89693 - Eating food that is distributed on the Prophet’s Birthday (Mawlid)

the question

Is it permissible to eat food that is distributed on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)? Some people quote as evidence the idea that because Abu Lahb set free a slave woman on the birthday of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Allah reduced the torment for him on that day.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

There is no festival in Islamic sharee’ah that is called “The Prophet’s Birthday”. Neither the Sahaabah nor the Taabi’een nor the four imams nor anyone else recognized such a day as part of their religion. Rather this festival was introduced by some ignorant Baatini innovators, then the people began to follow this innovation but the imams have denounced it in every time and place.

We have discussed the objections to this innovation in detail on our site, in the answers to questions no. 10070, 13810 and 70317.

Secondly:

Based on this, everything that the people do specially for this day is regarded as haraam, innovated actions, because they intend thereby to keep alive a festival that has been introduced into our religion, such as holding parties, offering food and so on.

Shaykh al-Fawzaan said in al-Bayaan li Akhta’ ba’d al-Kuttaab (268-270):

The commands in the Quran and Sunnah to follow that which has been prescribed by Allah and His

Messenger and the prohibition against introducing innovations into the religion are well known. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): “If you (really) love Allah, then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Quran and the Sunnah), Allah will love you and forgive you your sins”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:31]

“[Say (O Muhammad) to these idolaters (pagan Arabs) of your folk:] Follow what has been sent down unto you from your Lord (the Quran and Prophet Muhammad’s Sunnah), and follow not any Awliyaa’ (protectors and helpers who order you to associate partners in worship with Allah), besides Him (Allah). Little do you remember!”

[al-A’raaf 7:3]

“And verily, this is My straight path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His path”

[al-An’aam 6:153]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected.” According to a version narrated by Muslim: “Whoever does any deed that is not part of this matter of ours will have it rejected.”

Among the innovations that people have introduced is celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (Mawlid) in the month of Rabee’ al-Awwal. There are various ways in which they celebrate this occasion:

Some of them simply gather to read the story of his birth, or they listen to speeches and qaseedahs (odes) on this occasion.

Some of them make food and sweets etc, and offer them to the people who attend.

Some of them hold these celebrations in the mosques and some hold them in their houses.

Some of them do not limit themselves to what we have mentioned, rather their gatherings include haraam and evil things such as men mixing freely with women, dancing and music, or acts of shirk such as seeking the help of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and calling upon him or seeking his support against their enemies, and so on.

Whatever kinds of celebrations they are and whatever form they take, they are undoubtedly bid'ah and haraam innovations that were introduced long after the time of the best generations.

The first one who introduced this innovation was Abu Sa'eed Kawkaboori, the king of Irbil, at the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century AH, as was mentioned by the historians such as Ibn Katheer, Ibn Khalqaan and others.

Abu Shaamah said: The first one who did that in Mosul was Shaykh 'Umar ibn Muhammad al-Mulla, one of the well known righteous men, and the ruler of Irbil and others followed his example.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Katheer said in al-Bidaayah (13-137), in his biography of Abu Sa'eed al-Kawkaboori:

He did the Mawlid in Rabee' al-Awwal and celebrated it with a great celebration. … Then he said:

Al-Sabt said: Some of those who attended the feast given by the king on some of the Mawlids said that this feast included five thousand roasted heads, ten thousand chickens, one hundred thousand bowls and thirty thousand plates of sweets. And the Sufis sang from Zuhr until Fajr, and he himself danced with them. End quote.

Ibn Khalqaan said in Wafiyaat al-A'yaan (3-274):

When the first of Safar came, they would adorn those domes with all kinds of fine adornments, and in every dome there was a group of singers and a group of puppeteers and musical players, and they did not leave any dome but they installed a group there. End quote.

But most of what these innovators do on this day is making food of various kinds and distributing it and inviting people to eat. If a Muslim joins in this action, eats their food and sits in their gatherings, then undoubtedly he is taking part in keeping the innovation alive, and is cooperating

in it, and Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah”

[al-Maa’idah 5:2]

Hence the fatwas of the scholars state that it is haraam to eat food that is distributed on this day and on other innovated festivals.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question in Majmoo’ al-Fataawa (9/74):

What is the ruling on meat that is slaughtered for the Mawlid?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) replied:

If it is slaughtered (as a sacrifice) to the one whose birthday is being celebrated, then it is major shirk, but it is slaughtered just to be eaten, there is nothing wrong with that. But it should not be eaten, and the Muslim should not attend (the feast), so as to denounce them in word and in deed, unless he attends in order to denounce them without joining them in eating or anything else. End quote.

We have also quoted some fatwas concerning this previously. Please see the answers to questions no. 7051 and 9485.

And Allah knows best.