire of the immensity of that important day that merits special gratitude to Allah Most High. He expressed his gratitude through fasting each Monday, which corresponded to the day of his noble birth. Muslim narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection from Abū Qatāda al-Anṣārī ؓ who said: “He [the Prophet ﷺ] was asked about fasting on Mondays, to which he replied: ‘That is the day in which I was born, the day in which I was tasked with the Prophetic message, [or] the day when I first received divine revelation.’”

This hadith is an explicit text (*naṣṣ*) establishing the act of displaying joy and gratitude, and repeating it each week continually. So this day comes each week with a renewed feeling of joy and a fresh blessing, as well as the joy of fasting during the day of the Prophet's noble birth ﷺ. The fasting person, as the Prophet ﷺ informed us, experiences two joys, and in addition to those there

is the joy of thankfulness for Allah's largess and mercy via the birth of our master Muḥammad ﷺ and the joy of receiving Allah's providential success in emulating the Prophet's practice in reviving his Sunna and displaying delight and gratitude with his noble birthday ﷺ. Fasting, in addition to being one of the greatest forms of worship done solely and sincerely for Allah (as the Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah says: 'Every action of the son of Ādam is his, except fasting, for it is Mine, and I reward it.'"), has also be specified by the Prophet ﷺ on account of it being his birthday.

The hadith master, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, comments in his book *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif*:

In this [hadith] there is an indication that fasting is encouraged on the days that mark the anniversaries of the days when Allah's bounties were given to His servants, for the greatest of Allah's bounties upon this *Umma* is the manifestation of Muḥammad ﷺ, and his being tasked with the divine message and sent to them, as Allah the Exalted says: "*Certainly, Allah bestowed His favor to the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from their own selves. . .*" (Āl-ʿImrān: 164) Consequently, it is a beautiful and meritorious act to fast on the day wherein Allah's bounties upon His believing servants are renewed, and it is equivalent to receiving the bounty with thankfulness during the times which mark its anniversary.

The senior most Companions and Followers ﷺ practiced this Sunna of fasting in order to display their joy and rejoice at the noble birth of the Prophet ﷺ. The leading Imams of the forebears (Salaf) ﷺ composed written works on the noble Prophetic nativity. Said the Shaykh of our Shaykhs, the Imam and hadith master, the valorous *Mujtahid*, Sayyidī Aḥmad b. Šiddīq al-Ghumārī (may Allah have mercy upon him!), in his book *Ju'nat al-ʿaṭṭār*: Some of them have mentioned that the first person to compile a book on the Mawlid was al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Ibn Diḥya al-Kalbī, who passed away in the year 633 AH. The title of his nativity was *al-Tanwīr min mawlid al-Sirāj al-Munīr*, which he presented as a gift to the King of Irbil, who used to celebrate the night and day of the Prophet's birth ﷺ with unprecedented festivity. As a reward for his book, the king awarded Ibn Diḥya a lavish prize. Factually, however, this is incorrect, for a large number of scholars before Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Ibn Diḥya had written books on the Prophetic nativity. The first scholar I have come across that had compiled a work on the Mawlid is Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī, author of the *Maghāzī* collections and books on the early military conquests, who passed away in 206 (and some say 209) AH. He wrote two books on the Mawlid: *al-Mawlid al-Nabawī* (The Prophetic Nativity) and *Intiqāl al-Nūr al-Nabawī* (The Movement of the Prophetic Light), cited by al-Suhaylī in *al-Rawḍ [al-unuḍ]*. Similarly other early scholars wrote books on the Mawlid, such as the hadith master Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. ʿĀ'id, author of the famous *Sīra* (d. 233 AH), as well as the hadith master Abū Bakr b. Abī ʿĀšim (287 AH), author of several compilations.

Another proof illustrating the Prophet's ﷺ keenness to commemorate the blessed day of his birth and display happiness and gratitude in it is the fact that he performed his own *‘aqīqa* after being tasked with the Prophetic message. The *‘aqīqa* ceremony is but an expression of thanksgiving to Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, and a show of happiness and celebration upon the birth of a newborn baby. For that reason, the Prophet ﷺ did not neglect to perform it for himself. It is authentically reported in al-Ṭabarānī's *Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*: “On the authority of Aḥmad who said: ‘al-Haytham narrated to us, saying: “‘Abdullāh narrated to us on the authority of Thumāma, who narrated on the authority of Anas, that the Prophet ﷺ performed his own *‘aqīqa* personally after being tasked with the Prophetic message.”” This hadith is rigorously authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) with a fully connected chain, all of whose narrators are reliable.²

² This report was also recorded by ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī and Abū al-Shaykh via the route of Qatāda on the authority of Anas b. Mālik. ‘Abd al-Razzāq's chain of transmission includes ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥarrar al-Jazarī, regarding whom al-Dāraquṭnī and others said: “He narrations are shunned (*matrūk al-ḥadīth*).” That said, ‘Abdullāh b. al-Muḥarrar is not isolated in the narration of this particular report, as we shall see. Abū al-Shaykh's chain of transmission for this report includes one Ismāʿīl b. Muslim al-Makkī al-Baṣrī, who is not considered suspect in his transmissions (*ghayr muttahaḥ*); however, he was declared weak on account of his bad memory, but his hadith reports are well considered and sound sources of authoritative citation (*istishḥād*). In both routes of transmission there is *‘anʿana* from Qatāda.

This report was also recorded by al-Khalāl in his *Jāmiʿ*, and by al-Ṭaḥāwī in *Mushkil al-āthār*, with a rigorously authentic route of transmission from ‘Abdullāh b. al-Muthannā, on the authority of a man from the family of Anas. Although the identity of this “man” in the narration is unclear, it appears—and Allah knows best—that it is ‘Abdullāh b. al-Muthannā's paternal uncle Thumāma b. ‘Abdullāh b. Anas, considering that his name is recorded in all of the other narrations of this report. Thumāma was the grandson of Anas and a reliable narrator used by the two Shaykhs (al-Bukhārī and Muslim).

In *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* it is mentioned: “Abū al-Shaykh recorded it from the narration of Abū Bakr al-Mustamlī, on the authority of al-Haytham b. Jamīl and Dāwūd b. al-Maḥbar, both of whom said: “‘Abdullāh b. al-Muthannā narrated to us on the authority of Thumāma, on the authority of Anas. . .’ Dāwūd is weak, although al-Haytham is reliable.”

This report was also recorded by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, Abū al-Shaykh in his collection of hadith on the *‘aqīqa*, al-Ḍiyāʿ al-Maqdisī in *al-Aḥādīth al-Mukhtāra*, and al-Ṭaḥāwī in *Mushkil al-āthār*, all from the route of al-Haytham b. Jamīl, who said: “‘Abdullāh b. al-Muthanna narrated to us on the authority of Thumāma, on the authority of Anas. . .” This chain of transmission is rigorously authentic and its narrators are all reliable; however, the hadith scholars differed in their judgments about ‘Abdullāh b. al-Muthannā. He was declared reliable by Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Tirmidhī, and al-ʿAjli, and his narrations via Thumāma are considered reliable as proofs according to al-Bukhārī. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in *Taqrīb*: “He is truthful, frequently erring (*ṣadūq kathīr al-ghalaṭ*).” He also said in *Hadyī al-sārī* (p. 416): “I haven't seen al-Bukhārī use him in supporting narrations, except in his narrations from his paternal uncle Thumāma, from whom he narrated a number of hadith. He also recorded a hadith from his narrations from Anas that is considered corroborative.” This narration in question is the one from his uncle Thumāma, and is proof-worthy, and his narrations from others besides his uncle are well considered, although not at the level of being proof-worthy, and Allah knows best.

Furthermore, the practice of the Followers (Ṭābiʿūn) lends support the view that they considered it authentic, as Ibn Abī Shayba recorded in his *Muṣannaḥ* with a rigorously authentic chain on the authority of Ḥafṣ, on the authority of Ashʿath, on the authority of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, who said: “Had I not known that he performed the *‘aqīqa* on my behalf, I would have performed it for myself.” And Ibn Ḥazm recorded in *al-Muḥallā* from the route of Wakīʿ, on the authority of al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣubayḥ, on the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who said: “If he does not perform the *‘aqīqa* on your behalf, perform it for yourself, even if you are

a grown man.” The chain of this report is sound, Allah willing, and its narrators are all reliable, save for al-Rabīʿ, who is trustworthy with bad memory, as mentioned in *Taqrīb*.