

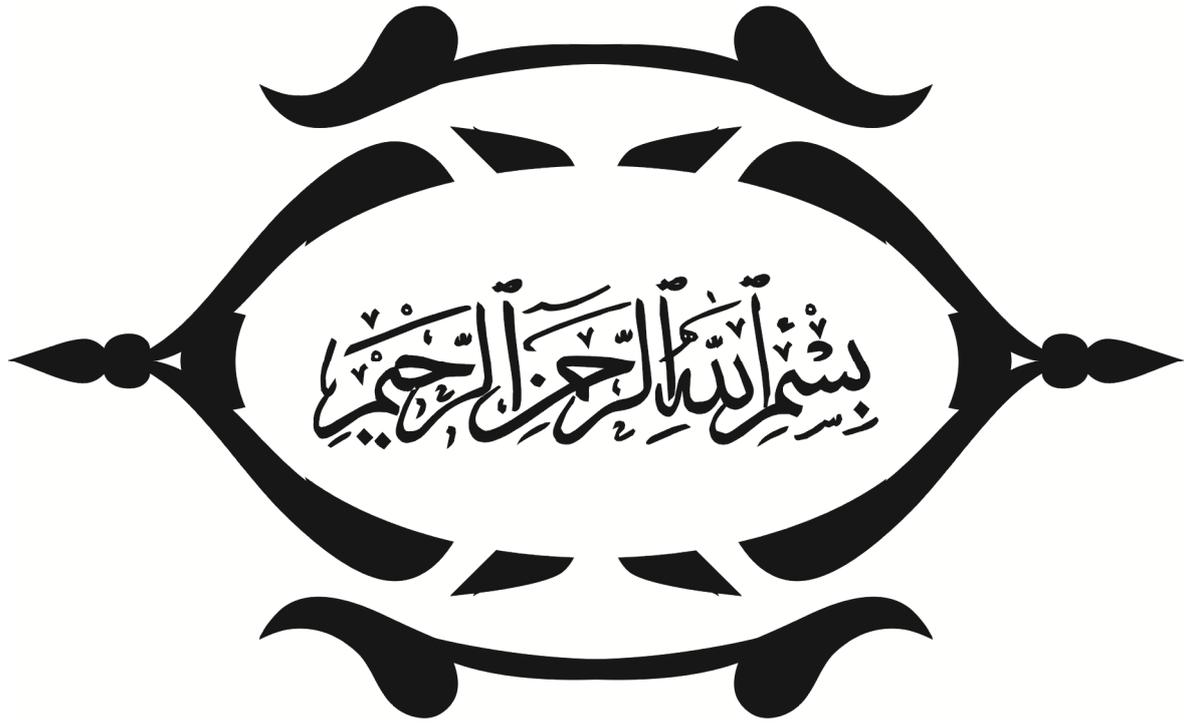


مجمع فقهاء الشريعة بأمريكا

Bring Children to the Mosque

By

Jamaal Zarabozo



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إن الحمد لله، نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره، ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيئات أعمالنا، من يهده الله فلا مضل له، ومن يضلل فلا هادي له، وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأشهد أن نبينا محمداً عبده ورسوله وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم تسليماً كثيراً.

أما بعد

The Seriousness of the Issue

At first glance this issue may sound like an insignificant fiqh issue. It may also seem to be an issue whose ruling is clear. The reality is that this issue pits a number of conflicting interests and wants against each other. At the same time, it highlights some of the problems that one encounters when applying Islam outside of a traditional Muslim setting, such as in the United States. When the issue becomes a problem, it puts a burden on the respective Mosque leadership to figure out a solution that is pleasing to all sides.

THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS

One of the many reasons why many people attend the prayers in the mosques is that the prayer said in the mosque is usually of a much better quality than their prayer said at home and is more spiritually uplifting for them. This goal, though, can be greatly affected by the environment in the mosque itself, in particular the presence of children. It is very difficult to concentrate on the prayers when there is a child right in front of the praying person trying to play peek-a-boo or when there is a verbal fight going on between the children in the same prayer area. On numerous occasions this author has given lectures on how to improve the quality of the

prayers and the interference of children has been an agreed upon complaint among all the sisters in particular in these classes, whether those sisters were young or old, mothers or non-mothers. (Many parents have the ability to “zone out” their children’s noises because they are so used to them. They become nothing more than “white noise” to them and they do not realize that not everyone is so accustomed to these noises.)

No one can dispute that prayer is the most important form of ritual worship. At the same time, it is confirmed that one may walk away from the prayer receiving a reward for only a portion of it. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيُصَلِّي الصَّلَاةَ فَيَنْصَرِفُ وَمَا كُتِبَ لَهُ مِنْهَا إِلَّا عَشْرُهَا، تُسْعُهَا، ثَمَنُهَا، سُدُسُهَا، خُمْسُهَا، رُبْعُهَا، ثُلُثُهَا، نِصْفُهَا

“A person may perform the prayer and he finishes it and nothing but a tenth, ninth, eighth, sixth, fifth, fourth, third or half is recorded for him.”⁽¹⁾

No one wants to be in a situation where they feel that their prayers have been ruined because of the children or, perhaps, due to the parents who do not teach their children how to behave in the mosque. Unfortunately, this negative feeling does build up in the hearts of many when this problem is not checked. In fact, there are some who simply stop attending the mosque. Especially for a sister upon whom

⁽¹⁾ Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and others. According to al-Albaani this hadith is *hasan* while Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, et al., declared it *sahih*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Alaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami al-Sagheeri* (Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Maktab al-Islaami), vol. 1, p. 335; Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, et al., footnotes to *Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Beirut, Lebanon: Muasassah al-Risaalah), vol. 31, p. 189.

the prayer in the mosque is definitely not obligatory, why should she take the effort to go to the mosque when she expects that her prayer is going to be “ruined” due to the children and their parents?

Many look towards the mosque as their refuge and sanctuary. It a place for a person to come and pray, read the Quran, make *dhikr*, contemplate and reflect. This is made very difficult if there are children making noise or playing in the vicinity. It is also quite difficult if there is the smell of stale food, vomit or even left behind diapers (as what happens most often on the sisters’ side).

Furthermore, children disturbing the prayers or misbehaving in the mosque can cause friction among the members of the community. In a recent case, when a child was unruly in the mosque and his father was not doing anything, one brother stopped the child and told him to sit in the corner until after the prayer and his father comes to take him. The child did so but the father was so enraged that he actually called the police.⁽¹⁾ The police had to come into the mosque to try to rectify the situation. They found that absolutely no wrong was done. But this incidence led to a split in the community, some saying that the brother was wrong for telling the child to stop running around and others arguing that the other brother was wrong for calling the police.⁽²⁾

At the same time, parents may feel a need to bring their children to the mosque. No culture of extended families exists in the United States. If both parents wish to attend the prayer or any other function in the mosque, they may have no choice but to bring their children with them. They simply do not have other family members to

⁽¹⁾ That is another big issue: Many parents do not seem to like it when others tell their children how to behave. Perhaps they take it as an insult implying that they do not know how to be a parent.

⁽²⁾ As far as this author is aware, the two brothers involved in this incident continue not to speak to each other to this day.

look after them and the idea of getting a babysitter every time one wants to go to the mosque simply is not feasible. Many Muslims are young parents and if these parents are prevented from coming to the mosque because they have children that would be very detrimental to the well-being of the mosque and the community as a whole.

Additionally, parents may feel it is their obligation to bring their children to the mosque. In other words, it is their responsibility to bring their children up on the faith of Islam and this would include inculcating a love the mosque and all things Islamic. This can only be achieved, the parents could argue, by actually bringing the children to the mosque and developing within them an attachment to the mosque.

Additionally, the parents of young children are the people who are raising the next generation of Muslims. Everyone should want these parents to be strong in *imaan* and have a good grasp of their faith. If it is made difficult for them to attend the mosque, this is going to affect their level of faith, knowledge and commitment to the religion. This, in turn, could have negative consequences on their ability and dedication to raising the next generation of pious Muslims. In other words, it is especially important that young parents be afforded the opportunity to attend and take advantage of what a mosque has to offer.

For the mosque administration, children in the mosque raises issues as well. First, there is the question of cleanliness of the mosque. Many parents, in order to pacify their children while in the mosque, will give their children candy, soda and so on. The child then proceeds to walk around the mosque sometimes dropping the sticky candy or spilling soda and so on. In addition, young babies frequently vomit and

sometimes that will reach the carpeting of the mosque. These are financial burdens on the mosque, as parents often do not follow their children and clean up after them or teach their children to clean up. In addition, these are nuisances for those who wish to pray and find their space either dirty or having a bad smell.

In addition, there are also problems of damage and vandalism to mosque property. Unfortunately, it has been this author's experience that even in the face of witnesses a parent would say, "My child would not do such a thing," or, "My child said he did not do it and I believe him..." Hence, the parent denies any responsibility, so the mosque and the remainder of the community bear the financial costs resulting from the child's behavior.

There are also liability issues for the mosque. It is easy for children to get injured while playing. In fact, many times children are so uncontrolled and undisciplined that they run out into the parking lot or nearby streets. This author recalls at least one case where a child was hit while running in the parking lot of a mosque. The parents are in the *musalla* praying and they let their children play, perhaps thinking that mosque security is the best of all babysitters. If a child gets hurt by running into the parking lot, the mosque could possibly be sued for not having child-proof doors or enough supervision and the like. These liability issues could be quite costly for the mosque, as the United States is a very litigious nation and insurance companies are notorious for raising premiums after any incident.

In the light of the aforementioned conflicting interests, this paper will attempt to address the following question: What exactly seems to be the Shareeah's guidance on bringing children to the mosque?

THE RELEVANT SHAREEHAH TEXTS

The first place to start are any relevant texts from the Quran or Sunnah that may shed light on this issue. There seem to be a number of hadith that are definitely relevant.

A VERSE OF THE QURAN

Allah says,

﴿فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ (۳۶) رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ﴾

“In houses (mosques), which Allah has ordered to be raised (and to be honored), in them His Name is glorified in the mornings and in the afternoons or the evenings, Men whom neither trade nor sale diverts them from the Remembrance of Allah (with heart and tongue), nor from performing prayers, nor from giving the Zakaat. They fear a Day when hearts and eyes will be overturned (from the horror of the torment of the Day of Resurrection)” (*al-Noor* 36-37). In his commentary to this verse, ibn Katheer, after discussing a number of things that are appropriate in a mosque, stated that children should be kept out of the mosque as they play therein and it is simply not the proper place for them. He then stated that if Umar would see children playing in the mosque, he would beat them with a stick.⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Ismaaeel ibn Katheer, *Tafseer al-Quraan al-Adheem* (al-Damam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1431 A.H.), vol. 5, p. 548.

Ibn Katheer himself does not comment on the authenticity of this report concerning Umar, which would be very relevant to this topic under discussion. Al-Albaani quotes ibn Katheer quoting this statement and also does not mention anything about its authenticity.⁽¹⁾ Hikmat Yaaseen also did not provide any footnote to the quote in his extensive authentication of ibn Katheer's Quranic commentary.⁽²⁾

This author was able to trace the source of this report (with slightly different wording than ibn Katheer's) in both al-Bukhari's *al-Tareekh al-Kabeer* and ibn Abi Haatim's *al-Jarh wa al-Tadeel*. Al-Bukhari has the following narration:

قَالَ لِي إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ حَمْزَةَ: حَدَّثَنَا طَلْحَةُ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، حَدَّثَنِي شُرْحَبِيلٌ؛ رَأَيْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ، وَنَحْنُ غُلَّامَانِ نَلْعَبُ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ، فَضَرَبْنَا بِالْمِخْفَقَةِ، فَخَرَجْنَا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ.

Ibraaheem ibn Hamzah said to me: Talhah ibn Saalih narrated to us saying: Shurahbeel narrated saying, "I saw Umar while we were young playing in the mosque beating us with a stick and driving us out of the mosque."⁽³⁾ The chain and the narration is virtually in the same in ibn Abi Haatim's *al-Jarh wa al-Tadeel*.⁽⁴⁾

The problem with this chain is Talhah ibn Saalih ibn Ibraaheem. He is *majhool* ("unknown") according to Abu Haatim, meaning he does not have enough hadith

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Al-Thamar al-Mustataab fi Fiqh al-Sunnah wa al-Kitaab* (Kuwait: Muassasah Gheras, 1422 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 762.

⁽²⁾ Hikmat Yaaseen, footnotes to Ismaaeel ibn Katheer, *Tafseer al-Quraan al-Adheem* (al-Damam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1431 A.H.), vol. 5, p. 548.

⁽³⁾ Muhammad ibn Ismaaeel al-Bukhari, *Al-Tareekh al-Kabeer* (Hyderabad, India: Daairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaaniyyah, n.d.), vol. 4, pp. 251-2.

⁽⁴⁾ Abdul Rahmaan ibn Abi Haatim, *al-Jarh wa al-Tadeel* (Hyderabad, India: Daairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaaniyyah), vol. 4, pp. 339-340.

experience or status to be considered an acceptable narrator.⁽¹⁾ As such, with corroborating evidence, this report is not considered an acceptable report.

HADITH #1:

عَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ يُصَلِّي وَهُوَ حَامِلٌ أُمَامَةَ بِنْتَ زَيْنَبَ بِنْتِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَلِأَبِي الْعَاصِ بْنِ رَبِيعَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ شَمْسٍ فَإِذَا سَجَدَ وَضَعَهَا وَإِذَا قَامَ حَمَلَهَا (٢)

“Abu Qataadah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was praying while carrying Umaamah the daughter of Zainab, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and the daughter of Abu al-Aas ibn Rabeeah ibn Abd Shams. When he would prostrate, he would put her down and when he would stand he would pick her up.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) This narration from al-Bukhari is not explicit in stating that this took place in the mosque. In the following narration from Muslim it makes it clear that this was while the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was leading the prayer:

عَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ قَالَ رَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ يَوْمَ النَّاسِ وَأُمَامَةَ بِنْتُ أَبِي الْعَاصِ وَهِيَ ابْنَةُ زَيْنَبَ بِنْتِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ عَلَى عَاتِقِهِ فَإِذَا رَكَعَ وَضَعَهَا وَإِذَا رَفَعَ مِنَ السُّجُودِ أَحَادَهَا

⁽¹⁾ See ibn Abi Haatim, vol. 4, p. 481. Note that ibn Hibbaan declared him to be *thiqah* (trustworthy). Muhammad ibn Hibbaan al-Busti, *al-Thiqaat* (Hyderabad, India: Daairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaaniyyah), vol. 8, p. 326. However, ibn Hibbaan is well-known for his unique view of including in his collection of trustworthy narrators any narrator that he did not receive a critical remark concerning.

رواه البخاري ومسلم (2)

“Abu Qataadah said, ‘I saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) leading the people in prayer and Umaamah bint Abu al-Aas, who was the daughter of the daughter of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), was on his shoulders...” Another narration in Muslim states,

عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ سُلَيْمِ الزُّرْقِيِّ سَمِعَ أَبَا قَتَادَةَ يَقُولُ بَيْنَا نَحْنُ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ جُلُوسٌ خَرَجَ عَلَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ
بِنَحْوِ حَدِيثِهِمْ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَذْكُرْ أَنَّهُ أَمَّ النَّاسَ فِي تِلْكَ الصَّلَاةِ

Abu Qataadah stated, “While we were sitting in the mosque, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to us...” and the rest of the hadith is similar except that he does not mention that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led the people during that prayer.

HADITH #2:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ شَدَّادٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ خَرَجَ عَلَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي إِحْدَى صَلَاتِي الْعِشَاءِ وَهُوَ حَامِلٌ حَسَنًا أَوْ
حُسَيْنًا فَتَقَدَّمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَوَضَعَهُ ثُمَّ كَبَّرَ لِلصَّلَاةِ فَصَلَّى فَسَجَدَ بَيْنَ ظَهْرَانِي صَلَاتِهِ سَجْدَةً أَطَاهَا قَالَ أَبِي
فَرَفَعْتُ رَأْسِي وَإِذَا الصَّبِيُّ عَلَى ظَهْرِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَهُوَ سَاجِدٌ فَرَجَعْتُ إِلَى سُجُودِي فَلَمَّا قَضَى رَسُولُ
اللَّهِ ﷺ الصَّلَاةَ قَالَ النَّاسُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ سَجَدْتَ بَيْنَ ظَهْرَانِي صَلَاتِكَ سَجْدَةً أَطَلْتَهَا حَتَّى ظَنَنَّا أَنَّهُ قَدْ
حَدَّثَ أَمْرًا أَوْ أَنَّهُ يُوحَى إِلَيْكَ قَالَ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ وَلَكِنَّ ابْنِي ارْتَحَلَنِي فَكَرِهْتُ أَنْ أَعْجَلَهُ حَتَّى يَقْضِيَ

حَاجَتَهُ

“Shaddaad said, ‘The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to us during one of the night prayers [Maghrib or Isha] carrying al-Hasan or al-Husain. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went forward and put him down and made the *takbeer* for the prayer. He prayed with us and he elongated the prostration. I raised my head and saw the infant on the back of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while he was prostrating and then I went back into my prostration. When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) finished the prayer, the people said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, you made a long prostration in your prayer such that some of us thought that something must have occurred or you were receiving revelation.’ He replied, ‘None of that happened. My son was upon my back and I disliked to rush him until he had finished what he wanted.’” Recorded by Ahmad, al-Nasaa`ee and others.⁽¹⁾

HADITH #3:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ إِنِّي لَأَقُومُ فِي الصَّلَاةِ أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُطَوِّلَ فِيهَا فَأَسْمَعُ بُكَاءَ الصَّبِيِّ فَأَجُوزُ فِي صَلَاتِي كَرَاهِيَةً أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَى أُمِّهِ

Abu Qataadah narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “I stand in the prayer intending to lengthen it but then I hear the crying of an infant so I shorten my prayer out of dislike for causing hardship for its mother.” Recorded by al-Bukhari and others. As ibn Hajar noted, there is nothing explicit in this hadith that mentions that the baby might be in the mosque. The mosque was

⁽¹⁾ According to both al-Albaani and al-Arnaaoot, this hadith is sahih.

surrounded by apartments and a mother could have left her child in her room but still within hearing distance. In any case, though, one could argue that most likely it refers to such infants being in the mosque.

Another narration recorded by Ahmad and declared authentic by al-Albaani states,

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ جَوَزَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ فِي صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ فَقِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لِمَ تَجَوِّزُ قَالَ
 سَمِعْتُ بُكَاءَ صَبِيٍّ فَظَنَنْتُ أَنَّ أُمَّهُ مَعَنَا تُصَلِّي فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُفْرِغَ لَهُ أُمَّهُ وَقَدْ قَالَ حَمَّادٌ أَيْضًا فَظَنَنْتُ أَنَّ أُمَّهُ تُصَلِّي
 مَعَنَا فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُفْرِغَ لَهُ أُمَّهُ

Anas ibn Maalik narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once cut the Fajr Prayer short [that is, he did not make it as long as usual]. He was asked, "Why did you cut it short?" He replied, "I heard the crying of an infant and I thought that his mother might be with us in the prayer so I wanted to free his mother for him." Hammaad narrated it with the words, "I thought that his mother may be praying with us so I..." This other narration further enhances the possibility that the crying infant was not necessarily in the mosque and it also indicates that it must not have been a regular occurrence as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked about his actions and it is not stated that he would regularly cut his prayers short due to such an incident.

HADITH #4:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ بُرَيْدَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَخْطُبُ فَجَاءَ الْحُسَيْنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا وَعَلَيْهِمَا قَمِيصَانِ أَحْمَرَانِ يَعْثُرَانِ فِيهِمَا فَنَزَلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ فَقَطَعَ كَلَامَهُ فَحَمَلَهُمَا ثُمَّ عَادَ إِلَى الْمِنْبَرِ ثُمَّ قَالَ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ إِتْمَاءَ أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ فَتَنَةٌ رَأَيْتُ هَذَيْنِ يَعْثُرَانِ فِي قَمِيصَيْهِمَا فَلَمْ أَصْبِرْ حَتَّى قَطَعْتُ كَلَامِي فَحَمَلْتُهُمَا

Buraidah said, "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was delivering a *khutbah* when al-Hasan and al-Husain came wearing two red gowns and they were tripping in them. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went down and picked them up and then returned to the *minbar*. He then said, 'What Allah said is true: 'Verily your wealth and your children are a trial.' I saw these two tripping in their gowns and I could not bear it, so I cut off my speech and picked them up.'" Recorded by al-Nasaa'ee, Abu Dawood and others.⁽¹⁾ The Prophet specifically mentioning in this instance that children are a "trial" is illuminating and cannot be ignored. The Prophet's feeling of compassion and mercy toward his grandchildren as they were tripping so moved him that he left his act of devotion to attend to them. This, in a very subtle way, is an indication of how children can be a trial and keep an individual from worshipping or acting in the proper manner. According to al-Wallawi, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did this act to demonstrate that such an act is not forbidden. As such, it was good for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to demonstrate that.

⁽¹⁾ This hadith is declared sahih by both al-Albaani and Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, et al. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood (wa huwa Kitaab al-Umm)* (Kuwait: Muasassah Gheras, 2002), vol. 4, p. 272; Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, et al., footnotes to Abu Abdullah ibn Maajah al-Qazweeni, *Sunan ibn Maajah* (Daar al-Risaalah al-Aalmiyyah, 2009), vol. 4, p. 597.

However, at that same time, though, it is permissible but disliked for anyone after the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as anyone after the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will not be in any role of demonstrating what is permissible and not forbidden.⁽¹⁾ This interpretation is indicated by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) referring to the children afterwards as a trial (*fitnah*)

HADITH #5:

عَنْ الْحَسَنِ سَمِعَ أَبَا بَكْرَةَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ وَالْحَسَنُ إِلَى جَنْبِهِ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى النَّاسِ مَرَّةً وَإِلَيْهِ مَرَّةً وَيَقُولُ
ابْنِي هَذَا سَيِّدٌ وَلَعَلَّ اللَّهَ أَنْ يُصْلِحَ بِهِ بَيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Abu Bakrah said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while he was on the *minbar* and al-Hasan was to his side, looking at the people at times and looking at him at other times, say, 'This, my son, is a leader. Perhaps Allah will bring peace between two groups of Muslims through him.'" Recorded by al-Bukhari and others. Abu Bakrah became Muslim after the Battle of Taaif which took place in the year 8 and al-Hasan was born in the year 3, so he must have been at least five years old at this time and possibly up to seven years old. Of course, in this case, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) possibly did not bring al-Hasan simply in the manner of bringing a child to the mosque but to point out to everyone that this boy, al-Hasan, whom they could all see would bring peace among Muslims in the future.

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad ibn Ali al-Ithiyooobi Al-Wallawi, *Dhakheerah al-Uqbaa fi Sharh al-Mujtabaa* (Makkah, Saudi Arabia: Daar Aal Baroom, 2003), vol. 16, p. 263.

HADITH #6

عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - سَأَلَهُ رَجُلٌ شَهِدْتَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ الْعِيدَ أَمْضَحَى أَوْ فِطْرًا قَالَ نَعَمْ لَوْلَا مَكَانِي مِنْهُ مَا شَهِدْتُهُ - يَعْنِي مِنْ صِغَرِهِ - قَالَ خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَصَلَّى ثُمَّ خَطَبَ...

Abdul Rahmaan ibn Abbaas narrated:

I heard Ibn `Abbas answering a man who asked him, "Did you attend the prayer of `Eid al-Adha or `Eid al-Fitr with Allah's Messenger ()?" Ibn `Abbas replied, "Yes, and had it not been for my close relationship with him, I could not have offered it." (That was because of his young age). Ibn `Abbas further said, Allah's Messenger () went out and offered the Id prayer and then delivered the sermon...

Ibn Rajab stated that this indicates that people who were his young age would regularly not be taken to the Eid Prayer but due to his closeness to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) he was taken.⁽¹⁾ Granted, the Eid Prayer is outside of the town and not in the mosque and that may give it a special ruling. Nonetheless, it does give an indication that it was not the norm to take children to the Eid Prayer at least. This could have been possibly true for prayers in general as well.

⁽¹⁾ Zain al-Deen Abdul Rahmaan Ibn Rajab, *Fath al-Baari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Madinah, Saudi Arabia: Maktabah al-Ghurabaa al-Athariyyah, 1996), vol. 8, p. 36.

HADITH #7

Al-Hareeri states that there is a consensus that it is allowed to bring children seven or older into the mosque.⁽¹⁾ In general, this view is based on the hadith,

مُرُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ سَبْعِ سِنِينَ وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ عَشْرِ

“Order your children to prayer when they are seven and beat them concerning it when they are ten.” (Recorded by Abu Dawood and al-Tirmidhi.) The idea here is that praying in the mosque is part of learning the prayer and hence such children must be allowed to be brought to the mosque.

In contemporary times, problems in the mosque often come from children older than seven years old. (The question of age versus behavior shall be touched upon later.) One mosque this author is aware of was even vandalized by young teenagers from the mosque community.⁽²⁾ (One could argue that this would lead to a question that is beyond the scope of this paper: The right of Mosque administrations to prevent individuals from coming to the mosque. Perhaps no one would disagree that mosques should be open to everyone but if someone is repeatedly found to be unruly or causing harm within the mosque, the rights of the mosque and of the community would have to take precedence over the right of any one individual.⁽³⁾)

⁽¹⁾ Mahmood al-Hareeri, *Ahkaam al-Masaajid fi al-Islam* (Riyadh: Daar al-Rifaa'ee, 1990), p. 29

⁽²⁾ And they actually posted their acts on myspace.com.

⁽³⁾ There have been cases in the United States where the mosque had to request restraining orders against individuals dual to vandalism, stealing from the mosque and so on. Issues like these highlight the importance of having leadership who are knowledgeable and qualified for positions of leadership. For explicit fatwaas approving of the concept of removing people from the mosque due to the harm that they create, see <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=Fatwald&Id=62261>; <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=Fatwald&Id=114043>; http://www.ibnothaimeen.com/all/noor/article_8005.shtml

HADITH #8

Another possibly relevant hadith is the following:

عَنِ الرَّبِيعِ بِنْتِ مُعَوِّذٍ، قَالَتْ أَرْسَلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ غَدَاةَ عَاشُورَاءَ إِلَى قُرَى الْأَنْصَارِ " مَنْ أَصْبَحَ مُفْطِرًا فَلْيُتِمِّمْ بَقِيَّةَ يَوْمِهِ، وَمَنْ أَصْبَحَ صَائِمًا فَلْيُصُمْ ". قَالَتْ فَكُنَّا نَصُومُهُ بَعْدُ، وَنُصَوِّمُ صِبْيَانَنَا، وَنَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ اللَّعْبَةَ مِنَ الْعِهْنِ، فَإِذَا بَكَى أَحَدُهُمْ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ أَعْطَيْنَاهُ ذَلِكَ، حَتَّى يَكُونَ عِنْدَ الْإِفْطَارِ.

Narrated Ar-Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwadh: "The Prophet (ﷺ) sent a messenger to the village of the Ansar in the morning of the day of 'Ashura' (10th of Muharram) to announce: 'Whoever has eaten something should not eat but complete the fast, and whoever is observing the fast should complete it.' She further said, "Since then we used to fast on that day regularly and also make our children fast. We used to make toys of wool for the children and if anyone of them cried for, he was given those toys till it was the time of the breaking of the fast." In that narration there is actually no mention whatsoever of the mosque. However, the same hadith is recorded by Muslim with the following wording:

عَنِ الرَّبِيعِ بِنْتِ مُعَوِّذِ بْنِ عَفْرَاءَ، قَالَتْ أَرْسَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ غَدَاةَ عَاشُورَاءَ إِلَى قُرَى الْأَنْصَارِ الَّتِي حَوْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ " مَنْ كَانَ أَصْبَحَ صَائِمًا فَلْيُتِمِّمْ صَوْمَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ أَصْبَحَ مُفْطِرًا فَلْيُتِمِّمْ بَقِيَّةَ يَوْمِهِ ". فَكُنَّا بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ

نُصُومُهُ وَنُصُومُ صِبْيَانِنَا الصَّغَارِ مِنْهُمْ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَنَذْهَبُ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَتَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ اللَّعْبَةَ مِنَ الْعِهْنِ فَإِذَا بَكَى أَحَدُهُمْ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ أَعْطَيْنَاهَا إِيَّاهُ عِنْدَ الْإِفْطَارِ .

Rubayyi' daughter of Mu'awwidh b. 'Afra' said that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent (a person) on the morning of Ashura to the villages of Ansar around Medina (with this message): He who got up in the morning fasting (without eating anything) he should complete his fast, and he who had had his breakfast in the morning, he should complete the rest of the day (without food). The Companions said: We henceforth observed fast on it (on the day of 'Ashura) and, God willing, made our children observe that, the young ones from among them. We went to the mosque and made toys out of wool for them and when anyone felt hungry and wept for food we gave them these toys till it was the time to break the fast." This narration differs from al-Bukhari's recording in a couple of significant ways. First, it explicitly mentions that the children are young children (*al-sighaar*). Second, it mentions going to the mosque. However, in this narration there is also nothing explicit that the children were taken to the mosque. They could have been left behind with the women who would give them the toys until it was time to break the fast, wherein the word "we" is used here in a metaphorical sense. However, as one moves along to later collections of hadith one finds a slight change in the wording of this narration, as found in *Saheeh ibn Khuzaimah*, *Saheeh ibn Hibbaan* and al-Baihaqi's *al-Sunan al-Kubraa*:

وَنُصُومُ صِبْيَانِنَا الصَّغَارِ وَنَذْهَبُ بِهِمْ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ

“We would make our young children fast and then we would take them to the mosque.”⁽¹⁾ It is a well-established fact that young children are not to be forced to fast. As such, al-Qurtubi states that perhaps the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was not aware what they were doing.⁽²⁾ It is also interesting to note that this is related to the first fast that was made obligatory. One does not find similar hadith or incidents related to fasting Ramadhaan, which was revealed later.

HADITH #9

جَنَّبُوا مَسَاجِدَكُمْ صِبْيَانَكُمْ

“Keep your Mosques away from your children.” .” (Recorded by ibn Maajah, al-Baihaqi, ibn Abi Shaibah, Abdul-Razzaaq and by al-Tabaraani in both *Mujam al-Kabeer* and *Musnad al-Shaamiyeen*.) Al-Albaani stated, “This hadith is not an authority. A number of leading scholars of hadith have declared it weak, including Abdul Haqq al-Ishbeeli, ibn al-Jauzi, al-Mundhir, al-Boosairi, al-Haitham, [ibn Hajar] al-Asqalaani and others.”⁽³⁾ Due to the weakness in the hadith, this writer does not completely agree with the fatwa from Nasr Fareed Waasil which further states concerning this hadith, “Although this hadith has weakness, other narrations can strengthen it and such a hadith can be used with respect to implementing virtuous deeds, such as keeping the mosque clean and its environment sound for what it is

⁽¹⁾ Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Khuzaimah al-Naisaboori, *Sahih ibn Khuzaimah* (Beirut, Lebanon: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1980), vol. 3, p. 288.

⁽²⁾ Al-Qurtubi is quoted in Mahmood al-Aini, *Nakhb al-Afkaar fi Tanqeeh Mabaani al-Akhbaar fi Sharh Maani al-Athaar* (Qatr: Wizaarah al-Auqaaf, 2008), vol. 8, p. 395.

⁽³⁾ Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *al-Ajwibah al-Naafiah an Asilah Lajnah Masjid al-Jaamiyah* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Maktabah al-Maarif, 2000), p. 114.

meant for, such as having *khushoo* in the prayer.”⁽¹⁾ At the same time, though, it should be noted that this hadith is quoted often in books of fiqh and is used as a supporting argument.⁽²⁾

HADITH #10

حَدَّثَنِي أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ - وَهُوَ عَمُّ إِسْحَاقَ -، قَالَ: بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ. إِذْ جَاءَ أَعْرَابِيٌّ فَقَامَ يَبُولُ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ، فَقَالَ أَصْحَابُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَهْ مَهْ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «لَا تُزْرِمُوهُ دَعْوَهُ» فَتَرَكَوهُ حَتَّى بَالَ، ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ دَعَاهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ: «إِنَّ هَذِهِ الْمَسَاجِدَ لَا تَصْلُحُ لِشَيْءٍ مِنْ هَذَا الْبَوْلِ، وَلَا الْقَدْرِ إِنَّمَا هِيَ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، وَالصَّلَاةِ وَقِرَاءَةِ الْقُرْآنِ»

Anas b. Malik reported: While we were in the mosque with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), a desert Arab came and stood up and began to urinate in the mosque. The Companions of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Stop, stop, but the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Don't interrupt him; leave him alone. They left him alone, and when he finished urinating, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) called him and said to him, “These mosques are not the places meant for urine and filth, but are only for the remembrance of Allah, prayer and the recitation of the Qur'an.” In this hadith, the

⁽¹⁾ See <http://www.albayan.ae/five-senses/2001-11-30-1.1130053>.

⁽²⁾ This author found it used as an evidence in more than twenty books of fiqh. See, for example, Muhammad al-Sarakhsi, *al-Mabsoot* (Beirut: Daar al-Marifah, 1993), vol. 2, p. 68; Alaa al-Deen al-Kaasaani, *Badaa al-Sanaai fi Tarteeb al-Sharaai* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1986), vol. 2, p. 117; Abu al-Waleed Muhammad ibn Rushd, *al-Bayaan wa al-Tahseel* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Gharb al-Islaami, 1988), vol. 1, p. 495; Shihaab al-Deen al-Qaraafi, *al-Dhakheerah* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Gharb al-Islaami, 1994), vol. 6, p. 188; Ali al-Mawardi, *Al-Haawi al-Kabeer* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1994), vol. 2, p. 266; ad nauseam. One book even states, “And it is affirmed from the Prophet that he said...” See Abu al-Taahir al-Mahdawi, *Al-Tanbeeh ala Mabaadi al-Taujeeh* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar ibn Hazm, 2007), vol. 1, p. 508.

Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has explained the main purpose and goal behind any mosque: It is a place of prayer, *dhikr* and reciting the Quran.

This is unquestionably the main purpose of any mosque. It does not mean that no other activities are allowed in the mosque. It does, however, imply that no activities should be allowed in the mosque that interfere with its main purpose.

WHAT THESE HADITH DO AND DO NOT SAY

The apparent meaning of these hadith indicate a permissibility of having children in the mosque. The hadith do not describe how common these events were. There definitely is no mention in any hadith of children running through the lines during the prayer, children making noise playing during the prayer, children standing in front of others and distracting them in the prayers. These are the types of incidents that people most complain about yet there is nothing in these texts that would indicate that children behaving in this manner in the mosque is acceptable. None of that is to be found in any of the hadith although it is a daily occurrence today in any mosque in which there are children. Indeed, many parents who allow their children to run about and play in the mosque quote the aforementioned hadith as evidence that there is nothing wrong with bringing small children to the mosque.

Furthermore, there is some question as to the “level” of permissibility that these hadith describe. In other words, these hadith may imply that an act is permissible but at the same time they could be permissible but disliked. Thus, for example, Al-Nawawi, commenting on the hadith of Umaamah stated, “This action does not negate the fact that it is disliked as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did this to show that it is permissible and in his case this was the best action for it was obligatory upon him to make the issue clear.”⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Yahya al-Nawawi, *al-Majmoo Sharh al-Muhadhdhab* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1997), vol. 2, p. 202.

Historical Scholarly Interpretations and Rulings

IMAM MALIK AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS VIEWS

Numerous narrations have come from Imam Malik concerning the first narration above where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was carrying Umaamah in the prayer. Imam Malik was asked whether people may apply this hadith. He replied that a man may do so only in the case of necessity where one cannot find anyone to look after his child. However, one may not do it simply out of love for the child.⁽¹⁾ In this statement, it seems obvious that he is speaking about the actual bringing of the child to the mosque, as holding the child in the prayer has nothing to do with being able to find anyone to look after the child.

In fact, Imam Malik was asked about bringing children to the mosque and he replied, "If he does not play around (or fidget) due to his young age and if he would stop if told so, then I do not see any harm in it. If he plays around due to his young age, I do not think that he should be brought to the mosques."⁽²⁾

The significance of Imam Malik's view is that he was well-known for his attachment to the practices of the people of Madina (*amal ahl al-madeenah*). He would look at those practices as a type of continual Sunnah having been passed down from the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). From his various statements on the question of bringing children to the mosque, it is clear that in his view there was no such established practice among the people of Madinah and therefore there was no such established Sunnah of bringing children regularly to the mosque, especially not very young children.

⁽¹⁾ Abu Umar Yoosuf ibn Abdul Barr, *al-Istdhkaar* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 2000), vol. 2, p. 348.

⁽²⁾ Maalik ibn Anas, *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubraa* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1994), vol. 1, p. 106.

Imam Malik's own view is echoed by numerous texts of the Maliki school. Ibn Farhoon said that if children do not refrain from playing in the mosque or do not obey when told to stop, it is not allowed to bring them to the mosque. A goal is to keep children from playing in the mosque.⁽¹⁾ Al-Qaraafi in *al-Dhakheerah* says it is prohibited to teach children in the mosque and to have them enter the mosque except for the purpose of the prayer.⁽²⁾

TWO OPINIONS ON THIS ISSUE?

Ibraaheem al-Khudhairi states that there are two opinions concerning the permissibility of infants and young children entering the mosque. The first opinion is that it is permissible but if it is feared that they will cause some harm in the mosque, it is disliked (*kiraahah tanzeeh*). This, he says, is the opinion of the majority of the scholars. The second opinion is that it is not allowed to bring such children into the mosque if it is expected that they may not respect the mosque in the proper way. This is the view of a number of Hanafis and some Malikis.⁽³⁾ (In the Hanbali school both opinions are clearly expressed as well.⁽⁴⁾) Al-Khudhairi himself concludes that it is permissible to bring infants and young children into the mosque. But he also says, "If some harm occurs to the mosque from the children or others, then that harm must be prevented and when it occurs it must be stopped."⁽⁵⁾

⁽¹⁾ Shams al-Deen al-Hattaab al-Ruaini, *Muwaahib al-Jaleel fi Sharh Mukhtasar al-Jaleel* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Fikr, 1992), vol. 2, p. 115.

⁽²⁾ Shihaab al-Deen al-Qaraafi, *al-Dhakheerah* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Gharb al-Islaami, 1994), vol. 6, p. 188.

⁽³⁾ Ibraaheem al-Khudhairi, *Ahkaam al-Masaajid fi al-Shareeah al-Islaamiyyah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Fadheelah, 2001), p. 289.

⁽⁴⁾ See Burhaan al-Deen ibn Muflih, *al-Mubdi' fi Sharh al-Muqni* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1997), vol. 1, p. 161; Mansoor al-Buhooti, *Kashshaaf al-Qinaa an Matn al-Iqnaa* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah) vol. 1, p. 148.

⁽⁵⁾ Al-Khudhairi, p. 292.

Both opinions seem actually to agree on one thing: If the children are not behaving properly in the mosque, they are not allowed to attend the mosque. Thus, al-Nawawi, the Shafiee wrote, "The mosque must be protected from what happens in lots of mosques of children and people with vain pursuits gathering therein, playing, raising their voices, disrespecting the mosque, violating its sanctity and bringing filth therein..."⁽¹⁾

On other occasions, there is simply an explicit statement that small children are supposed to be kept out of the mosque. In *Rauhdah al-Talibeen*, al-Nawawi states explicitly that children who are not of the level of discernment are to be prevented from coming to the mosque.⁽²⁾ Ibn Juzay's classic compendium of Maliki Fiqh, *al-Qawaneen al-Fiqhiyyah* has virtually the same wording as al-Nawawi's *Raudah*.⁽³⁾

Ibn Taimiyya was asked about teaching children in the mosque and he responded by saying, "All praise be to Allah. The mosque must be protected from all that harms it and those who are praying in it, even the raising of the voices of the children therein and their defiling of its carpet and so forth. This is especially true if it is during the time of prayer, as such is from the great evils."⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ Yahya al-Nawawi, *Al-Majmoo Sharh al-Muhadhdhab* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Fikr), vol. 2, pp. 177-178.

⁽²⁾ Yahya al-Nawawi, *Rauhdah al-Talibeen* (Beirut, Lebanon: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991), vol. 1, p. 297.

⁽³⁾ Abu al-Qaasim ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi, *al-Qawaneen al-Fiqhiyyah* (Kuwait: Ministry of Auqaf), p. 130.

⁽⁴⁾ Taqi al-Deen Ahmad ibn Taimiyyah, *Majmooah Fatawaa ibn Taimiyyah* (Madinah, Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Quran Complex, 1995), vol. 22, p. 204.

Contemporary Fataawaa

It is possible that circumstances have changed and therefore the rulings may have changed. Thus, contemporary *fataawaa* are here discussed separately. The goal was to compile a number of *fataawaa* from a wide range of perspectives.

One lengthy *fatwaa* from ibn Uthaimen runs as follows:

Question:

Some of the people come to the Masjid and they have their children with them who have not reached the age of discernment and they cannot pray properly. These children line up in the rows with those who are offering prayer and some of them fidget (or play frivolously) and disturb those who are around them. So, what is the ruling on this? And what is your advice to the parents of such children?

Answer:

I think that bringing children (to the Masjid) who will disturb those who are offering prayer is not permissible, because in that is a disturbance for the Muslims who are performing an obligation from the obligations of Allah. The Prophet heard some of his companions praying and reciting aloud, so he said:

وَلَا يَجْهَرُ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ بِالْقِرَاءَةِ

"You all should not raise your voices over each other in recitation." ⁽¹⁾

In another Hadith he said:

فَلَا يُؤْذِينَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا

"You all should not harm (or bother) one another." ⁽²⁾

Thus, everything that contains something that bothers those who are offering prayer, is not permissible for the person to do it.

Hence my advice to the parents of such children is that they do not bring them to the Masjid and they seek guidance in that which the Prophet directed to when he said:

مُرُوا أَبْنَاءَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ لِسَبْعِ سِنِينَ وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لِعَشْرِ سِنِينَ

"Command your children to pray when they are seven and beat them about (not offering) it when they are ten." ⁽³⁾

Likewise, I also direct advice to the people of the Masjid to open their hearts to the children whose coming to (i.e, presence in) the Masjid is legislated (in the Shariah). They should not make things difficult on them or remove

(1) Ahmad 2:36, 67.

(2) Abu Dawud no. 1332.

(3) Abu Dawud no. 494,495 and Ahmad 2:187]

them from their places (in the prayer lines) that they came to first. For verily, whoever is the first to come to something, he has the most right to it, regardless of whether he is a child or an adult. Hence, moving the children away from their places in the row contains:

- (1) Disregard of their right, because whoever comes to something first-that no one of the Muslims has beaten him to-then he has the most right to it.
- (2) It discourages them from attending the Masjids.
- (3) It contains the possibility of the child carrying hatred and dislike for the person who removed him from the place that he came to first.
- (4) It leads to the children being gathered together (in the row) and they end up playing and causing disturbance to the people of the Masjid that would not have occurred if the children were between the adult men...⁽¹⁾

The Standing Committee of the Leading Scholars of Saudi Arabia, made up of Abdul Azeez bin Baaz, Abdul Razzaq Afeefi and Abdullah bin Qaood, was asked about bringing children to the mosque and they replied, "As for children, there are not to be prevented from coming to the mosque with their guardians or if they are above the age of discernment, and that is seven years old and up, to pray with the

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad al-Musnad, compiler, *Fatawa Islamiyah: Islamic Verdicts* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2002), Vol. 3, pp. 26-28.

Muslims.”⁽¹⁾ Saalih al-Fauzaan similarly stated that if the children are seven or above, they may be taken to the mosque in order to acquaint them with the practice of praying in the mosque. If they are under seven, though, they should not be taken to the mosque unless it is known that they will not disturb those who are praying or doing any harm to the mosque, such that the child listens when being told and there is a genuine need to bring the child to the mosque.⁽²⁾ Ibn Jibreen opined that children under the age of discernment are not allowed to be brought to the mosque during the time of prayer or the khutbah because they do not understand the sanctity of the mosque. Even those above that age are only to be brought after they understand such matters.⁽³⁾

A very similar fatwaa comes from Salaah al-Saawi who wrote,

The right thing in this case is to bring the children, who comprehend, and we are commanded to teach how to pray, i.e. seven years old. As for those who are under this age, the matter depends on the parents' ability to control the child, and prevent him from annoying, and distracting those who pray in the mosque. If they are able to do so, then there is no objection, but if they are unable to do so, then respecting the validity of the prayer of the adults, who are commanded to pray, and not distracting those who pray

⁽¹⁾ Ahmad al-Duwaish, compiler, *Fataawaa al-Lajnah al-Daaimah* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Aasimah, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 275.

⁽²⁾ Quoted in Yoosuf al-Ateeq, *Fataawaa wa Ahkaam Khaassah bi-I-Tifl* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Samee, 1998), p. 50.

⁽³⁾ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 51.

take precedence over other interests. And Allah knows best.⁽¹⁾

A fatwaa on islamweb.com, after offering proofs for allowing children to attend the mosque, states,

On the contrary, there are many benefits in taking children to the mosques; for instance, it makes them habituated to the prayers and to attend study circles in the mosques, etc. Moreover, taking them to the mosques is a useful means of protecting them from bad friends and from the wide-spread amusement and entertainment that badly affect them.

On the other hand, we would like to make clear that when we allow taking children to the mosques, we do not permit them to disturb people, or to play with the Qur'aan, or to damage the belongings of the mosque, or even soil the mosque, etc. So, the children's guardians have to supervise them and teach them the etiquettes of the mosque.⁽²⁾

Yet another fatwaa comes from Mufti Faizal Riza of Darul Ifta Australia, with the relevant portion of the fatwaa reading:

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.amjaonline.org/fatwa-79972/info>

⁽²⁾ <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=Fatwald&Id=88568>

The ruling on bringing children to the masjid is as follows:

It is prohibited and sinful to bring such children to the masjid who are very small and immature, who do not know the right from the wrong, who do not know how to behave in the masjid and there is high probability of them making the masjid impure (by urinating etc).

Those children who have acquired some understanding and know the etiquettes of the masjid and there is not much chances of them making the masjid impure (by urinating etc), it is *makrooh tanzeehi* to bring such children to the masjid, i.e. although there is no sin in bringing such children to the masjid, it is better not to.

Those children who are close to the age of puberty and know the right from the wrong and can observe the etiquettes of the masjid and know about purity and impurity, it is permissible to bring such children to the masjid without any dislike (*karaaha*). In fact, one should bring such children to the masjid in order to train them to offer *salat*.⁽¹⁾

A lengthy *fatwaa* from Azhar can be summarized as: Young children who do not behave properly in the mosque and therefore they should not be brought to the

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.fatwa.org.au/taking-children-to-masjid-talking-in-masjid.html>

mosque. As for the story of al-Hasan being on the Prophet's back while praying, they mention that the scholars have stated that this is in reference to a child who does not bother the people who are praying and certainly does not extend to children who are left unattended to play in the mosque. They explicitly state that it is forbidden to leave a child in the mosque to play without him being watched over. Furthermore, they noted that such was not a continuous and much repeated practice of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Instead, it was done only once in a while.⁽¹⁾

The bulk of the fatwas that this author found were similar in nature to those above. Everyone seems to be concerned with either the age or the behavior of the child. There were two fatwas that must be quoted for the sake of completeness. One comes from islamqa.com and reads as follows:

Should children be stopped from coming to the mosque with their mothers for Taraaweeh, because they cause too much trouble and disruption?

I asked Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) this question, and he replied:

They should be allowed to come as it says in the *ahaadeeth*: "What is good for the earlier generation is good for the later generation." And Allaah knows best.⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Available at: <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/ask-the-scholar/8240/8394/8319/44676-2004-08-01%2017-37-04.html>.

⁽²⁾ <http://islamqa.info/en/11605>

This fatwaa is strange and questionable for a number reasons. First, the implication of it seems to contradict the *fatwaa* discussed earlier from the Standing Committee that was chaired by Abdul Azeez bin Baaz himself. Second, the statement quoted in this *fatwaa* is not a hadith and is actually misquoted in the translation. According to the original Arabic from the same website, the wording is ويسع الآخرين ما وسع الأولين, which implies something like: What is convenient for the earlier generations should be for the later generations. Even if it were meant to be the more famous statement, *لن يصلح آخر هذه الأمة إلا ما أصلح أولها*, “Only what was good for the earlier part of the Ummah will be good for the latter part,” it is still not a hadith. This is a statement of Imam Malik. Abdul Azeez bin Baaz was well aware that this is not a hadith as he quoted it often as a statement of Imam Malik⁽¹⁾ and on a few occasions as a general statement but never, to this author’s knowledge, as a hadith. Furthermore, the word “hadith” in the original Arabic is in the plural, which there is no apparent reason for. Finally, the question is very vague. If it meant what was good for the earlier portion of the Muslim Nation, it leaves open the question of exactly how did the early portion of the Muslim Nation treat children coming to the mosque.

There is another “more permissible” *fatwaa* found at islamqa.com as well. This one reads as follows:

What is the ruling on women taking their children with them to the mosque for *Taraweeh* prayer?.

Praise be to Allaah.

⁽¹⁾ See, for example, Muhammad al-Shuwayir, compiler, *Majmoo Fataawaa al-Allaamah Abdul Azeez bin Baaz* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Qaasim, 1420 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 129; vol. 1, p. 244; vol. 1, p. 320; vol. 1, p. 408; vol. 2, p. 445; vol. 7, p. 375; vol. 9, p. 189; vol. 12, p. 365; vol. 16, p. 111, etc. As for the statement in the *fatwaa*, this author has not come across bin Baaz using that statement.

There is no reason why women should not bring their children to the mosque with them in Ramadaan. The Sunnah indicates that women came to the mosque with their children at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), because of the hadeeth: "I begin to pray and I intend to make it lengthy, then I hear the crying of a child and I make my prayer short, because I know that his mother is experiencing hardship because of his crying." And: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) carried Umaamah as he offered an obligatory prayer whilst leading the people in prayer in the mosque.

But they should try to protect the mosque against any *najaasah* (impurity) and being careful lest the children fall asleep in the mosque and so on. End quote⁽¹⁾

In this author's opinion, these last two fatwas are somewhat anomalies. The bulk of the scholars are clearly in agreement that even given the numerous hadith discussed earlier there are certain conditions that must be placed on children coming to the mosque.

⁽¹⁾ <http://islamqa.info/en/106462>

Analysis, Discussion and Suggestions

No one can doubt that numerous hadith do point to the presence of children in the mosque during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). At the same time, though, it seems to have never been part of the Islamic tradition that children would be free to play or act as they wish in mosques. From the earliest times, the mosque was understood to be a place to be respected, as demonstrated in the attitude of Imam Malik who is known to be influenced by the practices of the people of Madinah.

There are definitely many benefits to children coming to the mosque. However, there are definitely some conditions for their presence. They are not allowed to disturb the sanctity of the mosque and the remembrance of Allah.

This brings up a very important question: Is behavior or age the key to allowing children in the mosque? The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated that children should be ordered to pray at the age of seven and, hence, this age is often taken as a dividing line between what age children are or are not allowed to attend the mosque. There is nothing, though, explicit in that hadith that states that the prayers must be or should be in the mosque from the beginning.

Levels of maturity change over time and from culture to culture. There used to be a time in which a seven year old was getting very close to being mature and not too distant from having a family of his own. Nowadays, one sometimes does not find that same level of maturity in late teenagers. With such children, the age of seven cannot be the sole criterion concerning whether or not he should be brought to the mosque.

In other words, the problem with children in the mosques of, for example, the United States could be more a problem of culture rather than anything else. It is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children proper behavior, including respecting the mosque, respecting elders and respecting others' properties. When a child does a disrespectful act, for example, he should be taught that his actions are not proper. Even if the child is young, he can be told that what he did is wrong. It has been the author's experience, that this is often not done today. The children are free to act as they please and some—definitely not all—parents rarely say anything. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) demonstrated that even young people can be taught, instructed and kept from doing what is wrong:

عَنْ حُدَيْفَةَ، قَالَ كُنَّا إِذَا حَضَرْنَا مَعَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ طَعَامًا لَمْ نَضَعْ أَيْدِينَا حَتَّى يَبْدَأَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَيَضَعُ يَدَهُ وَإِنَّا حَضَرْنَا مَعَهُ مَرَّةً طَعَامًا فَجَاءَتْ جَارِيَةٌ كَأَنَّهَا تُدْفَعُ فَذَهَبَتْ لِتَضَعَ يَدَهَا فِي الطَّعَامِ فَأَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ بِيَدِهَا ثُمَّ جَاءَ أَعْرَابِيٌّ كَأَنَّهَا يُدْفَعُ فَأَخَذَ بِيَدِهِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ " إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَسْتَحِلُّ الطَّعَامَ أَنْ لَا يُذْكَرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ جَاءَ بِهِدِهِ الْجَارِيَةَ لِيَسْتَحِلَّ بِهَا فَأَخَذْتُ بِيَدِهَا فَجَاءَ بِهَذَا الْأَعْرَابِيُّ لِيَسْتَحِلَّ بِهِ فَأَخَذْتُ بِيَدِهِ وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنْ يَدُهُ فِي يَدِي مَعَ يَدِهَا

Hudhaifa reported: When we attended a dinner along with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) we did not lay our hands on the food until Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had laid his hand and

commenced eating (the food). Once we went with him to a dinner when a girl came rushing as if someone had been pursuing her. She was about to lay her hand on the food, when Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) caught her hand. Then a desert Arab came there (rushing) as if someone had been pursuing him. He (the Holy Prophet) caught his hand; and then Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Satan considers that food lawful on which Allah's name is not mentioned. He had brought this girl so that the food might be made lawful for him and I caught her hand. And he had brought a desert Arab so that (the food) might be lawful for him. So I caught his hand. By Him, in Whose hand is my life, it was (Satan's) hand that was in my hand along with her hand. (Recorded by Muslim.)

In general, then, one can say that there are three categories of children:

- (1) Those who are generally well-behaved and understand as well as respect the sanctity of the mosque. This category should be brought to the mosque. In the past, it was expected that once a person reaches the age of seven, he would meet this criterion. Some would even meet this criterion at less than seven. Today, it looks like this is more of a case to case basis. However, Muslim parents should understand that it is expected of their child that by the age of seven they are to be ready for such responsibilities.

- (2) Those who obey their parents and others in authority and therefore will stop doing any action once instructed to do so. There should not be any problem with having these in the mosque as well.
- (3) Those who do not comprehend the sanctity of the mosque or who are not willing to obey instructions given to them. This is the category that scholars have traditionally stated it is disliked to bring them to the mosque. Traditionally, it was thought that these should be below the age of seven but today these characteristics may also be true for those above the age of seven. If a number of children like this are in the mosque at one time, it is going to be very difficult to control them and allow the mosque to be its desired serene state.

One of the keys to this issue is education, from “top to bottom.” Mosque administrators need to understand the main purpose of a mosque. It is their responsibility to try to ensure that this main purpose of prayer and remembrance of Allah is not interfered with, either by children or anything else. Mosque administrators first and foremost need to understand this point well. Secondly, they must also understand that it is a very delicate responsibility they have. It is very difficult to speak to some parents about their children, as some immediately get on the defensive. Solving this kind of problem is one of the burdens of responsibility.⁽¹⁾

Imams also need to be educated on this point. Many times the Imam does try to make reminders and asks the parents to take care of their children. That is a very important step. However, sometimes it is followed up with a statement like, “As

⁽¹⁾ In some mosques, there is a dedicated play area for the children, away from the *musalla*, such as in the mosque in Clear Lake, Texas. This may be an excellent solution for that particular community but, at the same time, the children need to be taught to respect the mosque and not think that every mosque is simply going to be a playground.

soon as the prayer is finished you may play...” This is not correct and means that the children will continue to interfere with some of the main purposes of the mosque.

Parents are greatly in need of understanding this topic well and appreciating the affects that their children have on others. They are the ones most responsible as they are the ones who bring their children to the mosque and they are the ones that their children will most likely listen to. They have to realize that they are responsible for the actions of their child. They also need to respect the sanctity of the mosque and not allow their child to disrupt the services, cause filth in the mosque or damage any part of the mosque—and then they simply walk away as if it is not their business. One step that may go along away in alleviating the situation is for the parent to always have his/her child close to him/her while at the mosque. It is often when the child that is off unsupervised or in a group of children that disturbances and issues arise. If the parent keeps the child with him at all times, there should be a great deal of improvement.

Given the characteristics of the Muslim community in the United States, it is a very difficult balancing act to try to meet everyone’s needs. The members of the community should never forget the importance of having love and compassion towards one another and the importance of bringing the next generation up with an attachment to the mosque. Allah willing, everyone is coming to the mosque for exactly the same reason: To get closer to Allah by worshipping Him in a house established for His worship. With that ultimate goal sincerely on everyone’s minds, in-shaa-Allah, Allah will guide the community to the proper way of handling children in the mosques and bring an end to this recurrent source of dispute—but first they must understand the fiqh rulings that have been offered by the scholars and reviewed in this paper.

And Allah alone knows best.

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