

EIDUL FITR & 6 FASTS OF SHAWWAL

Source: Darul Uloom Bury, UK

One of the meritorious aspects of Shawwal is that it has been chosen by Allah Almighty for the celebration of “Eid-ul-Fitr”, one of the only two annual festivals recognized by the Shari’ah. This happy day is designed by the Shari’ah as a sign of gratefulness by the Muslims on the accomplishment of Ramadhan, and as an immediate reward by Allah for those who spent the month of Ramadhan in fasting and performing other forms of ‘Ibaadah’.

Instead of commemorating an event from the past, the Shari’ah has prescribed the first of Shawwal as an annual festival for the Muslims at an occasion when they themselves accomplish a great ‘Ibaadah’. This approach reminds the Muslims that they should not rely only on the accomplishments of their ancestors; rather, they should themselves perform meritorious acts to please their Creator.

In prescribing the ways to celebrate the happy day, Islam has adopted another unique approach. The festivals of other religions or nations normally comprise of some acts of rejoicing and enjoyment. The whole happy day is normally spent in dancing, drinking singing and playing.

Islam has, conversely, prescribed a very simple, prestigious and more humane way to observe the happy day. First of all, it is mandatory on all the well-off Muslims to start their day by paying ‘Sadaqat -ul-Fitr’ to the poor of their society, so that they too may enjoy the day along with others, and may not be worried for earning their livelihood at least in that day of happiness.

After paying the ‘Sadaqat-ul-Fitr’, the Muslims are required to proceed to an open place where they can offer ‘Eid prayer collectively. In this way, they are supposed to present themselves before their Creator and offer two rakaahs of this special type of Salaah, which makes them receive blessings from Allah and start their celebration by these divine blessings.

After the Salah also, they are supposed to rejoice the day in a responsible manner, without violating the limits prescribed for them and never indulging in the acts prohibited by Allah.

Keeping this point in view, we will now discuss specific rules prescribed for observing the day of ‘Eid-ul-Fitr.

The Night preceding ‘Eid-ul-Fitr’

It had been the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he did not sleep in the night preceding the day of ‘Eid ul –Fitr. This night has been named in a Hadith as, ‘THE NIGHT OF REWARD’. It means that Allah Almighty bestows his rewards to those who have spent the month of Ramadhan abiding by the dictates of Shari ‘ah, and all their prayers in this night are accepted. Therefore, it is desirable to perform *Nafil* prayers in this night. The Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said:

“Whoever stands up (in worship) in the nights preceding the two Eids expecting rewards from his lord, his heart will not die when the other hearts will die.

To benefit from this opportunity, one should perform as much worship in this night as he can, and should pray for all his needs and desires.

Before going to 'Eid Prayer

The following acts are prescribed as Sunnah at the beginning of the day of Eid-ul-Fitr before proceeding to the 'Eid prayer:

1. To wake up early in the morning.
2. To clean one's teeth with a Miswaak or a brush.
3. To have a bath.
4. To put on one's best available clothes.
5. To wear perfume.
6. To eat a sweet food, preferably dates, before the 'Eid prayer.
7. To recite the following Takbir in the low voice while going to the 'Eid prayer:

"Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La ilaha ila lahu wal allahu akbar, allahu akbar wa lilla hii hamnd."

Sadaqat-ul-Fitr

Sadaqat-ul-Fitr is an obligation for every Muslim, male or female, who owns 613.35 grams of silver or its equivalent, either in the form of money, ornaments, stock-in-trade or in the form of some goods or commodities beyond one's normal needs. Every person who owns such an amount has to pay *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr*, not only on behalf of himself but also on behalf of his minor children. The prescribed amount of *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* is 1.75 kilograms of wheat or its value in money. This amount is prescribed for paying *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* for one person only. If a person has some minor children, the same amount has to be paid on behalf of each one of them separately. The following points must be remembered with regard to the payment of *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr*.

1. *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* is obligated on each adult male or female separately, and the relevant adult person himself is responsible to pay it. The husband is not required to pay *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* on behalf of his wife nor is the wife supposed to pay it on behalf of her husband. Similarly, a father is not bound to pay *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* on behalf of his adult children or vice versa. However, if the head of the family, by his own free will, wishes to pay *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* for each one of the members of his family, he should seek their authorization for that purpose. In this case the *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* paid by him will be valid on their behalf. If he did not pay *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* on behalf of his family, he will not be responsible for it. Rather, it is the duty of every adult member of the family to discharge his own obligation or request the head of the family to pay it on his or her behalf.
2. It is a *Sunnah* that the *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* is paid before performing the 'Eid prayer. It can also be paid before the 'Eid day, but it is not advisable to delay it up to the performance of 'Eid prayer. However, if a person has failed to pay on its proper time, he should pay it as soon as possible, whereupon the obligation will stand discharged.
3. The *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* is not necessary on behalf of a child who has been born after the break of dawn in the 'Eid day, nor is it necessary to pay *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* on behalf of person who dies before the dawn of the 'Eid day.
4. *Sadaqat-ul-Fitr* should only be paid to a person who is entitled to receive *Zakah*.

The 'Eid prayer

The second obligation on 'Eid day is to perform the 'Eid prayer. Some rules in this respect are mentioned hereunder:

1. The 'Eid prayer is *wajib* (obligatory) on every male Muslim.
2. The 'Eid prayer can be performed any time between the *ishraq* and *zawal*.
3. It is preferable that the 'Eid prayer is performed at an open field and not in a mosque. However, if, it is difficult to perform it in an open field, it can also be performed in a big mosque.
4. It is not advisable to hold the 'Eid prayer in every mosque, rather it is preferable that the people of several mosques either perform it in an open field or, in its absence, in a big mosque which can accommodate a large number of people.
5. No *Nafil Salah* can be performed before the 'Eid prayer, neither in one's home, nor at the place of 'Eid prayer. Similarly, *Nafil* prayer cannot be performed after the 'Eid prayer at the same place. However, it can be performed after one comes back to his home.
6. The 'Eid prayer has neither *Azaan* nor *iqamah*.
7. The 'Eid prayer has two rakaah to perform in the normal way with the only addition of six *Takbirs*, three of them in the beginning of the first rakaah, and three of them just before *ruku* in the second rakaah.

Khutbah: The address of 'Eid-ul-Fitr

In this *Salah*, *Khutbah* is a *Sunnah* and is delivered after the *Salah*, unlike the *Salah* of *Jumuah* where it is *farz* and is delivered before the *Salah*. However, listening to the *Khutbah* of 'Eid *Salah* is *wajib* or necessary and must be heard in perfect peace and silence.

It is a *Sunnah* that the *Imam* begins the first *Khutbah* by reciting *Takbirs* ' *Allahu Akbar* ' nine times and the second *Khutbah* with reciting it seven times.

Note: The way of 'Eid prayer described above is according to the Hanafi school of Muslim jurists. Some other jurists, like Imam Shafi, have other ways to perform it. They recite *Takbir* twelve times before beginning the recitations from the Holy Qur'an in both the rakaahs. This way is also permissible. If the *Imam*, being of the Shafi School, follows this way, you can also follow him. Both ways are based on the practice of the Holy Prophet (saw).

Six Fasts in the Month of Shawwal

It is commendable to keep six fasts in the month of Shawwal. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

"Whoever completes the fasts of Ramadhan then adds to them the fasts of six days in the month of Shawwal, it will carry the *thawab* of fasting for the whole year." (Sahih Muslim)

This *Hadith* had described the great *thawab* of six fasts of this month. The scholars have interpreted this *Hadith* by saying that according to the recognized rules of Shari'ah, every good deed is rewarded ten times more *thawab* of its origin, therefore, the *thawab* of 30 days of Ramadhan amounts to the *thawab* for 300 days. If the fasts of Ramadhan are followed by six more fasts, they carry the *thawab* of 60 days more, raising the aggregate *thawab* to 360 which is the number of days in one year according to the Islamic calendar. Therefore, the Muslims should take this opportunity of acquiring such an enormous reward from Allah. It is more preferable to start these fasts from the 2nd of Shawwal and keep fasting up to the 7th of Shawwal. However, if they are kept in other days, it is hoped that the requirement of the above *Hadith* may also be fulfilled.