

292645 - Ruling on eating certain foods only in Ramadan

the question

Here in Egypt, during the blessed month of Ramadan, we have some foods that are eaten specifically during this month, such as kunafah (a vermicelli-like pastry), qatayef (a kind of sweet dumpling), qamar ad-deen (apricot nectar), mukassarat (mixed nuts), yamish (a combination of dried fruits and nuts usually mixed with milk) and so on. There is a seeker of knowledge in the area where we live who says that it is not permissible to eat these foods specifically in the month of worship, because having some customs that are done specifically in the month of worship is a kind of innovation, especially since there is nothing in these foods that help the fasting person to fast. So they do not come under the heading of tangible or shar'i means. Based on that, he says that eating the foods mentioned is haraam in Ramadan, but not at other times of the year, and he says that he read that one of the shaykhs in Egypt said that. What is the ruling on this matter?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is nothing wrong with the custom that some people have of eating certain kinds of food during the month of Ramadan, sweets and other things, and it does not come under the heading of innovation, because they are not seeking to draw closer to Allah by singling out these foods in this month; rather it is a matter of custom and tradition.

Innovation (bid'ah) has to do with introducing things into the religion, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever introduces something into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2697) and Muslim

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(1718).

And he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever does an action that is not part of this matter of ours, will have it rejected.” Narrated by Muslim (1718).

“Additional bid‘ah (bid‘ah idaafiyyah)” is, as ash-Shaatibi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: An innovated practice that is introduced into the religion that is similar to prescribed practices, where the aim behind adhering to it is the same as the aim behind following the prescribed practice.

One example of that is consistently doing specific acts of worship at specific times for which there is no evidence in the texts of sharee‘ah, such as always fasting the fifteenth day of Sha‘baan and spending the night of the fifteenth in prayer (qiyaam).

End quote from al-I‘tisaam (1/51).

As for adhering to certain customs or traditions at certain times, that is not included in the definition of bid‘ah.

In Saheeh al-Bukhaari (5403) it is narrated that Sahl ibn Sa‘d said:

We used to look forward to Friday because there was an old woman of our acquaintance who would take the roots of silq (a variety of chard) and put them in a cooking pot of hers with some grains of barley. When we had prayed, we would visit her and she would offer that food to us. We used to look forward to Friday because of that, and we would not eat lunch or take a siesta until after Jumu‘ah. By Allah, there was no fat in it.

In this hadith we see that this Sahaabi woman used to make that food of hers only on Friday, and the companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to look forward to Friday and feel happy when it came, because of this food that they would eat in this lady’s house. Can it be said that this was an innovation?

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Or, what is the difference between the food that is traditionally made in the month of Ramadan, and what the companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to eat on Fridays?

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem (may Allah have mercy on him) said: If we pay attention to what is said about customs and traditions being innovations (bid'ahs) that have been introduced, then everything that did not exist at the time of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the time of his companions – whether types of food, drink, clothing, means of transportation, and all other inventions that were introduced into daily life after that time – should be regarded as reprehensible innovations!

Such a notion is extremely flawed and incorrect, and reflects complete ignorance of the fundamentals and objectives of Islam.

What the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said about the meaning of innovation is perfectly clear.

It is obvious to people of insight and understanding that what is meant by the innovated or introduced matters that are to be rejected is matters having to do with religion, such as adding something to it, or adhering to some practices to which the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not adhere.

End quote from Fataawa ash-Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem (2/128).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The difference between traditions and worship is that worship is what Allah and His Messenger have enjoined as a means of drawing closer to Allah and seeking His reward.

As for traditions, these are things that people customarily do in matters of food, drink, housing,

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clothing, means of transportation, interactions with one another, and so on.

There is another difference, which is that the basic principle with regard to acts of worship is that they are not allowed and are forbidden, unless there is evidence to prove that they are acts of worship, because Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Or have they other deities who have ordained for them a religion to which Allah has not consented?” [ash-Shoora 42:21].

As for traditions and customs, the basic principle is that they are permissible, unless there is evidence to prove that they are not allowed.

Based on that, if people have a custom or tradition that they follow, and someone tells them that it is haraam, he should be asked for proof, and it should be said to him: Where is the proof that it is haraam?

With regard to acts of worship, if it is said to someone that this act of worship is an innovation (bid’ah) and he says that it is not, we say to him: Where is the proof that it is not an innovation, because the basic principle with regard to acts of worship is that they are not allowed, unless there is proof to indicate that they are prescribed? End quote from Liqaa’ al-Baab al-Maftooh (2/72).

He also said: With regard to what is an innovation in shar’i terms, the guideline is that it is seeking to worship Allah in a way that Allah has not prescribed.

If you wish, you may say that it is worshipping Allah, may He be exalted, in a way that was not practised by the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or by the Rightly Guided Caliphs. So everyone who worships Allah by doing something that Allah has not prescribed, or by doing something that was not the practice of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or the Rightly Guided Caliphs who succeeded him, is an innovator, whether that act of

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worship has to do with the names and attributes of Allah, or it has to do with His rulings and laws.

But with regard to day-to-day matters that have to do with custom and tradition, these cannot be called innovations in religious terms, even if they are called innovations in linguistic terms; they are not innovations in religion, and they are not what the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) warned us against.

End quote from Majmoo' Fataawa wa Rasaa'il Ibn 'Uthaymeen (2/292).

And Allah knows best.