

182230 - Why do we send blessings upon Ibraaheem when the command in the Qur'an is to send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad only?

the question

We are commanded to recite as-Salaah al-Ibraaheemiyyah, in which it says: "Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad wa aali Muhammad kama salayta 'ala Ibraaheem wa aali Ibraaheem, innaka hameedun majeed. Allahumma baarik 'ala Muhammad wa aali Muhammad kama baarakta 'ala Ibraaheem wa aali Ibraaheem, innaka hameedun majeed (O Allah, send prayers upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You sent prayers upon Ibraaheem and the family of Ibraaheem; You are indeed Worthy of Praise, Full of Glory. O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You sent blessings upon Ibraaheem and the family of Ibraaheem; You are indeed Worthy of Praise, Full of Glory)." But we see in the Qur'an that Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "Allah sends His Salat (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy, etc.) on the Prophet (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) and also His angels too (ask Allah to bless and forgive him). O you who believe! Send your Salat on (ask Allah to bless) him (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islamic way of greeting (salutation i.e. AsSalamu Alaikum)" [al-Ahzaab 33:56]. We also see that the Qur'anic verse does not instruct us to send blessings upon Ibraaheem (peace be upon him); rather it only mentions the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

My question is: isn't the extra words that we say in as-Salaah al-Ibraaheemiyyah - i.e., sending blessings upon Ibraaheem and his family, and the family of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) - superfluous to what is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and therefore contrary to the command of Allah?

Are we not venerating Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) and raising him to a status higher

than that of our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when we say “and bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibraaheem and the family of Ibraaheem”? I hope that you can clarify.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

It is not permissible for the Muslim to differentiate between the rulings that are narrated in the Qur’an and the saheeh Sunnah. Allah, may he be exalted, has instructed the Muslim to adhere to that which was brought by the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it), and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment”

[al-Hashr 57:9].

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) confirmed that when he said: “Verily I have been given the Qur’an and something like it with it.” Narrated and classed as hasan by at-Tirmidhi (2664); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi. For more information on the meaning of the hadith, please see the answer to question no.

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Secondly:

The Prophet’s Sunnah explains and clarifies the Qur’an, and the Muslim cannot do without the Prophet’s Sunnah in order to understand his religion and act in accordance with the commands of the Qur’an, for the Sunnah

explains the rulings in detail, such as how much or how many, and how, when and where to do what is enjoined. The question put by our brother is a clear example of what we are saying. Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded us to send blessings upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), but how are we to send blessings upon him? This command is mentioned in general terms, and that is what motivated the noble Sahaabah to come to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and ask him how to send blessings upon him, and he answered them on the basis of revelation, telling them the wording mentioned by the questioner.

It was narrated that Abu Mas'ood al-Ansaari said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came to us when we were in the gathering of Sa'd ibn 'Ubaadah, and Basheer ibn Sa'eed said to him: Allah has commanded us to send blessings upon you, O Messenger of Allah; how should we send blessings upon you? The Messenger of Allah (S) remained silent until we wished that he had not asked him, then the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Say: Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala aali Muhammadin kama salayta 'ala Ibraaheem, wa baarik 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala aali Muhammadin kama baarakta 'ala Ibraaheem fi'l-'aalameen, innaka hameedun majeed (O Allah, send Your salaah (grace, honour and mercy) upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, as You sent Your salaah upon Ibraaheem, and send Your blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You sent Your blessings upon Ibraaheem among the nations, You are indeed Praiseworthy, Most Glorious). And the salaam is as you know." Narrated by Muslim (405).

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What this means is: Allah, may He be exalted, instructed us: "Send your Salat on (ask Allah to bless) him (Muhammad (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him)), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islamic way of greeting (salutation i.e. AsSalamu Alaikum)”

[al-Ahzaab 33:56]. So

how should we word the blessings? Here we see that whoever is instructed to do something and does not understand what is meant should ask about it so that he will know what to do.

End quote from Sharh Muslim (4/124)

Moreover, this asking about something one is not sure of does not apply only to the issue of how to send blessings upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him); rather it is general in meaning and applies to everything that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) brought, for which there is no specific text in the Holy Qur’an. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) responded to this false argument:

Abu Dawood (4604) narrated from al-Miqdam ibn Ma’di Yakrib from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), that he said: “Verily, I have been given the Book and something like it with it, but soon a man will be lying replete on his couch and he will say: You should adhere to this Qur’an. Whatever you find is permitted in it, take it as permissible, and whatever you find forbidden in it, take it as forbidden. Verily, the (meat of) domesticated donkeys is not permissible to you, nor is (the meat of) every animal that has fangs. The lost property of a dhimmi (is not permissible to you) either, unless its owner has given it up. Whoever stops among a people, they are obliged to entertain him, and if they do not entertain him then he has the right to take from them an amount equivalent to that with which they should have entertained him.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami’ (2643).

After this, you can reflect further on the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have also sent down unto you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) the reminder and the advice (the Quran), that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought”

[an-Nahl 16:44].

Thirdly:

With regard to your question about sending blessings upon Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) that you mentioned, it is an old and well known question. Ibn al-‘Arabi al-Maaliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words “kama salayta ‘ala Ibraaheem (as You sent blessings upon Ibraaheem)”, this is very problematic, because Muhammad is superior to Ibraaheem, so how can he (Ibraaheem) be superior to him, then ask for Muhammad to be raised to the level of Ibraaheem? There are many ways of understanding and interpreting that, which can essentially be boiled down to ten – and he mentioned all of them.

End quote from Ahkaam al-Qur’an (3/624).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) favoured the view that the word ka (in the phrase “kama salayta”= “as You sent prayers”) is indicative of similarity or likeness, but that does not necessarily mean that the one to whom someone is likened is of higher status than the one who is likened to him, as we say “kama salayta ‘ala aal Ibraaheem (as You sent prayer upon the family of Ibraaheem)” , meaning: as You previously sent prayers upon Ibraaheem and the family of Ibraaheem, therefore we ask You to send prayers upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, who is more

deserving, because that which is proven for one who is of high status is more appropriately proven for one who is of higher status. Thus we refuted the famous notion that the condition of likening one to another is that the latter should be of higher status.

Conclusion: likening one to another does not mean claiming that the one who is perfect is of the same level as one who is more perfect than him; rather it is by way of urging and the like, or to explain the situation to one who does not know by drawing a comparison with what he knows. In the case of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), he is clearly more perfect.

End quote from Fath al-Baari (8/534)

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) thought it more likely that the word ka ("as" in the phrase "kama salayta" = "as You sent prayers") refers to giving a reason or justification, not a comparison. He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Some of the scholars said that it signifies giving a reason or explaining, and that this comes under the heading of beseeching Allah on the basis of His previous action, asking Him to repeat it once more. In other words: as You previously bestowed your bounty upon the family of Ibraaheem, bestow Your bounty on Mohammed and his family. It does not necessarily mean that someone is being likened or compared to someone else.

With regard to further examples, there is the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "As We have sent among you a Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) of your own, reciting to you Our Verses (the Quran)" [al-Baqarah 2:151]; here the word ka ("as") gives the reason for what is mentioned before it.

And Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And

remember Him (by invoking Allah for all good, etc.) as He has guided you”

[al-Baqarah 2:198] that

is, because He guided you; however, it is possible to understand this as referring to a likeness or comparison, in other words: remember Him as He guided you (i.e., in the manner to which He guided you).

This view – that the word ka (“as” in the phrase “kama salayta”= “as You sent prayers”) refers to giving a reason or justification, which comes under the heading of beseeching Allah on the basis of His previous deed, asking Him to repeat it once more – is the more correct view, and there is no confusion if we understand it in this way.

End quote from Sharh al-Mumti’ ‘ala Zaad al-Mustaqni’ (3/165, 166)

And Allah knows best.