

Lakum Eidukum Wa Liya Eid..

Introduction

Alhamdu lillah. Indeed, all Glory and Praise is due to Allah. We glorify and praise Him and we ask Him for help and forgiveness. In Allah we seek refuge from the evils in ourselves and from our wrong doings. He whom Allah guides shall not be misguided, and he whom He misguides shall never be guided.

I bear witness that there is no [true] god except Allah, alone without any partners, and I bear witness that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is His ` Abd (servant) and Messenger.

Verily, the best words are those of Allah (Glorified be He); the best guidance is that of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him; the worst matters [in creed or worships] are those innovated [by people], for every such innovated matter is a Bid` ah, and every Bid` ah is a misguidance which shall reside in the Fire.

To many people, celebrating ` Eids is a non-religious matter, and one has the choice to participate in celebrating any ` Eid, for any nation or religion, as long as that does not involve engaging in haram (prohibited) actions. This view is the basis for what we witness repeatedly of Muslims engaging in various celebrations and in sharing in the holidays of other nations. This article is meant to present, based on the Qur'an and the authentic [Sunnah](#), guidelines for evaluating holidays and other related practices. This should enable one to reach a quick and sound conclusion when faced with such events.

Completeness of the Deen

By Allah's blessing and mercy, Islam is complete, perfect, and universal in nature. Allah (Glorified be He) said, "This day I have perfected your religion for you, have completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (Al-Ma'idah, 3)

It is narrated by [Imam Muslim](#) that some idol worshipers tried to mock of Islam by saying, “It seems as if your Prophet has taught you everything, even how to defecate!” When Salman heard this he responded with the strong dignity of a true believer: “Yes indeed! He prohibited us from turning our faces or backs to the Qiblah when defecating or urinating, from using the right hand to cleanse ourselves, from using less than three stones to cleanse ourselves [in the absence of water], and from using animal waste or bones to cleanse with.”

Allah’s mercy has required that people be informed of all what would save them from the Fire and what would let them into the Gardens of the Hereafter. This was the mission of all prophets, as declared by Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him: There was never any prophet before me but that his duty was to reveal to his people what he knew to be best for them, and to warn them of what he knew to be evil for them. [Narrated by Muslim] And this was certainly the mission of the Final Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, as he said: Nothing of what would bring you closer to the Jannah and further away from the Fire but have been clarified [through me] to you. [Authentic; narrated by Imam Ahmad].

With His encompassing Wisdom, Allah (Glorified be He) made His Final Revelation, Islam, a universal message meant for all peoples, at all times, without any distinction: “We have not sent you [Muhammad] otherwise than to mankind at large, to be a herald of glad tidings and a warner.” (Saba, 28)

Furthermore, this most important Message is preserved intact through the centuries, as is clearly observed today by any impartial examiner. This is in fulfillment of Allah’s promise: “It is We Ourselves Who have sent down the [Dhikr](#) (the Message), and it is We Who shall surely guard it [from corruption].” (Al-Hijr, 9)

We conclude then that:

Islam contains the complete and perfect guidance for humanity.

Islam did not neglect any information that would be needed by people to reach happiness and to avoid harm, in all matters, whether minute or large.

Islam is the only guidance tailored for all peoples at all times.

Islam has been preserved, and will remain intact through the ages, as the only true guidance capable of helping and saving people.

Completing That Which Had Been Completed?

The completeness of Islam obviously means that it cannot be completed further. Whether people realize it or not, believing otherwise would imply one or more of the following dangerous conclusions:

that Allah (Glorified be He) was not truthful in declaring this completeness (I seek refuge in Allah from such a blasphemous thought.)

that Allah (Glorified be He) has forgotten or missed some details needed to complete the Deen (again, I seek refuge in Allah from such a blasphemous thought.)

that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has neglected or forgotten to convey to us some matters needed to complete the Deen (and again, I seek refuge in Allah from such a blasphemous thought.)

This shows why Islam warned so strongly against introducing Bid`ahs into the Deen. We have cited in the Introduction above the Prophet's, peace and blessings be upon him, words warning of Bid`ahs. Imam Malik said, "Whoever innovates in Islam what he believes to be a good Bid`ah would be [implicitly] claiming that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has betrayed the trust (of delivering the full Message)." He then recited the above ayah from al-Ma'idah.

Distinct Muslim Identity – Is There A Choice?

To some people, the universality of Islam means that Muslims have the full choice to resemble and behave in coherence with other people in their localities (or in other locations as well). You continue to hear questions like the following: Is it all that important for a Muslim to have a clear distinctive identity? Is it not sufficient to have a strong belief within the heart and to perform Islam fully but privately?

Based on simple Islamic principles, we can immediately conclude that the answer to the first question is, simply, yes! And the answer to the second question is, simply, no!

A true Muslim is always eager to associate with his fellow believers: “If anyone contends with the Messenger even after the Guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell: What an evil abode!” (An-Nisa’, 115)

And a true Muslim is very anxious to be distinctive and different from the non-believers. This attitude follows from the repeated instructions of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him: “Be different from the Jews and the Christians.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim] “Be different from the disbelievers.” [Al- Bukhari and Muslim], and: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” [Authentic; narrated by Ahmad]

Why is it so important to be distinctive and different from the disbelievers? For the following reasons:

a) We Muslims are blessed with the best guidance. The Guidance from the Lord of lords, from Allah (Glorified be He). This gives us true dignity and pride that no one else has a claim to: “Honor belongs to Allah, to the Messenger, and to the Believers.” (Al- Munafiqun, 8)

b) The disbelievers are misguided, and their ways are based on sick or deviant views concerning their societies, the universe, and their very existence. Their actions frequently reflect their deviant opinions. Why then would anyone ever think of imitating them? Yet Muslims sometimes do just that – they imitate them in their most unintelligible acts! The Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him: “You [Muslims] will [in future times] follow the ways of those [disbelieving] nations who preceded you very closely; even if they enter into the hole of a lizard you would follow them into it.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

c) There is a substantial amount of evidence in Islam leading to the important rule: external agreement or similarity results in real similarity and agreement of the hearts. Thus, resembling disbelievers is Satan’s first step in leading Muslims to behave and believe like the disbelievers.

Differing from the disbelievers is of different levels or types, some of which are more important than others. They can be broadly classified as follows:

Islam requires us to be different from non-Muslims in matters which are particular to their beliefs or worships, such as: wearing a cross, attending their religious services, wearing monks’ attires, displaying or valuing their idols, etc. Imitating the disbelievers in such matters constitutes a major sin which is most possibly a form of disbelief that leads to permanent abode in the Hell-fire (may Allah (Glorified be He) save us).

Islam requires us to be different from the disbelievers in matters which are representative of them or are characteristic of their identity, even if the religious aspect were not apparent in such matters. Examples of this type of requirements: growing beards and trimming moustaches, dying white hair, not to totally abandon women in their menses, etc.

Matters which can be classified under the above two types should be treated similarly, even if there is no specific text to require such treatment. Examples: wearing the Western hat or wedding bands, carrying pictures of family members, walking dogs, wasting time in watching sports games and soap operas, etc.

As for other matters which are done by the disbelievers but are not specific to them, the above texts inform us that we should still try to be distinctive from them as much as possible.

What is stated above should not be taken to mean, for instance, that we should not learn the sciences or use technology because the disbelievers are currently its leaders. Islam requires us to learn and benefit from such forms knowledge, and this does not have to do with the subject of being different from the disbelievers.

Holidays Are Part of the Complete Deen

After the above lengthy discussion which, as stated earlier, is meant to provide general guidelines concerning celebrations and other related matters, we come back to apply what we have learnt so far to the subject at hand.

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once saw the Ansar celebrating a certain day. He inquired about that and was informed: This is one of two days that we used to celebrate in Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic ignorance) and we continue to do so. He replied: Nay! Allah has substituted for you two better days: the day of al-Fitr and the day of al-Adhha. [Authentic; narrated by Ahmad, an-Nasai, and others]

In addition to these two days, the Jumu`ah (Friday) is an `Eid day. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: This is a day which Allah has designated as an `Eid for Muslims. [Authentic] From this and the previous hadith, we conclude that Muslims have only three `Eid days, a weekly `Eid every Friday, and two annual `Eids, al-Fitr and al-Adhha.

Also, Islam instructs us as to how to celebrate our `Eids. No fasting is allowed on these days (Friday is excepted under certain conditions). On `Eid days, Muslims take a bath and wear their best clothes. They avoid all forms of sinning which people tend to commit when they are in a state of rejoice. The major part of the celebration is not eating or drinking. Rather, it is a prayer which gathers Muslims together to remember Allah's bounties and to chant His glory and greatness.

It becomes clear then that Allah alone has the right:

to prescribe `Eids and to set their dates, and

to prescribe the manner of celebrating them.]

Imitating Non-Muslims in Celebrations

The evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah is quite clear in that `Eids are distinctive features for every nation. Allah (Glorified be He) said: "To every people we have appointed [its own] rites and ceremonies." (al-Hajj, 34/67) And it was shown in the previous section that `Eids are purely religious occasions for Muslims.

As discussed earlier, Allah (Glorified be He) and His Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, have warned us against following or imitating non-Muslims in things which are characteristic of their religions or beliefs. This is more emphasized in the case of their `Eids or occasions, which always hold some religious or ideological non-Islamic meanings, and on which the disbelievers indulge in many evil practices. Differing from them on such occasions includes the following:

Staying completely away from the disbelievers' celebrations. This means to avoid places where they perform their holiday practices and to avoid participating with them in such practices (Christmas and New Year parties, Halloween trick-and-treat nonsense, Thanksgiving celebration and dinner, Fourth of July fireworks, First of April lies, birthday parties, anniversaries, etc).

Avoiding doing, ourselves, things which pertain to the practices of the disbelievers on such occasions (allowing Christmas trees in our homes or offices, inviting our friends to a Turkey dinner on Thanksgiving day, allowing members of our families to purchase or borrow Halloween attires, holding birthday or anniversary parties for our family members, etc).

Avoiding to celebrate our `Eids in a way which is meant to copy the ways of the disbelievers (mingling and shaking hands between men and women, improper cover for both genders, etc).

Avoiding initiating certain occasions or `Eids in imitation to theirs (the Day of the Earth, the Day of Iowa Muslims, etc.)

Bid`ahs and Sinning on `Eids

It has been shown above that `Eids are meant to be purely Islamic occasions and practices. They are not liable to the innovation or disobedience of people. The warnings concerning Bid`ahs (and sinning in general) clearly applies to them. Thus:

Celebrating so called Islamic occasions other than the three days prescribed by Allah is a Bid`ah which is rejected by Islam, because it consists of introducing new rites and worships which only Allah or His Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, have the right to do.

Introducing certain baseless practices during the three legitimate days is also a Bid`ah. On these days, people choose, for instance, to visit graveyards and distribute sweets there, to read specific portions of the Qur'an, to specify the preceding night for extended worship, and to do other things which have no valid evidence.

Committing all sorts of innovations and sins in imitation to the disbelievers and the ignorant Muslims is obviously a combination of Bid`ahs and other forms of disobedience which are emphasized by that people get involved in them at the time when they are supposed to be performing a purely religious worship.

To preserve our identity and our dignity, and to attain Allah's love and acceptance (which means peace and happiness in this life and ultimate prosperity in the Hereafter), let us adhere to what pleases Him as He instructed in His Book or in His Messenger's Sunnah; and remember: `Eids and celebrations are no exception to that. We ask Allah for guidance.