

over the Muslims must stamp out this evil phenomenon and put an end to these actions that have entered upon our customs and our culture.

Chapter Three The Wedding Dinner (*al-Waleemah*) and an Admonition Concerning Extravagance at Wedding Parties

The Root of the Word *Waleemah*, Its Linguistic and Technical Definition

The root of the word *al-waleemah*¹ (الوليمة) is, "Completing something and gathering it together."² Ibn al-Araabi said,

It is said that a man has *awalam* when his intelligence and character have come together. The one who is shackled is called *walm* because one of his legs is tied to the other. Then the word *waleemah* became specifically known as

¹ The meals that people are invited to are of ten varieties: (1) the wedding feast; (2) the feast at the time of circumcision; (3) the feast after giving birth; (4) the feast after completing one's house; (5) the feast at the time that one who was absent comes or returns; (6) the slaughtering due to the birth of a child (*al-aaqeeqah*); (7) the meal when the child becomes proficient and memorizes the entire Quran; (8) general feasts that may be given with or without any specific purpose; (9) the feast that is offered by the people who have suffered a death or catastrophe—this type is neither sanctioned nor recommended; (10) feast for the arriving person. See *Haashiyataa Qalyoobi wa Umairah ala Minbaaj al-Taalibeen*, vol. 3, p. 294; *al-Matli ala Abwaab al-Muqni*, p. 328; *al-Insaaf*, vol. 8, p. 316; *Fath al-Baari*, vol. 9, p. 241. [Here the author has simply listed the different types of meals that person are normally invited to. Some of his sources, such as *al-Insaaf* include others that he did not mention. It is important to note that not all of the above are necessarily sanctioned or recommended in Islamic law.—JZ]

² *Ibid.*

the wedding feast and was not used for anything else. Its plural is *walaaim* (ولائم).¹

The *shareeah* definition of *waleemah* is, "The food that is specifically for the occasion of a wedding." Some of the jurists give it the following definition, "Every meal given for a happy event." However, its usage for the wedding feast is more common. This latter definition contradicts what the scholars of the language and fiqh have stated.²

Al-urs (العرس) refers to the meal and the wedding.

Al-irs (العريس) refers to the man's wife or the woman's husband.

Al-uroos (العروس) refers to either a man or woman during the days in which the marriage is consummated and the two are brought together.³

The Ruling Concerning the *Waleemah*

The wedding feast (*waleemah*) is a strongly recommended sunnah according to the majority of the scholars.⁴ This is the well-known opinion among the Malikis⁵ and Hanbalis. This is also the opinion of some of the Shafi'ees. Since it is a feast due to a happy occurrence, it is not obligatory, as other feasts are also not obligatory.

There is a statement from Malik, a clear text in *al-Umm* by al-Shafi'ee and the opinion of the Dhahiris that the wedding feast is obligatory.⁶ This opinion is based on the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to Abdul Rahmaan ibn Auf,

أَوْلِمَ وَلَوْ بِشَاةٍ

¹ *Al-Matli*, p. 328; *al-Qaamoos al-Fiqhi Lughab wa Istilaahaan*, p. 387.

² *Al-Qaamoos al-Fiqhi*, p. 387; *al-Matli*, p. 328.

³ *Sharh Saheeb Muslim* by al-Nawawi, vol. 9, p. 234; *al-Qaamoos al-Mubeet*, under *uroos*.

⁴ *Nail al-Autaar* by al-Shaukaani, vol. 6, p. 1970.

⁵ *Al-Mughni*, vol. 10, pp. 192-193.

⁶ Qalyoobi and Umairah, vol. 3, p. 295; *al-Muballa* by ibn Hazm al-Dhaahiri, vol. 11, p. 22.

"Make the wedding feast even if it is with just a sheep."¹ The apparent meaning of this command is that of obligation.

A narration by Abu al-Shaikh and al-Tabaraani in *al-Ausat* from the hadith of Abu Huraira from the Prophet (peace be upon him) states,

الوليمة حق وسنة فمن دعي إليها فلم يجب فقد عصي

"The wedding feast is a right act (*haqq*)² and sunnah. One who is invited to it but does not attend has disobeyed [Allah and His Messenger]."³

Ibn Battaal stated,

¹ Discussed earlier.

² [The word in Arabic is *haqq*. This could imply "an obligatory act." It could also imply "a right act," which is the interpretation the author favors above. However, since this narration and the other narrations that state that the *waleemah* is a *haqq* are weak, the argument is actually moot. The only aspect they need to prove is that the command in the previous hadith, "Have a *waleemah* even if with just a sheep," is a command implying recommendation and not obligation. There is yet another *hasan* hadith that implies obligation which the author did not mention here. It states, "A wedding must have a feast." For more details on this point and the status of the *waleemah* see Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo, *The Fiqh of the Family, Marriage and Divorce* (Falls Church, VA: American Open University, 1997), pp. 146-150.—JZ]

³ [Al-Haithami stated that this hadith is recorded by al-Tabaraani through Yahya ibn Uthmaan al-Taimi. He says that Yahya was considered trustworthy by Abu Haatim al-Raazi and ibn Hibbaan while al-Bukhari and others considered him weak. He then states that the rest of the narrators are of *sahih* quality. A closer inspection of Yahya shows that he was considered very weak by almost all scholars. In fact, ibn Hibbaan himself included him in his collection of rejected narrators and stated, "His hadith are very rejected. He narrated objectionable reports that are not corroborated by anyone. It is not allowed to argue by his hadith." It is therefore clear that this narration from al-Tabaraani is weak or very weak. There are other hadith that mention at the beginning, "The *waleemah* is *haqq*," but they are also weak. Hence, there is no need to try to reinterpret the wording of this hadith to try to prove that the *waleemah* is not obligatory, as the author has done in the text above. Allah knows best. Cf., Abdullah al-Darweesh, *Bughyat al-Zaaid fi Tabqeeq Majma al-Zawaaid wa Manba al-Fawaaid lil-Haafidh al-Haithami* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1992), vol. 4, p. 80; Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Tabdheeb al-Tahdheeb* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1996), vol. 4, p. 378; Muhammad ibn Hibbaan, *Kitaab al-Majroobeen min al-Muhadditheen wa al-Dbuafaa wa al-Matrookeen* (Beirut: Daar al-Marifah, 1992), part 3, pp. 122-123; Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Irwaa al-Ghaleel fi Takhreej Ahadeeth Manaar al-Sabeel* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1979), vol. 7, pp. 8-11.—JZ]

His word, *haqq* (a right act), means, “not invalid but something recommended.” And it is a *sunnah*, meaning a virtuous act. The meaning of *haqq* here is not that it is obligatory. It is interpreted to mean preferred since he ordered the person to have the dinner with a slaughtered sheep while all agree that such is not obligatory.¹

Hence, the weightier view is that it is a stressed *sunnah* and a preferred act but it is not obligatory.

Al-Muwaafiq ibn Qudaamah stated in *al-Mughni*, “There is no difference of opinion that it is not obligatory. What they mentioned [the Shafi’ees who say it is obligatory] has no basis. So the report [above] is interpreted to imply recommendation.”²

The Timing of the *Waleemah*

The early scholars differed over the timing of the *waleemah*: Is it at the time of the marriage contract, right after the contract is concluded, when the marriage is consummated, right after the marriage is consummated or is it from the time of contract until after consummation?

Al-Nawawi stated,

[The scholars have] differed. Al-Qaadhi Iyaadh stated that the strongest opinion among the Malikis is that it is preferred after the consummation while a group of them says it should be at the time of the contract. Ibn Jundub mentions both the time of the contract and after consummation.³

Al-Subki, a Shafi’ee, stated,

¹ *Nail al-Autaar* by al-Shaukaani, vol. 6, p. 198.

² *Al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 193. [The text in Arabic was not clear. The above translation is based on what ibn Qudaamah wrote in *al-Mughni* itself.—JZ]

³ *Nail al-Autaar*, vol. 6, pp. 198-199.

What is narrated from the actions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that it is after consummation. In the hadith of Anas, recorded by al-Bukhari and others, it is clearly stated that it was after consummation, as it says, "He became a newlywed with Zainab and he invited the people..." This is what the Malikis base their view on. The Hanbalis say that the sunnah is for it to be at the time of the marriage contract. The custom has become that it is done just prior to the consummation.

In *al-Insaaf* it states, "The preferred opinion is to say that the preferred time stretches from anytime from the time of the contract to the last days of being a newlywed, as there are authentic reports on that matter. Furthermore, the complete happiness comes after the consummation."¹

That is the correct opinion. Allah knows best.

The Amount of the *Waleemah* and What It Consists Of

Based on what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Abdul Rahman ibn Auf, "Give a wedding feast even if it just be a sheep,"² the scholars say that it is preferred for one who has the means to offer a feast of no less than a sheep. However, it is confirmed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had a wedding feast for one of his wives with something less than a sheep.

Al-Bukhari recorded from Safiyyah bint Shaibah who said, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave a wedding feast for one of his wives with just two *mudds*³ of barley."⁴ Al-Bukhari also recorded that the Prophet (peace be upon him) freed Safiyyah and married her, with her dowry being her freedom. He gave a wedding feast for her consisting

¹ *Al-Insaaf fi Marifah al-Raajib min al-Khilaaf* by al-Mardaawi, vol. 8, p. 317.

² This [authentic] hadith was discussed earlier.

³ [A *mudd* is an amount; it is equivalent to what a man with normal sized hands can scoop up with his two hands cupped together.]

⁴ *Al-Sabeeh* (#5173), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on having a wedding feast with less than a sheep.

of *hais*.¹ *Hais* is a meal made up of dates mixed with dry yogurt, flour or butter. That is how it is defined in *Fath al-Baari*.²

Al-Qaadhi Iyaadh stated,

The [scholars] agree that there is no upper limit to what may be given as a wedding feast.³ The same is true for its minimum amount. Whatever is easy upon the person will suffice. The preferred feast is what in accordance with the ability of the husband.⁴

As for its length, it is two days long. The early scholars differed over having it for more than two days. Some disliked it while others allowed it.⁵

The issue differs depending on the person and the customs of the people.⁶

¹ *Al-Sabeeh* (#5169), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on having a wedding feast even if with just one sheep.

² Vol. 9, p. 237 (al-Salafiyyah edition).

³ [As the author will explain later, in all things, extravagance is forbidden, as is clear in numerous places in the Quran. Allah says, "And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium between those [extremes]" (*al-Furqaan* 67). "O children of Adam! Take your adornment while praying and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He likes not those who waste by extravagance" (*al-Araaf* 31). For more on the question of extravagance and the wedding feast, see Abdullah al-Tiraiqi, *Al-Israaf: Diraasah Fiqhiyyah Muqaarinah bain al-Madhaabib al-Arbaah* (Riyadh: published by its author, 1992), pp. 217-224. One of the aspects that al-Tiraiqi mentions in particular is the preparing of more food than is expected to be eaten. This leads that food to be thrown away and this is a great misuse of this blessing from Allah. The person, he states, will be asked about that bounty on the Day of Judgment, as Allah says, "Then on that Day you shall be asked about the bounties [you were privileged with in this world]" (*al-Takaathur* 8).—JZ]

⁴ *Fath al-Baari bi-Sharh Sabeeh al-Bukhaari*, vol. 9, p. 235; *Nail al-Autaar*, vol. 6, p. 199.

⁵ [It seems that the strongest opinion is that three days is both permissible and also part of the sunnah. This is based on a *hasan* hadith in *Musnad Abu Yala* which states, تزوج النبي صفيية وجعل عتقها صداقها وجعل الوليمة ثلاثة أيام "The Prophet (peace be upon him) married Safiyah and made her freedom her *mahr* and made the *waleemah* three days long." Allah knows best.—JZ]

⁶ *Sharh Sabeeh Muslim*, vol. 9, p. 234.

The Invitation to Attend the *Waleemah*

It is the practice in Islam for the husband to feed, his family, companions and neighbors during the *waleemah*. He should also set aside a portion for the poor and indigent as a way of expressing thanks to Allah and recognizing Allah's bounty upon him.

The husband must also do his best to invite the pious and good people. He also should not distinguish between the rich and poor. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has prohibited such a practice. Abu Hurairah stated, "The worst food is the food of the wedding feast in which only the rich are invited and the poor are avoided. And whoever does not respond to the invitation has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger."¹ Although this is a statement of a Companion, in its ruling it is treated as having its source with the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Al-Nawawi stated in *Sharh Saheeh Muslim*, "This is stating what the people did after him [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] of tending to the rich in their dinners and other events. They would invite them in particular and give them preference in having the best food and the best places to sit and so forth, as is the case in most dinners. And Allah alone is the one who can be resorted to for help."²

On this point, ibn Masood said, "If only the rich are invited and the poor are left out, we have been ordered not to respond to such an invitation." Ibn Bataal said, "If the host distinguishes between the rich and poor and feeds each one separately, there is no harm in that. Ibn Umar did such."³

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari (#5177), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on the one who does not answer the invitation has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger; Muslim (#1432), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on the order to respond to the invitation when one is invited. The wording above is from al-Bukhari.

² *Sharh Saheeh Muslim*, vol. 9, p. 237.

³ *Fath al-Baari*, vol. 9, p. 245.

The Ruling Concerning Answering the Invitation for the One Who is Not Fasting

Scholars are agreed that it is sanctioned to answer the invitation to a *waleemah*. Some say that it is an individual obligation upon the person who was invited— however, that obligation may be dropped if the invited person has an acceptable excuse, and such excuses shall be discussed shortly, Allah willing. Ibn Taimiyah concluded that the stronger opinion is that it is only recommended. Furthermore, the ruling for a woman is the same on this point as for a man, unless it involves being in private seclusion with men, which is forbidden.

The scholars differ concerning invitations other than that of the wedding feast. Malik and the majority of the scholars say that it is recommended to respond to any other invitation. The Dhahiris (Literalists) say that it is obligatory to respond to every invitation, whether it be a wedding feast or otherwise. That was also the opinion of some of the early scholars.¹

The evidence stressing the importance of responding to the wedding feast invitation is in the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him),

إِذَا دُعِيَ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى الْوَلِيمَةِ فَلْيَأْتِهَا

“If one of you is invited to the wedding feast, he should go to it.”² And also his statement (peace be upon him) discussed earlier, “The worst food... And whoever does not respond has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger.”³ There are also other hadith that stress the obligation of responding to the invitation on the first day. The invitation for the

¹ See *Maraatib al-Ijmaa*, p. 25; *Mausooah al-Ijmaa*, vol. 2, p. 1152; *al-Muhalla* by ibn Hazm al-Dhaahiri, vol. 11, pp. 22-23, issue number 1824; *Fatawa Shaikh al-Islam ibn Taimiyah*, vol. 32, p. 206.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari (#5173), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on the right of responding to the wedding feast and invitation.

³ [As was presented earlier, this was not a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as the text states here, but a statement of Abu Hurairah, albeit it is considered as having its source with the Prophet (peace be upon him).—JZ]

second day is considered preferred. Responding to the invitation for the third day of the wedding feast is considered disliked, as shall be explained later.¹

Shaikh al-Islam stated, "It is forbidden to eat and slaughter meat for what is beyond the norm during the remaining days, even if the custom is to do so or if it is done to make the family happy. If they continue to do so, they should be reprimanded."²

Al-Haafidh [ibn Hajr] researched the question of having more than three days for the *waleemah* and he presented statements from people of knowledge. In sum, what he concluded is that it is disliked to have the *waleemah* for more than three days unless there is no fear of any commotion in that it is clear that the host is not doing it to show off or compete against others. In other words, he is just prolonging it due to the large number of people that he needs to invite or something of that nature.³

¹ A hadith on that matter has been recorded by al-Tirmidhi (#1097), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on what has been narrated concerning the *waleemah*. Its text is, "The food of the *waleemah* on the first day is a right act, on the second day it is a sunnah and on the third day it is showing off. Whoever does acts for show, Allah will make it be known [that he did it for show]." Al-Tirmidhi found fault with one of its narrators who had heard from his source after his source became senile. However, that hadith has other evidence for it that shows that it has a basis. Ibn Hajr pointed that fact out in *al-Fath* (vol. 9, p. 243) and he mentioned that hadith just alluded to. [There is nothing in ibn Hajr's discussion that explicitly states that the above hadith is *hasan*. Indeed, earlier in ibn Hajr's discussion he quoted the hadith mentioned in an earlier footnote from this translator in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had a *waleemah* for three days. Ibn Hajr explicitly stated that the chain of that hadith is *hasan*. Al-Albaani has discussed the hadith, "The food of the *waleemah* on the first day is a right act, on the second day it is a sunnah and on the third day it is showing off. Whoever does acts for show, Allah will make it be known [that he did it for show]" in detail and he concluded that it is weak, with none of its supporting evidence being strong enough to raise it to the level of *hasan*. See al-Albaani, *Irwaa*, vol. 7, pp. 8-11. Allah knows best.—JZ]

² *Haashiyah al-Raudh al-Muraba bi-Sharh Zaad al-Mustaqni*, vol. 6, pp. 408-409, fn. 5.

³ See *al-Fath*, vol. 9, p. 243.