

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

MUSIC AND SINGING

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There are no prohibitions found for music or singing within the Quranic text. These prohibitions are only sourced from [Islamic secondary sources](#).

Other Quranic verses are often mistranslated and misconstrued for support to imply the prohibition of music and singing when a clear reading of the Arabic text within context negates the claim. An example is given at the end of the article.

The Quran remains the only judge for believers and claims to be the only source which guides to a path which is most firm, right, straight and stable.

Note the Arabic word 'Aqwamu' in the following verse which comes from its root 'Qaf-Waw-Mim' which also means to be firm, established, straight and right.

017.009

"Indeed, this Quran does guide to that which is most straight (**Arabic: Aqwamu**), and gives glad tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward"

The Quran is also the only source which makes something lawful or prescribes a prohibition. We note the following verse which is a response to a dialogue with regards imposing unwarranted restrictions with regards food. The general advice is however clear.

016.116

"And do not assert with your own tongues by saying the lie that "This is lawful and this is forbidden" so that you invent a lie against God. For those who ascribe false things to God, will never prosper"

The Quran also informs the reader that those that do not judge by the scriptures are disbelievers (Kaffiruna) (5:44); wrong-doers (zalimuna) (5:45); defiantly disobedient, rebels, evil-doers, transgressors (fasiquna) (5:47)

007:032

Say: Who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God, which He has brought forth for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He has provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the signs in detail for those who understand.

The very next verse then succinctly summarises the prohibitions in a nutshell:

007.033

"Say: the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to God, for which He has given no authority; and saying things about God of which you have no knowledge"

Many prohibitions have been clearly stated in the Quran. In the following article, the reader will note a list of many commandments in the Quran. Nowhere does one find the prohibition for music or singing.

[Quranic Commandments](#)

PROPHET DAVID'S ^(pbuh) PSALMS

004.163

"We have sent you (Muhammad) inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Ishmail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms (Arabic: Zabur)"

The Psalms of Prophet David ^(pbuh) are clearly poetic in structure and character. Today the Psalms consist of 150 hymns or songs which include lamentations, songs of thanksgiving, hymns of praise, wisdom psalms, royal psalms and others of a mixed composition. It is well attested within Jewish tradition, that the psalms were sung in front of the Tabernacle and subsequently in the reign of Prophet Solomon ^(pbuh), they were sung from the steps of the Temple when it was completed.

The fact that the hymns were sung or chanted also finds support from the following verse of the Quran where the mountains and birds are said to 'echo' them.

034:010

"And certainly We gave to David excellence from Us: O mountains! sing (Arabic Awwibi) praises with him and the birds; and We made the iron pliant for him"

The Arabic word 'Awwibi' comes from the root (Alif-Wa-Ba) which means more literally to repeat or echo. However, the chanting nature of the Psalms in the first instance remains evident.

يَلْجِبَالُ أَوْبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَالتَّنَّالَهُ الْحَدِيدَ

Awwibi

Illustration - Joseph Islam

2. **أَوْبٌ** see 1, first sentence : — and the same again, near the end. — He repeated, or echoed, the praises of God: thus in the saying [in the *Qur* xxxiv. 10], **يَا جِبَالُ أُوْبِي مَعَهُ** *O mountains, repeat ye, or echo ye, the praises of God with him*; [i. e., with David;] (S,* M, TA;)

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

In another Quranic verse and a similar context, we see the usage of the Arabic term 'Yussabihna' which means to glorify God in praise in a raised voice during supplication or prayer.

021:079

“So We made Solomon to understand it; and to each one We gave wisdom and knowledge; and We made the mountains, and the birds to celebrate Our praise (**Arabic: Yusabbihna**) with David; and We were the doers”

وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ

Yusabbihna

Illustration - Joseph Islam

is obsolete: accord to El-Mufaddal, **سُبْحَانٌ** is the inf. n. of **سَبَّحَ** signifying he raised his voice with supplication, or prayer, and magnification or celebration or praise [of God, as when one says سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ or the like]; and he cites as

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [2]

If singing or musical sounds were forbidden, how would the Psalms of David^(pbuh) be chanted in such fashion?

Indeed, there is no question that the chanting of Prophet David's^(pbuh) Psalms were sung to glorify God. However, this still does not imply any prohibitions on any other type of singing or music. In keeping with the Quran's overarching philosophy of a good word and pleasant speech, there are

decent moral boundaries which are insinuated and these should be applied to both singing and music. However, this does not equate to prohibiting it.

MISQUOTING QURANIC VERSES

A common verse used to support the prohibition of music and singing is the following verse.

031:006

"But there are, among men, those who purchase idle (Arabic: Lahwa-l) tales (Arabic: Hadith), without knowledge, to mislead from the Path of God and throw ridicule (on the Path): for such there will be a Humiliating Penalty"

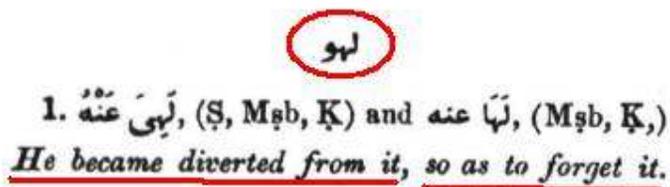
Although the meaning of 'Hadith' is well known to signify a story, a report, a statement or a tale, many later commentators unnecessarily misconstrue the meaning of 'lahwa hadith' to signify music and singing purely basing their opinions on [secondary sources](#) when it is clear from the Quran's own context and usage of the term that this rendering is unsupportable.



Illustration - Joseph Islam

The situation that one is presented with is not without a sense of irony. In effect, one notes that despite the warning of the verse, later commentaries based on [Islamic secondary sources](#) unnecessarily distort the Quranic based rendering of the terms, when the Quran is clearly warning one against the use of 'divertive / frivolous' reports or hadith.

WHAT IS LAHWA? ROOT - L-H-W



Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [3]

 *Diversion; pastime; sport; play: or especially, such as is vain, or frivolous; idle sport: (from various explanations :) *what occu-**

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [4]

In the above context therefore it is the divertive, frivolous, idle HADITH which is being referred to that leads MAN ASTRAY from the path of God without knowledge, not singing and music. Fanciful discourses and literature which have no real substance and only serve to lead mankind far away from the path of truth can only work counterproductive to the true message of Islam.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As with speech which can be used in prayer and to speak a good word, it can also be abused and used for profanity, imparting hurtful jibes and spreading slander. This does not make the tool of speech forbidden, just its immoral usage. Similarly, music or singing has no intrinsic moral value but individual choice which determines its good or bad usage.

All civilisations would naturally have a level of understanding of what constitutes abuse, sarcasm and an ungodly word without it necessarily needing to be prescribed.

Judgement is key.

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 1, Page 123

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[2] Ibid., Volume 4, Page 1289

[3] Ibid., Volume 8, Supplement, Page 3014

[4] Ibid.

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