

97389 - Organizing a gathering to remember the deceased

the question

We have an association for sponsoring orphans. This association mediates between the charitable people and the families of the orphans. The manager of this association has passed away two months ago, may Allah have mercy on him. He was such a great model of sacrifice and loyalty. He was always doing his best to delight and please the families of the orphans. The brothers working here thought of making a meeting to remember him. It is not a commemoration. We decided to make this meeting about his role in the charitable work, and to give his family a certificate of achievement for the efforts the deceased exerted.

The meeting includes a word about the activities and achievements of the association.

The question: Is it permissible to organize such a meeting?.

Detailed answer

Organizing lectures, seminars and meetings to talk about deceased scholars and righteous people or those who did good is permissible and there is nothing wrong with it.

But the following conditions should be adhered to:

1 - The purpose should be to encourage people to do good and to express thanks to his family and try to benefit from the bright side of the life of the deceased, and to tell people about him so as to encourage them to follow his example.

The aim should not be to stir up grief and sorrow, or remember calamities and pain, or make tears fall and hearts break. Such things have no place in Islam; rather they are contrary to what is enjoined of patience in the face of calamity and acceptance of the will of Allaah.

2 – This gathering should not be made into an “eid” that is repeated every year, because the Muslims have no eid apart from Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha only, and it is not permissible to introduce any eid on any other occasion apart from those that are mentioned in sharee’ah.

3 – Only the truth should be spoken, without exaggerating or boasting. If the deceased was a righteous, knowledgeable and good man, mention may be made of what he did for his ummah and his religion, and that should only be mentioned for the sake of Allaah and so as to encourage people to do good, not to try to attain some position or to show tribal loyalty to a group or party. But if he was a sinner who followed whims and desires or he was one of those who mix good deeds with bad, it is not permissible to deceive the ummah by means of such people and it is not permissible to tell lies by praising them for things that are not true. What we should do is leave their case to Allaah.

4 – These meetings should not be accompanied by any reprehensible actions such as customs of mourning or hanging up pictures or using musical instruments. It is also not permissible to connect such meetings to certain nights such as one week or forty days after the person’s death, and other such myths that are widespread among the common folk.

It says in al-Fataawa al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kubra by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (2/18):

Ibn ‘Abd al-Salaam said: some kinds of mourning are haraam, such as wailing, because that implies objecting to the divine decree. But if the qualities of a pious scholar or righteous man are mentioned so as to encourage others to follow the same path and think well of him, in that case it is more akin to obedience and exhortation, because of the goodness that may result from it. Hence many of the Sahaabah and scholars did that throughout the ages and were not denounced for it. End quote.

It says in the commentary by Ibn al-Shaat on al-Furooq by al-Qarraafi (2?180-182):

In fact mourning and eulogizing fall into four categories: haraam and a major sin, haraam and a minor sin, permissible and mandoob (recommended).

The guideline on what is haraam and a major sin with regard to eulogizing and commemorating the dead:

Any statement which suggests that Allaah has been unfair in His will and decree, such as when they exaggerate in listing the virtues and good qualities and deeds of the deceased which have come to an end with his death, which means that his death was a terrible thing and that it would have been better if he had carried on living.

The guidelines on what is haraam and a minor sin:

Words that stir up grief and lead to discontent and lack of patience, and may lead to striking one's cheeks or rending one's garment.

The guidelines on what is permissible with regard to mourning and eulogizing:

Words that do no more than mention the religious commitment of the deceased and that he has moved on to the realm of recompense, and that all people will meet the same fate.

The guidelines on that which is recommended with regard to mourning and eulogizing:

Words which enjoin and encourage the family of the deceased to be patient. End quote.

The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

What is the origin of the forty-day commemoration? Is there any evidence that it is prescribed to commemorate the deceased?

(They replied:)

Firstly: its origin lies in Pharaonic customs, which were known to the Pharaohs before Islam, then they spread to other people. It is a reprehensible innovation that has no basis in Islam, and it is refuted by the proven words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2550).

Secondly: Commemorating and eulogizing the deceased in the manner that is known nowadays, where people gather for that purpose and go to extremes in praising him, is not permissible, because of the report which was narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Majaah, and classed as saheeh by al-Haakim, from 'Abd-Allaah ibn Abi Awfa who said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade eulogizing.

And because mentioning the attributes of the deceased is usually boasting, and renews the anguish and stirs up grief.

As for simply praising him when he is mentioned or when his funeral passes by, or by telling others of his good deeds and so on, which is akin to the way in which some of the Sahaabah eulogized the slain at Uhud and others, that is permissible, because of the report narrated by Anas ibn Maalik (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: A funeral passed by and they spoke well of him, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "It is guaranteed." Then another passed by and they spoke ill of him, and he said: "It is guaranteed." 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "What is guaranteed?" He said: "The one of whom you spoke well, Paradise is guaranteed for him, and the one of whom you spoke ill, Hell is guaranteed for him. You are the witnesses of Allaah on earth." Agreed upon. End quote.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah (9/154-155)

Some contemporary scholars regard it as mustahabb for such meetings to be organized a long time after the death, so that the grief will not be renewed.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen was asked: In some mosques they give speeches in which they recount the good qualities of the deceased and his good legacy, such as a scholar or a daa'iyah. What is the ruling on this action?

Answer:

I think that this should not be done, because if it is too close to the death of the scholar or daa'iyah it is regarded as a kind of eulogizing or mourning, and the people are moved to

tears by it. But if it is after a long time and after the calamity has been forgotten, and his qualities and legacy are mentioned as a biography, there is nothing wrong with that, because all of the scholars are written about and their qualities and legacy recounted. But as for that which is aimed at stirring up grief and sorrow at the loss of this man, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade wailing and this is a kind of wailing. End quote.

Liqaa'aat al-Baab il-Maftooh (no. 207, question no. 15).

To sum up: There is nothing wrong with you organizing a memorial meeting to speak of the head of the association, so long as you adhere to the conditions mentioned above.

And Allaah knows best.