

Visiting the Prophet's Mosque and Guidelines for Visitors

Written by

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Introduction

Praise be to Allah Who made visiting the Prophet's Mosque one of the most pious acts and prayer therein a means for gaining higher ranks; and peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, Companions and all those who follow them rightly until the Day of Judgment.

To proceed:

I am pleased to introduce to you this book, "Visiting the Prophet's Mosque and Guidelines for Visitors", by Dr. 'Abdullāh ibn Nāji Al-Mikhālāfi. The book is presented in a simple style and it is comprehensive in the topics it deals with. It comprises the key aspects that should be taken into consideration by visitors.

It presents the lawful visit and the proper way of invoking Allah to send His peace and blessings upon the Prophet and his two Companions; and it clarifies the places that can be visited in Madīnah apart from the Prophet's Mosque. It also offers some guidelines that are needed by visitors and comply with the sound creed and the path of our righteous predecessors as they are based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. Given the significance of this book and its content, I definitely recommend publishing it imploring Allah Almighty to make it beneficial for anyone who reads it. I would also like to express my deep sense of gratitude to the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman ibn Abdulaziz Al Saud and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed ibn Salman ibn Abdulaziz, the Crown Prince, for the great care they give to the two sacred mosques and for all the services and facilities they provide to their visitors. I would also like to give thanks to the General President of the Affairs of the Sacred Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, His Eminence Shaykh Dr. Abdulrahman ibn Abdulaziz Al-Sudais, for his great efforts in serving the two sacred mosques and his ongoing support for the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at the General Presidency of the Affairs of the Prophet's Mosque.

May Allah give them the best reward and enable all of us to serve Islam and Muslims; and peace and blessings of Allah be upon Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions.

Ali ibn Sālih Al-Mhaisni

Director of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at the General Presidency of the Affairs of the Prophet's Mosque.

Introduction

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, and may Allah's peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions.

Dear visitor, may the peace, blessings and mercy of Allah be upon you. Welcome to the Prophet's city, Madīnah.

Dear visitor, be grateful to Allah Almighty that He gave you the health and financial ability and enabled you to come to the Prophet's city. Many Muslims wish and seek to come here, but they cannot. As you arrive in Madīnah, you should act according to the Islamic etiquettes enjoined by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). A Muslim is required to observe them anywhere, yet it is more required in Madīnah. Be grateful to your Lord that He enabled you to visit the Prophet's Mosque,

one of three meritorious mosques about which the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: (Journey can only be made to three mosques: the Sacred Mosque, this mosque of mine, and Al-Aqsa Mosque.) [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

Also praise Allah Almighty that He enabled you, along with visiting the Prophet's Mosque, to visit his grave. So, it behooves you to follow the right ways and manners he prescribed for his Ummah in relation to this visit which were observed by our righteous predecessors (may Allah have mercy upon them).

Dear visitor, if you intend to come to the Prophet's Mosque, clean and purify yourself and apply perfume. Do not come to the Mosque with unpleasant smells. When you reach the Mosque, enter it with your right foot first and say: "In the name of Allah, and may Allah's peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah. O Allah, forgive me my sins and open for me the gates of Your mercy. I seek refuge with Allah, the Most Great, and with His noble Face, and His eternal authority from the accursed devil."

Then go to Al-Rawdah Al-Sharīfah and offer two Rak'ahs therein as a greeting to the mosque if you can. If it is crowded, however, you can pray anywhere in the mosque. Avoid pushing within crowds, for this is not permissible. In fact, you have come to the Prophet's Mosque to gain rewards, not to incur sins.

Then proceed to the Prophet's grave in a calm and polite manner. If lots of people are there, be sure not to push against them even if this means you wait for a while until the area becomes less crowded. You'd better not go there after the obligatory prayers as the place is usually crowded at these times. Do not raise your voice there, for Allah, the Almighty, prohibits the believers from doing so, saying: {O you who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet nor be loud to him in speech like the loudness of some of you to others, lest your deeds become worthless while you perceive not. Indeed, those who lower their voices before the Messenger of Allah – they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for righteousness. For them is forgiveness and great reward.} [Al-Hujūrāt: 2-3] In his Tafsīr, Imām Ibn Kathīr (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: "Raising one's voice near the Prophet's grave is disliked as it used to be so in his presence during his lifetime, for he always deserves respect while alive or in his grave." "Umar bin Al-Khattāb (may Allah be pleased with him) heard two men speaking loudly in the Prophet's Mosque and he said to them: "Who are you?" Or "Where are you from?" They replied: "From Taif." Thereupon, he said: "If you had been residents of this city, I would have beaten you for raising your voices in the Prophet's Mosque!" [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri] When you come in front of the grave, stand in calmness and solemnity and greet the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) saying: Peace, blessings, and mercy of Allah be upon you, O Messenger of Allah. Peace be upon you, O Prophet of Allah. Peace be upon you, O you, the noblest of Allah's creatures. Peace be upon you, the master of the messengers and the leader of the righteous. I bear witness that you conveyed the message, fulfilled the trust, gave sincere advice to the Ummah and strove in the cause of Allah in the most proper manner. May Allah grant you the best reward He would give to a prophet for what he did to his Ummah! O Allah, bestow Your peace upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You bestowed Your peace upon Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm; You are the Praiseworthy, the Glorious. O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm; You are the Praiseworthy, the Glorious!

You can also greet the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) in any other reported wording.

Then move a little to the right and greet the Prophet's successor, Abu Bakr Al-Siddīq (may Allah be pleased with him), saying: "Peace be upon you, O Abu Bakr, and the blessings and mercy of Allah; peace be upon you, O successor of the Messenger of Allah, and the one who was with him in the cave; may Allah give you the best reward for what you did for Islam and Muslims!" Or you can use any similar wording. Then move a little to the right and greet the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar bin Al-Khattāb (may Allah be pleased with him), saying: "Peace be upon you, O 'Umar, and the blessings and mercy of Allah; peace be upon you, O the second rightly guided Caliph; may Allah give you the best reward for what you did for Islam and Muslims!" Or you can use any similar wording. Thus your visit to the Prophet's Mosque and grave and his two Companions becomes complete. If you want to supplicate to Allah Almighty, face the Qiblah anywhere in the mosque at any time during the day or night, and be careful to choose a quiet place where you can supplicate in a focused and submissive manner. Implore Allah Almighty to grant you and your fellow Muslims good in this world and in the Hereafter. Beware,

dear visitor, of exceeding the limits in supplication, which may take many forms, like invoking other than Allah and seeking his giving and help. This contradicts the command of Allah and His Messenger, and it is even an act of polytheism. Allah Almighty says: {So invoke not anyone along with Allah.} [Surat Al-Jinn: 18] Allah also says: {And when My servants ask you concerning Me – indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be guided.} [Al-Baqarah: 186] And He says: {And who is more astray than he who invokes besides Allah those who will not respond to him until the Day of Resurrection and they are unaware of their invocation.} [Al-Ahqāf: 5] Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “If you ask for anything, ask for it from Allah, and if you seek help, seek it from Allah.” [Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi]

Say instead: “O Allah, make Your Prophet my intercessor with You; O Allah, do not deprive me of Your Prophet’s intercession!” Implore Allah Almighty by virtue of your love for His Prophet, your following of his example and all your righteous deeds.

You should know, dear visitor, that such a visit was the practice of the righteous predecessors (may Allah have mercy upon them).

The Places that Can Be Visited

in Madīnah apart from the Prophet’s Mosque.

1. Al-Baqī’: This is the cemetery of the people of Madīnah where many of the Companions, Tābi’is (the followers) and righteous predecessors were buried. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) used to visit Al-Baqī’ and greet the Muslims buried therein and supplicate for them.

So, if you visit Al-Baqī’, greet them and say as our Prophet used to say: “Peace be upon you, dwellers of these abodes from amongst the believers and Muslims. We, Allah willing, shall definitely join you. I ask Allah to grant well-being to us and you.” [Narrated by Muslim] And supplicate for the people of Al-Baqī’ and ask Allah’s forgiveness for them. Such is the Shar’i visit. Beware, dear brother, of treading or sitting on any grave, for the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have prohibited this, saying: “Do not pray facing graves and do not sit on them.” [Narrated by Muslim]

Also beware of kissing or touching the graves to seek blessing therefrom, taking anything of their soil or invoking those buried therein, for they possess no ability to do anything good or harm.

2. The martyrs of Uhud Battle. This is a battle that took place between Muslims and polytheists that left 70 Companions martyred. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) used to visit the martyrs of Uhud and greet them and supplicate for them. You should remember that those martyrs died while defending the religion. Therefore, it is their right upon us to supplicate for them and invoke Allah’s pleasure upon them. If you visit them, greet them as you greet the people of Al-Baqī’ and other dead people.

3. Qubā’ Mosque: It is from the Sunnah to visit and pray in it as the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) used to visit it every week, walking or riding, and pray therein. Whoever visits and prays there shall have a reward equivalent to the reward for performing ‘Umrah. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Whoever performs ablution at home and then comes to the mosque of Qubā’ and offers prayer in it shall have like the reward for ‘Umrah.” [Narrated by Ibn Mājah]

So, do not miss out on these abundant rewards.

Guidelines for visitors of the Prophet’s Mosque

Dear visitor:

* Be careful to say the reported supplication upon entering and leaving the Prophet’s Mosque or any other mosque.

* Do not bow when you greet the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), but stand in a tranquil, solemn and polite manner.

* Do not seek blessing by touching the walls, columns, or gates of the Prophet's Mosque or its pulpit, niches or the window around the Prophetic chamber. This is not permissible.

About touching the Prophet's grave with one's hand, Imām Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy upon him), in his book "Al-Majmū", said: "If anyone thinks that touching with hand brings greater blessing, this indeed stems from his ignorance and unawareness, for blessing only lies in compliance with the Shariah. How can one pursue virtue in something wrong!"

* Know, dear visitor, that such a visit is not linked to certain times, long or short, or to a specific number of prayers, large or small. One of the errors committed by visitors of the Prophet's Mosque is their belief that they should offer a certain number of prayers therein, 40 prayers or the like. Some overburden themselves and those along with them. This is wrong, as the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is not authentically reported to have specified a certain number of prayers to be performed by visitors of his mosque. So, offer prayers there as you wish, more or less.

In a Hadīth narrated by Imām Ahmad in his Musnad, Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever offers forty prayers in my mosque, not missing one prayer, shall be absolved from Hellfire, safe from punishment and free from hypocrisy." But this Hadīth is weak. In another Hadīth narrated by Imām Al-Tirmidhi, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever performs prayer for Allah for forty days in congregation, catching the first Takbīr, shall have two absolutions: absolution from Hellfire and absolution from hypocrisy." This is an authentic Hadīth.

So, my advice to you, dear visitor, is to gain this absolution whether you act upon this Hadīth here in Madīnah or in your country.

* Fundamentally, a supplicant should face the Qiblah during supplication. However, some tend to stand somewhere in the Prophet's Mosque raising their hands in supplication while facing the Prophet's grave. This act is not known to have been done by the earlier members of this Ummah or its Imāms and scholars. So, beware of such acts; sufficient for you are the acts done by the Companions, the Tābi'is and the righteous predecessors. In supplication, one should face the Qiblah.

* It is not permissible to write a message containing a supplication for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and place it on the chamber's window, Al-Rawdah or anywhere in the Mosque. This is wrong and impermissible. The same holds true for carrying such messages from far and wide to the Prophet's Mosque.

* It is not permissible to circumambulate the Prophet's grave, for Tawāf is an act of worship, which should only be performed around the Ka'bah as exaltation for Allah Almighty and in compliance with His command.

* Dear visitor, be keen to engage in a lot of good deeds during your stay in Madīnah, to attend the obligatory prayers in the Prophet's Mosque and to offer a lot of supererogatory prayers in Al-Rawdah Al-Sharīfah, if possible, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is authentically reported to have said:

"Between my house and my pulpit is one of the gardens of Paradise."

[Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

Describing this area by this particular trait, apart from the other areas of the mosque, indicates its excellence and merit. So, be sure to offer supererogatory prayers, engage in supplication and recite the Qur'an there without pushing against people or annoying worshipers. Indeed, if someone leaves something for the sake of Allah, Allah will compensate him with something better.

As for the obligatory prayers, it is better to offer them in the first rows, as the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The best rows for men are the first, and the worst are the last." [Narrated by Muslim]

He also said:

“If people were to know what excellence is there in the Adhān and in the first row and found no other way to get that except by drawing lots, they would have definitely done that.”

[Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

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One prayer in the Prophet’s Mosque is more meritorious than a thousand prayers offered in other mosques except for the Sacred Mosque where one prayer is better than a hundred thousand prayers performed elsewhere. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “A prayer in this mosque of mine is better than a thousand prayers elsewhere, except for the Sacred Mosque; and a prayer in the Sacred Mosque is better than a hundred thousand prayers elsewhere.” [Narrated by Ibn Mājah and Ahmad]

Be keen to frequently recite the Qur’an, remember Allah and render thanks and praise to Him, give charity and observe I’tikāf (spiritual retirement) in the Prophet’s Mosque if you conveniently can.

* If you get confused about any religious matter, refer to the scholars, including their Eminence the Shaykhs who teach at the Prophet’s Mosque in compliance with Allah’s command: {...So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know.} [Al-Anbiyā’: 7]

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[Al-Anbiyā’: 7]

* Or you can turn to the phone numbers of “the Department of the Affairs of the Guidance of Questioners”, which are displayed at the gates of the Prophet’s Mosque and in some places therein, and you will receive an answer to your question regarding any matter related to your visit and your ‘Umrah or Hajj.

* Be keen to attend the learning classes given by the noble scholars who teach at the Prophet’s Mosque so as to gain a proper understanding of your religion and fall under the Prophet’s statement: “Whoever comes to this mosque of mine, and only comes for something good to learn or teach, his status is like that of one who fights in the cause of Allah. And whoever comes for any other purpose, his status is that of a man who is keeping an eye on other people’s property.” [Narrated by Ibn Mājah, Ahmad, and Al-Hākim]

“Whoever comes to this mosque of mine, and only comes for something good to learn or teach, his status is like that of one who fights in the cause of Allah. And whoever comes for any other purpose, his status is that of a man who is keeping an eye on other people’s property.”

[Narrated by Ibn Mājah, Ahmad, and Al-Hākim]

Also, do not forget, O dear seeker of knowledge, to visit the library of the Prophet’s Mosque and go to its spacious hall, which lies on the roof on the western side of the Prophet’s Mosque’s expansion launched by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd (may Allah have mercy upon him). Go up the electric ladder No. (10) to reach it and find useful things therein.

If you are interested in manuscripts, you can go to the manuscripts section at the Gate of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (may Allah be pleased with him), which is situated at the end of the first Saudi expansion, in the middle of the Prophet’s Mosque.

There is also the department of the audio and video directive production at gate No. (17h) - the Gate of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb - within the expansion launched by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd. It records the classes, sermons, and prayers held at the Prophet’s Mosque for visitors for free. The visitors would only bring empty tapes, hard discs or the like. Also, there is a women library at the eastern praying place for women at gate No. (24) and at the western praying place for women at gate No. (16). There is also an audio library for women at gate No. (28).

* Step forward and complete the first row, if complete, the next one, and so on, and do not sit at the doorways, corridors, ladders or gates, thereby blocking entry into the Mosque and forcing people to

pray outside the Mosque while there is enough space inside. Rather, you and other fellow worshipers should be keen to complete the rows and line them up one after another in a way that accommodates all worshipers inside the Mosque.

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* If you want to pray in the first rows or in Al-Rawdah Al-Sharīfah, come early to the Prophet's Mosque. You should not come late and then pass through worshipers and push them to reach the place you want. This annoys Muslims, which is not permissible.

While the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was delivering a sermon upon his pulpit, he saw someone passing through people to reach the front rows. Thereupon, he stopped his sermon and said to him: "Sit down, for you have annoyed (people) and you are late." [Narrated by Ibn Mājah and Ahmad]

"Sit down, for you have annoyed (people) and you are late."

[Narrated by Ibn Mājah and Ahmad]

In other words, you have annoyed people by passing through them while you have come late. If you want to be at the first rows, you should come early.

* Do not pass in front of praying people. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If the one passing in front of a praying person knew the gravity of his act, he would prefer to stand for forty than to pass in front of him." Abu al-Nadr said: "I do not know whether he said forty days, months, or years." [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri] In Fat-h Al-Bāri (585/1), Imām Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: "His words 'he would prefer to stand for forty' mean that if the passing person knew the gravity of the sin he incurs as a result of passing in front of praying people, he would choose to stand for the said period to avoid incurring that sin."

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* Dear visitor, be careful to keep yourself clean and perfumed and remove bad smell from your body or clothes, for angels get annoyed by the things that annoy humans.

* Maintain cleanliness of the Mosque and its yards and do not annoy fellow worshipers by spitting or blowing your nose on the Mosque's floor, pillars, or yards. You should feel the inviolability of this place and know that spitting in the mosque is a sin as indicated by the Prophet's Hadith: "Spitting in the mosque is a sin and its expiation is to bury it." [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

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* Do not let your children play in the Mosque or raise their voices, for this contradicts politeness towards the Prophet's Mosque.

* Avoid overcrowded places in the Mosque and go to the ones with good space. Know that the merit of prayer in this Mosque is attained by praying anywhere in it.

* Dear visitor, after performing the obligatory prayers, wait and say the reported Dhikr and do not rush to offer the supererogatory prayers following the obligatory ones, especially at the times and places of

crowdedness, so as to give room for those with excuses and those who want to leave early to go out without having to pass in front of praying persons.

* Be calm and do not run or push others upon lifting the curtain placed for women's prayer in Al-Rawdah.

* Do not take the copies of the Qur'an out of the Prophet's Mosque, for they are put there as an endowment.

* Do not lean upon the Qur'an's tallboys, nor place your shoes beside them, or pass from above them as an act of reverence for the Book of Allah.

* When you put your shoes in a certain place, always remember where that place is. Containers where shoes are placed are numbered. You should merely know the number so that you can come back to take your shoes easily.

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* Know, dear visitor, that the Prophet's Mosque and other mosques are built for worship. So, do not turn them into a place for sleep, begging, or calling for lost items.

* Do not use the fountains and containers of Zamzam water, which are put in many places in the Mosque for drinking, for ablution. Do not use the carpet in the Mosque as pillows or covers.

* Do not lie down in the yards of the Prophet's Mosque.

* Smoking is banned in the yards and facilities of the Prophet's Mosque. Anyone who is afflicted with such a thing should supplicate to Allah Almighty in the Mosque of His Prophet to help him quit smoking. It should be known that the scholars stated that it is prohibited to smoke tobacco or sell it. Accordingly, smoking is a sin. You, dear visitor, have come to increase your good deeds, so keep away from sins.

* All the gates of the Prophet's Mosque are named and numbered. You should know the name or the number of the gate through which you have entered so that you can return through it when you want to leave.

* If you find crowds of people at the gates, wait a little in the Mosque until there is less crowdedness.

* When you leave the Mosque, do not forget to step out with your left foot first and to say the supplication of leaving the mosque: "In the name of Allah; may Allah's peace and blessings be upon Muhammad; O Allah, forgive me my sins and open to me the gates of Your grace!" [Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, and Ahmad in addition to a similar Hadīth by Muslim]

"In the name of Allah; may Allah's peace and blessings be upon Muhammad; O Allah, forgive me my sins and open to me the gates of Your grace!"

[Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, and Ahmad in addition to a similar Hadīth by Muslim]

* We advise you to take a card from your accommodation so that you can go back to it easily.

* In case there is a sick person in the Prophet's Mosque in need of medical aid, quickly alert the observers standing at the Mosque's gates or any of the staff or officers carrying walkie-talkies.

* The roof of the Prophet's Mosque is open for Friday prayer throughout the year and for the five prayers during seasons. So, if there is crowdedness in the ground floor, go up to the roof and you will find good room, Allah Willing.

* There are trolleys for the disabled and the elderly at "the Department of the Gates of the Prophet's Mosque" at gate No. (8) in the western side of the Mosque. They are intended to carry them from their accommodation or cars to the Prophet's Mosque for the duration of their stay.

* During prayers at times of crowdedness in the front yards, do not pass the area of Imām to avoid the difference of opinion among different fiqh schools.

* Try to benefit from the directives given by the observers at the Prophet's Mosque who are assigned to serve you and make things easy for you.

* Supplicate a lot and affirm your pledge to Allah the Almighty to repent sincerely. Know that true politeness towards your Lord lies in loving and exalting Him and being sincere in religion to Him; and true politeness towards the Prophet lies in following his Sunnah, sticking to his guidance and the practice of his Companions after him as well as showing respect to him after his death.

* And finally, I advise you, dear visitor, to frequently invoke Allah's peace and blessings upon the Prophet. 'Amr bin Al-'Ās (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he heard the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) saying: "Whoever invokes peace and blessings upon me once, Allah will send peace and blessings upon him tenfold." [Narrated by Muslim and others]

"Whoever invokes peace and blessings upon me once, Allah will send peace and blessings upon him tenfold."

[Narrated by Muslim and others]

And engage a lot in the reported Dhikr and implore Allah the Almighty and turn to Him, for you are in a place where supplications are hoped to be answered. Remember your parents, family, children, and fellow Muslims everywhere in your supplications.

May Allah's blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his Companions.

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